

## ODWNA Association Meeting Minutes

**Date:** Wednesday, September 18, 2024

**Place:** Third Christian Reformed Church, 2400 Winchell Ave, Kalamazoo, MI

### **Board Members:**

**Present:** Diana Morton-Thompson, Vice-President; Christopher Bovid, Secretary; Stephanie Watkins, Barry Olson, Barb Miller

**Excused:** Chris Shook, President; Rachel Bennett, Treasurer; Peter Kushner, Past President; Christine Chadderdon; Paul Scott



**In Attendance:** Approximately 19 people (includes Board members)

- I. Meeting called to order by Diana Morton-Thompson, Vice-President; 7:02 PM
  - A. Welcome to first meeting of 2024-2025 year
  - B. Review of Agenda and tonight's guest speaker
  - C. Thank you to Third Christian Reformed Church for use of the space
  
- II. MINUTES – May 15, 2024 (Chris Bovid, Secretary)
  - A. Minutes from the ODWNA Annual Meeting are posted on the ODWNA website.
  - B. Minutes adopted without objection.
  
- III. TREASURER'S REPORT - (Chris Shook for Rachel Bennett, Treasurer)
  - A. ODWNA Checking Account Balance as of 3/31/2024 was \$8,343.49.
  - B. If anyone is unsure about current membership, please talk with Rachel Bennett.
  
- IV. BUSINESS ITEMS
  - A. Sunday Oct 6 at 1pm at Kensington Park – Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the W-A-L-K Nature Route official opening. All are invited!
  - B. Winchell Elementary School PTO is having its "Fun Run" – Friday September 27 130 – 330 (Winchell-Aberdeen-Crosswind-Broadway)
    - I. Please stay off the streets then if possible
  - C. Woods Lake update – Chris Bovid
    - I. The Kalamazoo County Health Department concluded its seasonal weekly e.coli tests of Woods Lake at the Woods Lake Park Beach and for yet another year there were no high tests and no beach closures.
  - D. Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 Planning – Stephanie Watkins
    - I. The City of Kalamazoo will be holding public meetings for anyone who is interested to attend and give input on its next ten year plan.
    - II. The City is also hosting separate 'Organization' meetings and has requested the neighborhood associations and other organizations to send a representative only.
    - III. In connection with Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 the City is suggesting that people read and consider a particular book: Happy City by Charles Montgomery
    - IV. [Imaginekalamazoo.com](http://Imaginekalamazoo.com)
      - i. In addition to the meetings it is hosting, the City is asking residents to host small groups with family, neighbors, etc. to discuss and develop input for the next ten year plan.
  - E. Introduction of Guest Speaker – Mark De Clercq, PE, AMP, MIAM; President, Applied Asset Management (consultants)
    - I. Background:
      - i. Spent the last 15 years developing and aligning asset management programs
      - ii. More than 30 years experience in public and private sectors, most recently as City Engineer for the City of Grand Rapids
      - iii. Adjunct Professor at Michigan Technological University and a Professional Engineer
    - II. Outcomes for Woods Lake:
      - i. Good Water Quality
        1. Clean water supports recreation, wildlife, and drinking water sources
        2. Efforts aim to minimize pollutants entering the lake
      - ii. Minimize Sedimentation
        1. Mitigate sediment levels to improve water clarity and promote healthy aquatic habitat
        2. Reduce impacts resulting in lakebed shallowing
      - iii. Good Vegetative Health
        1. Robust shoreline, stable banks, and filtered runoff
        2. Quality vegetative health to prevent erosion and fuel a thriving habitat
      - iv. Protecting a Natural Asset
        1. Sustain balanced nutrient levels and biological availability

## ODWNA Association Meeting Minutes



- 2. Thriving aquatic ecosystem
- III. Stormwater System Design Intent
  - i. Water Flow
    - 1. Convey heavy rain and snowmelt
    - 2. Free-flowing stormwater from streets, roofs, and driveways to prevent flooding and impair human safety
  - ii. Inlets and Catch Basins
    - 1. Debris-free inlets for efficient & effective capture of stormwater
    - 2. Blocked systems cause localized flooding and collateral property and environmental damage
  - iii. From Surface to Woods Lake
    - 1. Convey stormwater to Woods Lake through a network of pipes, inlets, and catch basins
- IV. Recognizing the Challenges
  - i. Challenges
    - 1. Sediment build-up, blockages
    - 2. Lack of preventive maintenance
    - 3. Ineffective street sweeping practices
    - 4. Snow plowing and de-icing chemicals
      - a. Understand that community voice might be important in helping the City determine for purposes of Imagine Kalamazoo 2035, what levels of service the community wants with respect to refraining from salt use (or using alternatives) versus reducing road slipperiness
      - b. Understand that salt also deteriorates sewer system pipes
    - 5. Aged & deteriorated components
      - a. Many such municipal systems are very old
    - 6. Impacts from other adjacent infrastructure systems
      - a. Sanitary sewer systems / system breaks were not addressed in the last neighborhood strategic plan, but if there is a water main break and it undermines other structures including storm drain systems, they will also deteriorate and fail.
  - ii. Positive Actions
    - 1. Mitigate sedimentation from water main breaks
    - 2. Prompt pothole patching and invest in routine pavement preventive maintenance
    - 3. Vegetation management in urban city parks
    - 4. Quality street sweeping
    - 5. Stormsewer Preventive Maintenance
  - iii. ODWN Neighborhood Plan – Flooding/Stormwater (See *Imagine Winchell*, pgs. 45-46)
    - 1. Monitor, evaluate, and repair or upgrade infrastructure to prevent flooding and protect lakes, streams, rivers, and wetlands
    - 2. Keep infrastructure clean and clear of debris to help prevent flooding and help preserve surface water bodies
    - 3. Following PEPSPG, create an education program for neighborhood residents/workers to learn about the stormwater systems and how to be good stormwater stewards
      - a. See Citizen Brochure on City of Ashton, WI website as an example
    - 4. Create and install informational signage at stormwater drains
    - 5. Make this area of the City a Zero Runoff Community
- V. Some Examples of Community Help (See *Imagine Winchell*, pgs. 43-44)
  - i. Maintain your property:
    - 1. Effective landscape edging to prevent debris runoff into storm inlets
  - ii. Limit chemical use:
    - 1. Use eco-friendly lawn fertilizer and de-icing chemicals to reduce run-off pollution
  - iii. Get involved:
    - 1. Join neighborhood efforts to reduce storm drain blockages and report maintenance issues to the City
- VI. Potential Natural Alternatives to Achieve Outcomes
  - i. Public Green Spaces
    - 1. Public vegetation areas can naturally absorb and filter stormwater
    - 2. Proper maintenance of green spaces improves both stormwater management and property protection

## ODWNA Association Meeting Minutes



- ii. Biological Stormwater Filtration & Detention
  - 1. Can naturally absorb, filter, and store stormwater to control flooding and mitigate pollutants
    - a. Rain gardens
    - b. Bioswales
    - c. Detention ponds etc.
  
- VII. What questions may we help answer?
  - i. Email contact:
    - 1. Mark.declercq@appliedasset.com
  - ii. Corporate phone:
    - 1. (269) 870-7021
  - iii. Website:
    - 1. appliedasset.com
  
- F. ODWNA Adopt-A-Drain Program (Stephanie Watkins)
  - I. Mi.adopt-a-drain.org
  - II. The project derived from the ODWN Neighborhood Plan – Environmental Responsibility section in which a top goal in the neighborhood was addressing flooding from stormwater.
  - III. The City unfortunately has no dedicated funding source for stormwater maintenance.
  - IV. The Adopt-A-Drain goals are to prevent flooding, help protect Woods Lake and Axtell Creek and other bodies of water from leaves, grass clippings, and other materials that lead to increased phosphorus and nitrates that promote algae growth.
  - V. The ODWNA Board formed a committee and researched possible adopt-a-drain solutions from various sources including
    - i. Michigan Geological Survey program development
    - ii. Self-managed program development
    - iii. City of Kalamazoo/ESRI program development
    - iv. Hamline University's "Adopt-A-Drain" program
  - VI. Hamline University's "Adopt-A-Drain" program was selected
    - i. It was ready to go ("turnkey")
    - ii. The data developed belongs to the neighborhood association, not Hamline University
    - iii. The City of Kalamazoo supported the program at the outset
  - VII. Future Progress
    - i. ODWNA Board of Directors approved paying for the startup costs of the program (initial contract was \$1,228)
      - 1. Future years program costs are currently scheduled to be \$987.79 annually.
    - ii. The City provided guidance on potential safety issues and open communications regarding data
    - iii. The ODWNA's Adopt-A-Drain Committee members are meeting monthly with City staff regarding a potential city-wide program.
  - VIII. Adopt-A-Drain website signup / use
    - i. mi.adopt-a-drain.org
    - ii. Enter your home address
    - iii. Choose a drain you want to adopt (that has not already been adopted by someone else)
    - iv. Create an account (username/password)
    - v. Choose a name for your drain – get creative! (e.g., "Can't Believe It's Not Gutter"; "Mentally Drained"; "Financially Drained"; etc.)
    - vi. Periodically clean your adopted drain(s) and estimate the amount and type of material and enter the information into the website for data collection purposes.
  - IX. So far there are 64 drains adopted by 47 adopters with estimated 510 pounds of debris cleaned/removed from our neighborhood storm drains.
  - X. Donations to help fund the program in future years are gladly accepted by the ODWNA and will go only toward that purpose.
  
- G. Jean Talanda, Water Programs Manager for Water Resources Division of Public Services Dept. for City of Kalamazoo. Geologist.
  - I. The City has an education website: protectyourwater.net
  - II. In her role she spends a lot of wellhead protection grant funds on water resource education: movies, streaming tv, ads, social media, etc.
  - III. For storm water, City is working with MS4's (municipal storm and sanitary sewer systems are separate)
  - IV. There is a lot that goes on behind the scenes in trying to do planning and find funding resources
  - V. When Jean started, there had been 10 years where nothing has been done because there had been a mass exodus of city staff.
  - VI. There was previously no way to track what was being organized, fixed, or anything else.

## ODWNA Association Meeting Minutes



- VII. They found a little bit of grant money for storm water management but most of the funds went to sanitary sewer work.
  - VIII. Jean has spent a lot of the last 7 years realizing that we will never get anywhere without knowing what our storm water assets are and how much it is going to cost to maintain them. Have been developing an asset management program. Can now put in work orders through 3-1-1 and can get the service done as soon as possible. One of the things she does the most is walk residents' property when they are having water in their basements, etc., and looks at grading, plants, and finds things that we can do as private property owners to reduce storm water problems. Grass is not a great natural plant. What you plant and how you grade it is key. "Low Impact Development" is a 200 page book with wonderful ideas that help to reduce problems on your own property. It really leads us to rethink development to mimic nature. James Baker, director of public services, points out that "if you build it, you have to maintain it." That is true for rain gardens as well.
  - IX. Without money for storm water management it is hard to get things done.
  - X. As a compliance manager for storm water, it is a nightmare. If you are required to do something by law but you can't because you don't have funding, it is very difficult. The City sits on the edge of being out of compliance and under some enforcement agreement by the State of Michigan so it is a constant struggle. Getting an asset management plan and doing data mining is so important.
  - XI. Every time a city staff person goes to a storm sewer they are now using an ipad and doing a conditional analysis, a risk analysis, etc., to help with data collection and reporting.
  - XII. This past Monday evening the City Commission approved funding for the City to hire Tetra Tech to evaluate whether it would be possible for the City of Kalamazoo to implement a storm water utility (billing) system to fund stormwater system maintenance.
  - XIII. Concerns that the City has with an Adopt-A-Drain program:
    - i. Safety
    - ii. Training
    - iii. Liability
  - XIV. Questions:
    - i. Foundation For Excellence money for stormwater maintenance?
      - 1. Jean doesn't know why that hasn't been utilized yet. Mark notes that there needs to be a business case established and a strategy with objectives for the stormwater systems and citizen input as far as level of service desired. Be aware that storm water systems are designed to have to back up to slow down water. A substantial portion of the City is in a flood plain! Consider what the different levels of service might look like and the property tax millages / price tags that would be required to achieve each one.
      - 2. Washington DC has released a lot of funding for climate based infrastructure work but the City would be competing with other municipalities and needs objective data to do the work.
      - 3. The County has the ability to do bonds and could leverage the entire county and direct some of those resources to the City (e.g., a Chapter 20 Drain Code Bond).
  - XV. Diana Morton-Thompson encourages everyone to participate in planning for the Imagine Kalamazoo 2035 master plan.
- V. Diana Morton-Thompson, Vice President, adjourned the meeting at 8:23 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Christopher Bovid, ODWNA Secretary