LANSING REGIONAL SmartZone

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JOINT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FINANCE AUTHORITY (LDFA) /
LANSING REGIONAL SMARTZONE (LRSZ) BOARD MEETING

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, June 17, 2026 | 8:30 a.m.
Suite 300 – Technology Innovation Center
325 E. Grand River Ave., East Lansing, MI 48823

Attendees: Mark Dobson, Charles Hasemann, Jon Laing, Shay Manawar, Heather Pope, Traci Riehl, Abigail Tykocki, Dave Washburn, Ben Bakken

Staff: Harrison Leffel-Jones, Casey Paskus, Laura Sumpter, Jillian Winn

Recorded by: Laura Sumpter, LEAP

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Tykocki called the meeting of the Lansing Regional SmartZone Joint Local Development Finance Authority (LDFA) to order at 8:34 a.m. The meeting was conducted in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

Director Winn conducted roll call.

> **Present:** Mark Dobson, Charles Hasemann, Jon Laing, Shay Manawar, Heather Pope, Traci Riehl, Abigail Tykocki, Dave Washburn
> **Absent:** Irene Cahill, Mark Meadows, Nicole Millsap, Christian Palasty
> **Late Arrival:** Ben Bakken 8:45am
> **Result:** Quorum present

2. Adoption of Agenda

Chair Tykocki called for a motion to adopt the agenda as presented.

> **Motion:** Traci Riehl moved to adopt the agenda as presented.
> **Second:** Heather Pope

> **Vote:** Motion Carried (8-0)
> **Result:** Approved

3. Consent Agenda

Chair Tykocki noted that no financial statements are included in this consent agenda, as the quarter 3 financials were approved at the April board meeting and quarter 4 does not end until June 30. The consent agenda included three sets of meeting minutes for approval:

- 3.1 — April 22, 2026 Regular Board Meeting Minutes
- 3.2 — May 6, 2026 Special Meeting Minutes (Vision Session 2)
- 3.3 — June 8, 2026 Special Meeting Minutes (Vision Session 3)

> **Motion:** Charles Hasemann moved to approve the consent agenda as presented.
> **Second:** Jon Laing
> **Vote:** Motion Carried (8-0)
> **Result:** Approved

4. LDFA Appointments

4.1 Reappointment of Charles Hasemann, City of East Lansing

Chair Tykocki announced that Charles Hasemann has been reappointed by the City of East Lansing City Council to the LDFA Board for a new term ending June 30, 2030. The reappointment was made at the May 26, 2026 City Council meeting.

> **Motion:** Traci Riehl moved to accept the appointment of Charles Hasemann to the LDFA Board.
> **Second:** Heather Pope
> **Vote:** Motion Carried (8-0)
> **Result:** Approved

> Ben Bakken arrived 8:45am

5. Program Updates / Presentations (Information Only)

The following presentations were provided:

5.1 TIC / Alliance Updates – Jeff Smith / Gabbi Strom (MSU Research Foundation)

Jeff Smith and Gabbi Strom from the MSU Research Foundation presented the TIC and Alliance financial summary and tenant report.

Financials (TIC)

- $11,000 *over* forecasted revenue — performing better than expected

- Office expenses down $10,000 due to an unused furniture budget
- Originally approved up to $31,000 in subsidy; zero subsidy will be needed
- Space has been successfully filled through tenant recruitment, offsetting costs

Tenant Report (City Center/TIC)

- Change Media moved in, taking over the former MSU Innovation Center boardroom (relocated from HQ)
- 30 active tenants currently in the TIC — noted as a high count for this time of year
- 17 virtual companies among tenants; hoping to see a shift toward more physical/full tenants
- Grant cycles (specifically SBIR and TPRC grants) cited as a reason people remain virtual
- A few student companies leaving soon due to end of semester and housing leases

Alliance Building

- 7 steady tenants — no changes

5.2 Capital Area Startup Studio – Blake Grewal / Jeff McWherter

Blake Grewal and Jeff McWherter presented a Year Two recap of the Capital Area Startup Studio program. Key highlights included:

- Program growth from 2025 to 2026: applicants up 56% (16 to 25), companies up 100% (4 to 8), events up 125% (4 to 9), with over 120 event signups in 2026
- 6 companies actively selling in the market with early customers; 50% of founders are full-time on their business; $20,000 in funding distributed across the group
- Year One founder highlights: Recifix (non-technical founder turned technical, now full-time and profitable, platform nearing 100 active food creators); Made in Amirika (husband also full-time, highest earning year in progress, seeking office space for expansion)
- Lessons learned: more events does not mean better; greater founder accountability and milestones needed; founders need to be building with AI
- Year Three plans include a launch bootcamp event open to the community, 6 companies inside the studio, and in-person building days with founders
- Presenters invited the board to attend Founders Day tonight, June 17, 4:00–6:00 PM at MSUFCU

5.3 Business Made Simple – Jazmin Anderson

Jazmin Anderson presented an update on Business Made Simple, a free workshop series for small business owners in the Lansing region. Program highlights:

- 11 sessions delivered to date with 175+ total attendees and 9 local experts featured
- Sessions have covered topics including email, social media, bookkeeping software, AI tools, data analytics, project management, and Canva
- Best-attended session to date: The Stunio Story (517 E&I Week), with 42 attendees
- Upcoming sessions: Canva Without the Confusion Parts 2 and 3 (June 17 and July 15, 2026)
- Recently moved to the Neighborhood Empowerment Center (north side) for classroom-style setup

5.4 Conquer Accelerator & Venture Creation / Mentor in Residence – Becky Roman Landini / Bradley Matson (MSU Research Foundation)

Becky Roman Landini and Bradley Matson presented updates on the Conquer Accelerator and Venture Creation

(Mentor in Residence) programs.

Venture Creation (MIR) Program highlights (FY2026):

- 37 total clients served, including 25 new founders; 76% underrepresented
- 29 grants applied to, 27 secured; $320,000 in non-dilutive funding
- $580,000 in trailing twelve-month revenue; 65 jobs created and retained
- 23 referrals to community partners; 93% client success rate

Conquer Accelerator overall outcomes (since program inception):

- 114 portfolio companies, 68% in the tech industry, 15% life sciences; 13 exits
- 85 of 114 companies still operating (75% survival rate)
- 218+ jobs created; 35x leverage (startups raise an average of $35 for every $1 invested)
- 42% of startups raise additional funding rounds post-Conquer

Conquer 2025 Cohort highlights:

- Celer Energy: solid-state battery with AI-driven fault prediction; completed first technology demo and found new lab space
- Blooma: gardening app for Gen Z/Millennials; founder moved to full-time
- KISS: anonymous STI status sharing app; growing user adoption and strategic partnerships
- VERN AI: emotion recognition AI; achieved $30,000 MRR and closed a $6.5 million deal in eldercare
- CocoMar: ready-to-drink protein smoothie; advancing shelf-stability and winning awards

Conquer 2026 Program update:

- Applications closed May 22; 38 applications received from Ann Arbor (16), Detroit (16), East Lansing (12), and Traverse City (4)
- Selection Committee meets the week of June 8; cohort finalized week of June 29; program begins July 13

5.5 Apple Community Education Initiative – December Day / Rachel Ochylski / Patricia Monterrosa

December Day, Rachel Ochylski, and Patricia Monterrosa from MSU Extension presented on the Apple Community Education Initiative, which brings Apple technology, STEAM education, and workforce exploration to Ingham County youth.

Program highlights (September 2025 – June 2026):

- 566 youth reached through direct programming and outreach events
- 150 students reached through special interest coding clubs and community events
- 60 days of unique, custom programming (up from 10 days the prior year)
- 17 coding clubs and community events (up from 10)

Program highlights by initiative:

- Mindful Mosaics (Refugee Development Center): a tech-infused blend of mindfulness, arts, culture, and outdoor experience for middle and high schoolers; students used iPads for digital storytelling, giving several their first hands-on experience with this kind of technology

- Digital Storytelling (Southside Community Coalition): students produced micro-documentaries and animated shorts; Everett High School collaboration included a Michigan Student Film Festival 2026 Best of Show award
- East Lansing High School Code Coaches: high school coding club students created lessons and led visits to teach elementary students coding and robotics
- Whitehills and Robert L. Green Elementary After School Coding Clubs: four clubs teaching Swift coding and Sphero robots
- Robotics Day at East Lansing Public Library: one-day community event with 150+ attendees, drawing together MSU Extension, 4-H, MSU Future Spartan Engineers, Lansing Makers Network, and ELHS Robotics
- East Lansing Public Library Programs: Teens Demystifying AI event; Sphero Chariots at Maker Monday

Summer 2026 programs in development include Code Coaches, Intro to Coding Club, Sphero: Robotics in Motion, Exploration Days, and community events.

5.6 Impression 5 STEM Youth Programming – Erik Larson / Micaela Balzer

Erik Larson and Micaela Balzer from Impression 5 presented an update on STEM Youth Programming.

Program Reach

- 801 students served across four programs
- 33 programs delivered

Four Programs

- Winter Labs
- Spring Labs
- Summer Labs (includes coding programming)
- Mount Hope STEM Program — out-of-school programming during mid-break, spring break, and summer

Notable Activities

- Slime on Your Floor — partnered with MSU Entrepreneur Institute; students made and marketed slime products, then held a market to sell them
- Fifth grade onsite program — relationship-building, in-class programming throughout the school year

Looking Ahead

- Impression 5 planning a new teen tech facility on campus to extend the learning pipeline
- Currently hosting Destination Mars Traveling Exhibit through September

5.7 MEDC Gateway Program – Casey Paskus

Grants Manager Casey Paskus presented the Gateway Program update, covering grant activity for the period July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026.

Total grant funds awarded: $580,352.85 to 47 companies across four programs:

- Local Accelerator Fund (LAF): 17 awards to 16 companies totaling $101,427.14
- Business Accelerator Fund (BAF): 11 awards to 10 companies totaling $198,010
- TREK Accelerator Fund (TAF): 24 awards to 23 companies totaling $178,786.12
- Direct TREK Accelerator Fund (DTAF): 12 awards to 12 companies totaling $102,129.59

Client highlights:

- AgriDynamics (TAF, $13,000, June 2026): MSU spinout building automated apple-picking robots using camera and suction technology to solve agricultural labor shortages; recognized as Innovation of the Year at the MSU Research Foundation Innovation Celebration
- Full Cycle Logistics (DTAF, $5,100, May 2026): platform for regional composting operations management; hired dedicated sales staff and enabling product demos
- Sit Sense (LAF, $4,109, August 2025): MedTech MSU spinout developing smart patient position-shifting technology to reduce bedsores; received $100,000 in investor funds and a $1.55M NSF SBIR Fast-Track grant
- BRCE (BAF, $29,800, October 2025): student-founded company making patented polymer composite shoelaces; appeared on Shark Tank (secured $300,000 deal for 20% equity), won $600,000 at Rice Business Plan Competition, and is closing a $2.5 million pre-seed round

6. Approval of the FYE Budget and Program Committee Spending Plan Recommendations

Chair Tykocki noted there are two separate actions under this item.

6.1 Approval of Program Committee Spending Plan Recommendations

Chair Tykocki presented the Program Committee's spending plan recommendations. The Program Committee, which includes Chair Tykocki, Dave Washburn, Irene Cahill, and Traci Riehl, met on May 29, 2026. The recommendations are consistent with the update provided at the April board meeting.

The Program Committee recommends allocation of funds within the Programs and Services and Rising Tide budget categories. Recommended programs include:

- Capital Area Startup Studio
- Conquer Accelerator and Cade Program
- Venture Creation (Mentor in Residence) Program
- Local Business Accelerator Funds
- Incubator Tenant Parking
- Business Made Simple
- Event Sponsorship
- 517 Entrepreneurship & Innovation Week
- Youth STEM Programming (Impression 5 and MSU Extension funded at the same amounts as FY2026)

> **Motion:** Ben Bakken moved to approve the Program Committee's recommended FYE2027 spending plan as presented, and to authorize management to proceed with contract negotiations with individual service providers with terms agreeable to this board.
> **Second:** Charles Hasemann
> **Vote:** Motion Carried (8-0) [Ben Bakken arrived to = 9 but Dave Washburn recused self from vote due to conflict]
> **Result:** Approved

6.2 Enactment of FYE2027 Budget

Chair Tykocki provided context for this motion. At the April board meeting, the board approved the FYE2027 Budget and authorized its submission to the City Councils of East Lansing and Lansing. The City of East Lansing approved the budget at their May 26, 2026 City Council meeting. The City of Lansing approval is still in process. Today's motion formally enacts the budget, contingent upon City of Lansing approval. Once approved, the budget will take effect without requiring further action by this board.

> **Motion:** Ben Bakken moved to enact the FYE2027 Budget as previously approved and submitted to the City Councils of East Lansing and Lansing, contingent upon approval of the budget by the City of Lansing.
> **Second:** Traci Riehl
> **Vote:** Motion Carried (8-0) [Ben Bakken arrived to = 9 but Dave Washburn recused self from vote due to conflict]
> **Result:** Approved

7. Reports / Information

Updates were provided on:

7.1 TIF Extension Update

- No new updates
  - Bill passed committee but has not reached the House floor
  - Speaker Hall controls whether it moves to the floor; Republican outreach more effective
  - SmartZone sunsets next June — one TIF payment remaining if legislation fails
  - Entrepreneur support letters submitted and read into record during committee process
  - Hasemann recommends all SZ clients reach out to senate
  - Bakken says to tie it to population trends

7.2 TIF Plan and Vision Sessions Update

- Continued sessions
  - 3 vision sessions completed; draft vision in progress, not yet final
  - Working with cities to collect capture parcels
  - Goal: draft TIF plan by end of September
  - Two requirements for continuation: legislation + new operating agreement with all parties

7.3 MSUFCU Coworkerie

- Transitioning to a new downtown East Lansing incubator space in partnership with MSUFCU – The MSUFCU Coworkerie at 311 Abbot
- LEAP also supporting the space independently

- Final agreement targeting early July; official transition date not yet set
- Space capacity: 6 private offices (3 available), 36 cubicles, 42 dedicated stations, 6 conference rooms
- New Rosenberg Center announced by MSU Research Foundation

8. Look Ahead: October 2026 Board Meeting

Director Winn noted that the next regular board meeting will be the annual meeting in October 2026, at which the board will conduct the election of executive committee officers.

Future board meeting dates:

- October 21, 2026 (Annual Meeting)
- January 20, 2027
- April 21, 2027
- June 16, 2027

9. Public Comment

Chair Tykocki invited public comment.

Names / Organizations that gave public comment:

Ben Bakken stepping down from the LDFA Board

- This is his last meeting
- Director Winn presented him with a certificate, an award honoring his leadership and years of commitment, and Smarties as a playful sendoff for being once a Smartie, always a Smartie.

Dave Washburn discussed Rosenberg Center

- Ribbon cutting Fall 2026, Grand opening Spring 2027

Director Winn shared **Christian Palasty** is retiring from East Lansing Public Schools in September 2026 and will be stepping down from the board.

Heather Pope discussed East Lansing City Manager

- Robert Belleman resigned as East Lansing City Manager 6.15.26
- Annette Irwin is Interim City Manager

10. Adjournment

> **Motion:** Ben Bakken moved to adjourn.
> **Second:** Charles Hasemann
> **Vote:** Motion Carried (9-0)
> **Result:** Approved

Chair Tykocki adjourned the meeting at 9:51 a.m.

The next meeting will be Wednesday, October 21, 2026.

SUBMITTED BY: Laura Sumpter, Recording Secretary
STATUS: APPROVED BY THE BOARD ON OCTOBER 21, 2026