



**Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
September 3, 2026**

**Present** Dana DeLuca, Zach Ehmann, Valerie Leith, Lynn Lupini (via Zoom), Craig Vaughan, Wilson Xu

**Absent** Qianna Decker, Steve Glista, Jim Ratliff

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:45 pm by Wilson Xu, Board President.

**Approval of Agenda**

Motion to approve agenda approved unanimously.

**Approval of Previous Minutes (August 6, 2026)**

Motion to approve August 6 meeting minutes approved unanimously.

**Financial Report**

Craig provided a financial update and reported no significant changes to the Association's finances. The Board continued its discussion regarding placing a portion of WHNA funds in an interest-bearing account or short-term investment while maintaining sufficient access to funds for upcoming projects, particularly the neighborhood gateway sign.

Options discussed included:

- Certificates of Deposit (CDs)
- Treasury bills
- Higher-yield savings or checking products
- Maintaining funds with Consumers Credit Union versus opening an account with another financial institution such as Advia Credit Union

Craig noted that some available products are earning approximately 4%, depending on current promotions and terms. The Board expressed a preference for keeping funds with Consumers Credit Union if the rate difference with another institution is minimal, particularly to avoid the administrative burden of maintaining additional accounts and passwords.

**Action:** Craig will check current products and rates at Consumers Credit Union and Advia Credit Union and report his recommendation to the Board.

### **National Night Out Reimbursement**

Valerie reported that the City of Kalamazoo will reimburse WHNA \$200 for 2026 National Night Out expenses, an increase from the \$100 reimbursement received the previous year.

Documentation of eligible expenses has been submitted to the City. The reimbursement is expected to be made through direct deposit.

**Action:** Valerie will follow up with the City if the reimbursement is not received within the next several weeks.

### **Annual Corporate Statement**

This item was tabled because Steve was not present.

**Action:** Wilson will follow up with Steve regarding the annual corporate statement.

### **Board Recruitment and Board Member Interest Form**

Lynn raised concerns regarding the current Board Member Application posted on the WHNA website. She noted that some of the language, particularly references to board members contributing their “time, talent and treasure,” could make prospective volunteers feel they are being vetted rather than invited to participate.

The Board discussed the original purpose of the application, which was created to:

- Clearly communicate expectations to prospective board members
- Help individuals understand the commitment before joining
- Establish a consistent process for recruiting and considering new members

Members agreed that expectations should remain clear but that the tone should be more welcoming and appropriate for a volunteer neighborhood association.

### **Proposed Changes**

There was general support for:

- Changing the name from “Board Member Application” to “Board Interest Form”
- Retaining the phrase “You’re Invited to a Seat at the Table”
- Making the form more invitational and less formal
- Reframing financial expectations to emphasize participation in fundraising efforts rather than an expectation of personal financial contributions
- Clearly describing realistic expectations related to time, participation and community engagement

The Board discussed wording used by other neighborhood associations, including language encouraging board members to support organizational fundraising efforts.

Members also discussed the value of retaining some description of expected contributions of skills and experience while ensuring that prospective board members do not feel they must possess specialized professional qualifications.

### **Recruitment and Review Process**

Because WHNA does not have a formal Nominating Committee, the Board discussed establishing a consistent process for prospective board members.

A possible process would include:

1. An interested neighbor submits a Board Interest Form.
2. The Board President notifies the Board that an interest form has been received.
3. One or two board members hold an informal conversation with the prospective member.
4. The prospective member is invited to attend a Board meeting.

5. The Board considers the individual for appointment in accordance with the bylaws. The Board also discussed whether background checks should be part of the process. Members expressed differing opinions regarding whether formal background checks are necessary for a neighborhood board. It was noted that WHNA events sometimes involve children and families and that publicly available information may be considered when appropriate.

No formal policy regarding background checks was adopted.

**Action:** Dana and Lynn will work together to review and revise the current Board Interest Form and bring proposed language back to the Board.

### **Geographic Representation**

The Board also discussed the importance of recruiting members from throughout the Westledge Hill neighborhood, noting that current representation is concentrated in certain areas. Members were encouraged to identify and personally invite neighbors from areas that are currently less represented. The Board discussed ways to make service more appealing by emphasizing that board membership offers residents:

- A platform to develop neighborhood projects and events
- Access to WHNA resources and funding
- Support from board members with community connections and organizational experience
- An opportunity to help shape the future direction and culture of the Association

Members also noted that many interested residents have demanding work and family schedules and may be willing to help with projects without taking responsibility for leading them.

### **Board Size, Elections and Staggered Terms**

Questions were raised regarding:

- The preferred size of the Board
- Whether future elections would be competitive if more candidates are interested than current seats
- How appointments differ from elections
- Whether current members vote when their own terms are expiring
- The need for staggered terms to avoid large-scale turnover at one time

Because Steve has been reviewing potential bylaw language concerning staggered terms, the Board agreed to revisit these questions when he is available.

**Action:** Wilson will ask Steve to provide a plain-language explanation of the relevant bylaw provisions regarding appointments, elections, board size and staggered terms.

### **Virtual Participation and Electronic Voting**

Valerie raised concerns about confusion that can occur when Board discussions and votes take place through long email or text-message threads.

Members agreed that it should always be clear when the Board is:

- Discussing an issue
- Considering a proposal
- Formally voting

The Board agreed that formal electronic votes should occur through email rather than text messaging.

Suggested subject lines include:

**PROPOSAL – (Topic)**

followed by a separate email when the matter is ready for a vote:

**VOTE – (Topic)**

The individual bringing forward the proposal should be responsible for:

- Explaining the proposal
- Setting a deadline for discussion when appropriate
- Responding to questions
- Summarizing discussion
- Clearly stating the final motion or question being voted upon

Board members may respond:

- Yes
- No
- Need more information/discussion

Once discussion is complete, a separate voting thread should be used so that votes can be easily documented for the official minutes. The recent electronic vote regarding the gateway sign was cited as an example of an effective process because the motion, response options and deadline were clearly stated.

**Action:** Wilson will communicate the clarified electronic voting process to board members, including those not present at the meeting.

### **Crane Park Garden Proposal**

Although the garden proposal had initially been removed from the agenda because it was not yet ready for Board action, Valerie provided an informational update. She met with Natalie regarding possible WHNA involvement in maintaining garden beds at Crane Park.

Important considerations include:

- WHNA and participating volunteers may need to register through the City's Adopt-a-Park program (for liability purposes).
- WHNA already carries liability insurance, and clarification is needed regarding how the two requirements interact.
- The City will need to identify which garden beds are currently available.
- Some beds may already be designated for Master Gardeners.
- Kalamazoo in Bloom may have funding or other resources available.
- Maintenance could require work approximately every two weeks.
- Depending on the size of the area, a volunteer team of approximately 10–12 people may be helpful.
- Scout troops and other community volunteers could potentially assist.
- WHNA may want to provide water and light refreshments for volunteers.

The Board agreed that the project would most realistically begin in spring 2027 rather than during the current fall season. Valerie emphasized that she intends to develop a complete proposal before WHNA recruits neighborhood volunteers or publicly promotes the project.

**Action:** Valerie will continue gathering information regarding liability, available garden beds, volunteer expectations, resources and possible funding and will return to the Board with a formal proposal.

### Neighborhood Planning and City Commission Update

Discussion of a formal response or presentation to the Kalamazoo City Commission was postponed. The neighborhood planning committee has not met recently, and additional work remains to incorporate feedback collected during:

- Neighborhood listening sessions
- The neighborhood survey
- National Night Out

#### **National Night Out feedback included:**

- Dot voting on neighborhood priorities
- Written comments
- Safety feedback collected through an interactive map
- Location-specific comments about pedestrian, bicycle and traffic safety

Members noted that the map and location-based data may take considerable time to organize and interpret. The original goal had been to complete the neighborhood vision plan before the end of the year. Given the current schedule, completion may be delayed until late fall or early winter.

**Action:** The planning committee will continue working to schedule a meeting and consolidate the available data.

### KDPS Neighborhood Liaison Invitation

Dana reported that she had invited WHNA's Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety neighborhood community police officers (CPO) to attend a future Board meeting. She subsequently learned that one of the two CPO's listed on the WHNA website resigned approximately six to eight weeks ago and was subsequently removed from the WHNA website. The remaining CPO, Samantha Schmeltz, has not yet responded to the invitation. Board members expressed interest in developing a stronger relationship with the neighborhood CPO so that WHNA can help connect residents with public safety resources. The Board also revisited concerns raised by a resident at the previous meeting regarding issues occurring on her street. Members agreed that addressing concerns brought directly to the Board is an important part of WHNA's role as a conduit between residents and City services. The possibility of holding a future neighborhood conversation or forum with KDPS was discussed.

**Action:** Dana will continue efforts to connect with the neighborhood CPO.

### Annual Meeting and Board Elections

The Board briefly discussed the timing of the next WHNA annual meeting. Members expressed concern that January may not be an ideal time because of winter weather and the general difficulty of attracting attendance during that period. There was interest in considering a spring annual meeting instead. The Board also discussed the possibility of using Google Forms or another electronic platform to facilitate future voting. No final decision regarding the annual meeting date or voting format was made.

### Old Business

#### **Mid-Year Appeal**

Dana reported that the mid-year fundraising appeal has generated approximately \$2,885 to date, with additional employer matching gifts still pending. The cost of producing and mailing the appeal was approximately \$1,600, resulting in positive net revenue for WHNA.

### **Gateway Sign Grant**

Dana reported that she submitted a \$2,500 grant request to the Kalamazoo Community Foundation to help support the neighborhood gateway sign project. The grant deadline had initially appeared to be at the end of August, although more recent information indicates a possible September deadline. The Board will await notification regarding the request.

### **Gateway Signage Project**

Wilson presented a full-scale representation of the proposed Westnedge Hill gateway sign so board members could review the size and proportions of the final design. Members reviewed the design and expressed final support for proceeding. SignWriter has the final artwork and Pantone colors and has indicated that the design can be fabricated. WHNA has already paid the required 50% deposit on the sign. The next step will be for SignWriter to proceed with the permit process and fabrication. The Board hopes the sign can be installed before the ground freezes, ideally by late September or October. Members discussed holding a small community celebration or photo opportunity after installation and inviting local media. Dana agreed to prepare a press release once an installation date is confirmed.

**Action:** Dana will notify SignWriter that WHNA has given final approval to proceed.

**Action:** SignWriter will move forward with permitting and production.

**Action:** Dana will prepare a press release and help coordinate publicity once installation timing is known.

### **Little Free Library**

Wilson reported that he received a quote of approximately \$850 for the concrete pad needed for the proposed Little Free Library. He plans to build the library structure himself at no cost because it will be located on his property. Members discussed whether WHNA should cover the cost of the concrete pad and whether a smaller independent contractor could perform the work at a lower cost. Dana offered to obtain contact information for a contractor who recently completed a smaller concrete project for a neighbor. The Board agreed to place the Little Free Library proposal on the next meeting agenda.

**Action:** Dana will obtain concrete contractor information for Wilson.

**Action:** The Little Free Library project and proposed WHNA contribution will be added to the next Board meeting agenda.

### **New Business**

No additional new business was presented.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:48 p.m. by Wilson Xu, President.

[The next meeting will be held on Thursday, October 1 at 5:45 pm at the YMCA on Maple Street.](#)

Minutes provided by Dana DeLuca, Secretary