DOWNTOWN GUELPH BUSINESS ASSOCIATION (DGBA)

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Date	Wednesday, September 30, 2026	**Time**	5:01 PM Call to Order
Location	DGBA Boardroom / Zoom Hybrid	**Chair & Secretary**	Chuck Nash (Chair) • Derrick Rutherford (Secretary)

1. ATTENDANCE & CALL TO ORDER

- **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Chair Chuck Nash at 5:01 PM.
- **Roll Call & Attendance:** Conducted by Secretary Derrick Rutherford.
  - **Present (In-Person):** Chuck Nash (Chair), Derrick Rutherford (Secretary), Richard Overland (Treasurer), and Pina Marfisi (Attractions Chair).
  - **Present (Online via Zoom):** Bryan Steele (Vice-Chair), Carly Klassen, Iside Dallan, Kristel Manes, Tom Lammer, and Fay Yachetti.
  - **Special Guests & Staff:** Mike Schreiner (MPP for Guelph), City of Guelph Liaisons, and DGBA Staff.

2. SPECIAL DELEGATION: PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES & COMMUNITY SAFETY

Guest Speaker: Mike Schreiner, MPP for Guelph

- **Downtown Challenges & Provincial Assistance:** The Board addressed ongoing challenges impacting commercial storefronts, including youth stabilization, public substance use, and street safety amid active construction.
- **Supportive Housing vs. Institutional Costs:** Schreiner noted that general emergency relief for businesses is limited, but police operational grant avenues exist. Comparative cost metrics were shared: supportive housing costs approximately $250,000 to build and $40,000/year to operate, compared to correctional facilities at $24 million to build and $162,000/year to operate.
- **Treatment Bed Waitlists:** Waterloo-Wellington-Guelph currently records 2,639 people on waitlists for mental health and addictions treatment. Provincial wait times for dedicated treatment beds average 124 days. Acute psychiatric bed capacity at Guelph General Hospital expanded by 8 beds.
- **Advocacy Next Steps:** Schreiner recommended that the DGBA partner with the Guelph Chamber of Commerce to issue a coordinated joint communication directly to the Premier and key provincial ministers.

3. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE UPDATES

Presented by Chuck Nash (Chair)

- **Street Lighting Infrastructure:** Vendor repairs on Carden Street lighting were completed to satisfactory standards; installation along remaining streets is being expedited.
- **Board Nominations:** Official nomination notices were issued on September 21; all current directors seeking to continue on the Board must submit their nomination forms.
- **Spirit of the Season Preparations:** All 60 newly ordered market huts have been delivered; electrical wiring and lighting installation are underway.
- **Voucher Pilot Program Metrics:**
  - *Distribution:* 1,152 vouchers issued across 35 giveaways at 33 host businesses (plus 15 awarded via media contests).
  - *Redemption:* 393 redeemed to date across 47 participating downtown businesses; 744 outstanding; 129 expired.
  - *Economic Multiplier:* Average spend per voucher is $51.00, more than doubling the $25 voucher face value.
  - *Merchant Response:* Business feedback across downtown has been overwhelmingly positive.

4. TREASURER REPORT: 2026 VARIANCE & 2027 BUDGET REVIEW

Presented by Richard Overland (Treasurer) & Chuck Nash

- **2026 Year-End Variance:** Operating expenses are projected to exceed the original budget by approximately $152,000 due to unbudgeted construction mitigation initiatives. Existing reserve funds are fully sufficient to cover this amount.
- **2027 Budget Allocation:**
  - A $150,000 mitigation reserve line has been allocated for 2027 to cover the potential continuation of the voucher program and extended social media content creation.
  - Budget items include support for two automotive events (Exotic Car Show and Classic Car Show) and stabilized expenses for the *Spirit of the Season* event ($40,000).
- **Review Schedule:** Board members were requested to review the draft budget documents and submit any amendments to the Executive prior to formal budget approval at the October meeting.

5. CITY OF GUELPH UPDATES

Presented by City Liaisons

- **Construction & Winter Shutdown:** Grading and sidewalk installations are progressing. The contractual winter construction shutdown is scheduled for December 18, 2026, with contractors targeting maximum street reopening south of the square.
- **St. George's Square:** Following merchant input, the area is being leveled and opened up with reduced fencing.
- **Free Parking Program ("Free for Three"):** The 3-hour parking program is performing well, with approximately $5,000 remaining from the initial $50,000 budget by end of October. Discussions began on potential funding strategies for November and December.
- **Underground Waste Containers:** In-ground installations are scheduled for Q1 2027.
- **Lower Wyndham Workaround:** Metrolinx permit delays are being managed through an interim engineering bypass.
- **New Central Library & Laneway Activation:** Facility structural construction remains on schedule for year-end completion, with operational opening targeted for 2027. The City Liaison highlighted that the area between the new library and the rear of businesses along Quebec Street (facing Chapel Lane) will become a lively public hub with increased foot traffic, natural surveillance, and cameras; the Board and Attractions team were advised to start brainstorming ways to activate these rear spaces, rear entrances, and laneways in coming years.

6. COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEE (CLC)

Presented by Derrick Rutherford (Secretary / CLC Chair)

- **Strategic Shift:** The committee is transitioning from the public-facing "Good Neighbour Campaign" to an internal, merchant-centered **Downtown Business Network & Safety Guide**.
- **Core Objectives:** Designed specifically for employers and commercial operators to address:
  - An employer's statutory duty of care under Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (s. 25(2)(h)).
  - Frontline staff de-escalation, worker personal safety, and exit protocols.
  - Commercial property rights, clear passage maintenance, and lawful enforcement under the *Trespass to Property Act*.
  - Business-specific reporting matrices to assist police in documenting repeat commercial offenses and harassment.
- **Operational Next Steps:** Finalize branding, visual assets, and conducting a procedural review with Guelph Police Service.

7. ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS COMMITTEE UPDATES

Presented by Pina Marfisi

- **Market Activations:** Recent markets experienced strong visitor turnout and steady foot traffic.
- **Hut Bookings:** Market huts are fully booked for upcoming seasonal events.
- **Communications Coordination:** Recommended that future event sign-up opportunities be sent via standalone dedicated email blasts or highlighted directly in subject lines to maximize business engagement.

8. NEXT MEETING & ADJOURNMENT

- **Next Meeting:** Wednesday, October 28, 2026 at 5:00 PM.
- **Adjournment:** The meeting officially adjourned following the completion of agenda items.

Chuck Nash, Chair

Derrick Rutherford, Secretary