



Board of Directors Meeting Draft Minutes

**Tourmaline Wealth Advisors, 520 Main St
January 6, 2026**

Present: Meggie, Allie, Charles, Billy, Patti, Lori, Risa, Claire, Katherine

The draft minutes from the November 4, 2025 Board Meeting were reviewed and approved. Lori moved to approve, Patti seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

A bid summary sheet for replacing MDM's longtime planter landscaper Judy Ferguson was presented. Charles moved to award the planter landscaping contract to Green Edens, with Allie seconding. The motion was approved unanimously. The Placemaking Committee will consider a plan for reallocating urns in light of the extras on Main Street that are paid for by the Main Chicago TIF.

The Board agreed on officers for 2026:

- Meggie Smith - President
- Billy Lowe - Treasurer
- Patti Piron – Secretary

Katherine went over the preliminary year end financials. We earned a modest amount of extra income (thanks to a TIF reimbursement for Main St planters), and came in under budget on expenses as well. Amy and Katherine will meet with new Treasurer Billy Lowe prior to presenting final year-end financial figures.

With regard to the delay in our levy disbursement, \$52,000 has been drawn from reserves since November, and \$13,000 drawn from Wintrust line of credit to cover January expenses. No timeline has been established for the next disbursement; so the repayment of reserves and line of credit remains pending. Katherine, Billy and Amy will meet and return to the Board with a recommendation.

At the November meeting, Katherine asked about facilitation options for a Strategic Review. At the time, Billy suggested using AI for document review and synthesis. Katherine input four documents into ChatGPT for a preliminary Executive Summary and synthesis, which resulted in suggested new Mission and Vision statements and found the results promising. Note: The selection was limited and only covers findings through 2022. A more comprehensive selection and new surveys are recommended for an official project.

Meggie, Claire, and Risa volunteered to steer this effort. The review will include planning for future

challenges, particularly those related to Chicago Ave, and focus on actionable opportunities beyond targeting NU students.

Katherine and Claire will coordinate to advance the Neighbor Advisory Committee initiative. Goals include leveraging board applicant interest, using the group as a marketing base, and recruiting volunteers for MDM events.

Katherine took the Board through a Holiday Campaign Debrief. She was high on the Family Shopping Days held on December 6 and 20 and happy with the Holiday Train Donation Drives on December 17 and 19. The Sip & Shops on December 10 and 12 were not widely attended and should be rethought. Possible options:

- Reallocating part of our holiday event funds to advertising.
- Possibly shifting funding for an event to January or February for Valentine's Day

Actionable suggestions for 2026: invest in branded sandwich boards with QR codes so people can follow or subscribe, and improve signage for train station alley and Trader Joe's bench seat.

Many placemaking efforts will be happening in 2026 thanks to multiple organizations investing in the district.

Main St Festoon Lighting (funded by the TIF) – Katherine will follow up with all Main St property owners and also with Illuminight.

Dempster St Festoon Lighting (funded by MDM) – we lost a full string on the Dempster St festoon lights. It's unbudgeted, but will need to be replaced. Katherine will follow up with Illuminight.

Directory / Gateway Signage (funded by Evanston Thrives) – installation expected in Spring 2026

MDM Gateway Mural, 1231 Chicago Ave - (Funded by Evanston Thrives.) Next placemaking meeting will talk about design for this mural. Katherine will reconnect with Lea Pinsky at EMAP.

Open Studio Project Mural on Main St: add this to our list for discussion

[Bridge Lighting proposals are in](#) – Placemaking Committee reviewed and asked for these to include MDM colors rather than purples and teals. The colors are programmed in, so they can be changed anytime, even after they're installed.

[OPENED / CLOSED businesses, Open Storefronts worksheet](#) as of 1/4/26. Of note:

- **NOW OPEN:** [Crepe O'Clock](#), 601 Dempster St – Greek pastry & treats shop
- **COMING SOON:** [Cloth & Home](#), 610 Dempster St (moving from downtown Evanston)
- **COMING SOON:** Shapiro Law Firm, 900 Chicago Ave Ste 104-5 (moving from Downtown Evanston)
- **GROUND BROKE:** Dard Factory Apartment Development, 810-383 Custer St (behind the Post Office). Name of the building is "Inside Info Custer"
- **DEMOLITION STARTING SOON:** 801 Main St building

- **CLOSED:** Starbucks on Main St, 525 Main St
- **CLOSED:** Kettelkamp & Kettelkamp, 1315 Sherman Place
- **RUMORS ABOUT, BUT NO CONFIRMATION:** The old subway and the barn doors building have been leased

Adjourn