

Bloomington Urban Enterprise Association

Board Meeting Minutes

March 11, 2026 | 12:05 p.m. | McCloskey Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

- Jane Kupersmith, BUEA
- Virginia Githiri, BUEA
- Heather Robinson, BUEA
- Katarina Koch, BUEA
- Kate Rosenberger, BUEA
- Michael Hover, BUEA
- Felisa Spinelli, BUEA (remote)

STAFF AND OTHERS PRESENT

- De de la Rosa, Economic & Sustainable Development (staff liaison)
- Taegan Garner, staff
- Cheryl Gilliland, Deputy Controller, City Controller's Office
- **Guest:** Eric Ost, member of the public

Absent: Brad Wisler (scheduling conflict)

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

The meeting was called to order. The board welcomed its newest member, Katarina Koch, who fills the C3 position previously held by Mary Morgan. Koch introduced herself: she relocated to Bloomington over 12 years ago, left for approximately 7 years, and returned in 2023. She currently serves as Executive Director of the Lotus Education Arts Foundation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES — DECEMBER 2025 AND FEBRUARY 2026

Staff noted that the December 2025 minutes required re-approval due to an error in the original recording and notes in which motion and second language was omitted. The board agreed to consider approval of the December 2025 and February 2026 minutes together.

No corrections or comments were raised on either set of minutes.

Motion to approve the December 2025 and February 2026 meeting minutes. Motion carried by roll call vote (all members present voting yes).

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Staff reported on the following:

- **EZID Reminders and Invoices:** Outreach to zone businesses will be sent the following week. Staff confirmed that DMA will continue to represent Novo Nordisk.
- **Board Vacancies:** Board members were reminded to submit recommendations for remaining open seats to staff or directly to Jennifer Crossley in the Clerk's Office.
- **Entrepreneurship Support Organization (ESO) Convening:** Staff participated in a recent ESO meeting with representatives from the Mill, SBDC, and the Chamber of Commerce. Discussion focused on organizational roles and shared resources.
- Key outcomes and initiatives from the ESO meeting include:
 - o A rotating resource desk at the Mill, open to the public and entrepreneurs, where staff from each organization will take turns providing information about available programs and services.
 - o A database of resources compiled by former Amplify small business staff, to be developed into a resource guide and eventually used for ecosystem mapping. BUEA will be included in the database.

FINANCIAL REPORTS — Q4 2025 / YEAR-END

Deputy Controller Cheryl Gilliland presented the Q4 2025 financial reports, including a budget-to-actual summary and year-end balance sheet. Key highlights:

- **Revenue:** BUEA exceeded budgeted income by approximately 83%, in part due to back-payments received during the year.
- **Expenses:** BUEA spent 61% of its budgeted expenses, an improvement from 48% in 2024, reflecting more realistic budget-setting and stronger program delivery.
- **Grant Expenditures:** Across all grant categories, BUEA spent approximately 56% of budgeted grant funds. Staff noted that while 100% utilization is the goal, an average of 50% across programs is considered a strong benchmark given the volume of funds and variation in program demand.
- **Management Fee Correction:** The administration category shows a 14% overage due to a \$50,000 check written to the City of Bloomington for internal management that was inadvertently deposited back into the BUEA account rather than the City account. A corrected payment was issued in January 2026, which will appear as a negative \$50,000 in Q1 2026 reporting. The net income for 2025 is therefore approximately \$500,000 higher than shown, and the overage in the admin category is not a true overage.
- **PALS Loan Balance:** The year-end balance sheet still reflects the PALS loan balance, which the board authorized for forgiveness following the summer 2023 tornado. Because the correction did not occur until after year-end and forgiveness funds are already budgeted in 2026, the board agreed to reflect the adjustment in 2026 reporting rather than make a prior-year adjustment.

Motion to approve the Q4 2025 financial reports as presented, with the notation that the management fee overage reflects a corrected accounting error and does not represent an actual overspend. Motion carried by roll call vote (all members present voting yes).

BUSINESS BUILDING IMPROVEMENT GRANT APPLICATION — WONDERLAB

Staff disclosed serving on the WonderLab board in a non-voting capacity and confirmed with legal counsel that presenting the staff report does not constitute a conflict of interest, as staff is not voting and is acting in a staff liaison role, not as a board representative.

Project Summary: WonderLab applied for a Business Building Improvement Grant to fund the replacement of windows in its facility, which are original to the building. WonderLab has received BUEA grants previously but has not previously applied for this specific grant program.

Grant Request: \$4,094.16 (50% match required)

Total Project Cost: \$8,188.31

- **Windows (City Glass):** \$7,793.11
- **Staff labor (installation-day operations):** \$395.20

Discussion — Staff Labor Costs: The board discussed the inclusion of \$395.20 in WonderLab staff time, representing approximately 16 hours of labor to clear the gift shop and be present on-site during the installation. The installation is scheduled for a Monday, when WonderLab is closed and staff would not ordinarily be working. The board noted this level of detail and justification has not typically appeared in prior applications, where labor costs are generally lumped under a single line item.

The board reached general consensus that the staff labor cost is reasonable and appropriate in this case given the following factors:

- The installation requires the gift shop to be cleared of merchandise, which is work specific and necessary to the project.
- The installation is scheduled on a Monday, when the museum is closed, meaning staff are being called in outside their normal schedule.
- WonderLab documented the rationale clearly in their application narrative.

The board also discussed whether to add explicit language to grant guidelines addressing staff labor eligibility. Views included:

- Adding a cap on reimbursable staff time (e.g., a dollar or percentage limit).
- Allowing staff time to count toward the applicant's required match rather than as a direct grant expense.
- Deferring any policy language pending further experience with such requests, to avoid creating an easy avenue for larger or less justified claims.
- Ensuring that any future eligibility language is applied consistently across for-profit and nonprofit applicants.

Staff noted that the Business Building Improvement Grant does not currently include a list of ineligible expenses (unlike the Minor Improvement grant, which does), and flagged this as an item to address in future guideline updates.

Action Item: Staff will develop a recommendation for the board on how to address staff labor costs in grant guidelines, including possible cap language or in-kind match treatment.

Motion to approve the WonderLab Business Building Improvement Grant application in the amount of \$4,094.16, including the staff labor component as presented. Motion carried by roll call vote (all members present voting yes).