Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA)
97 N Broad St, Hillsdale, MI 49242
(517) 437-6449
tifa@cityofhillsdale.org

MINUTES
Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA)
July 21, 2026, 7:30 AM
Council Chambers, Hillsdale City Hall

I. **Call to Order**
  a. Members Present: Andrew Gelzer (Chair), Chris Bahash, Cindy Bieszk, Darin Spieth (arrived at 7:59 AM), James Brandon, Kevin Conant, Luke Robson, Mary Margaret Spiteri, Mike Clark, and R. Gregory Stuchell
  b. Others Present: Jack McLain, Mary Wolfram (Friends of the Dawn), Mayor Scott Sessions, and Olivia Smith (Zoning Administrator and TIFA Secretary/Treasurer)
  c. Members Absent: Margaret Braman (excused), Chris Sumnar (excused), and Rachel Doty (excused)

II. **Consent Agenda**
  a. Motion by Clark to approve the consent agenda as presented. Second Robson. 10-0. Motion passed.

III. **Public Comment – Agenda Items**
  a. None

IV. **Communications**
  a. None

V. **Committee Reports**
  a. Beautification Committee
    i. None
  b. Program Review Committee
    i. Bieszk provided a brief background on the projects and the reasons for the recommendations of the committee.
    ii. JT26-001 – Motion by the Program Review Committee to award $3,091. Second Brandon. 10-0. Motion passed
    iii. JT26-002 – Motion by the Program Review Committee to award $4,500. Second Bahash. 10-0. Motion passed.
  c. Review Committee
    i. Continuing review of *Rules and Procedures.* Will schedule next meeting near the end of this meeting during Roundtable.
  d. Targeted Development
    i. Dawn Theater Operator Updated – In negotiations with two (2) applicants: Friends of the Dawn and Jason Walters & Associates. Hudson Entertainment has dropped out.
      1. Brandon – Seven (7) requests for the venue have come in. He then described those requests and their target time. What is the timeline for naming a new operator?

a. Bahash – Estimate October 1
b. Brandon suggested moving forward with The Taildraggers (September 12) and Jim Malcolm (October 17).
c. Wolfram – All requested events are open to public. Friends are struggling with the dynamic of fundraising for the Dawn Theater and then denying requests to use the venue.
d. Bahash – Potential new operator would like to do construction on the building. Not opposed to the proposed events. Need more information on the mechanics of the events before considered by the Targeted Development Committee.
e. Wolfram voiced concerns on not approving the Nutcracker event as they applied and were granted Hillsdale County Community Foundation grants for this specific recurring event.
f. Motion by Gelzer to approve The Taildraggers (September 12) and the Nutcracker (December 6). Second Conant. 10-0. Motion passed.

2. Dawn Theater Maintenance Update
    a. Continued conversation regarding water damage under stage.
    b. Gelzer introduced $600 quote from Campbell Electric for two (2) electrical outlets under the stage in relation to water damage mitigation.
        i. Motion from Targeted Development Committee to approve the quote. Second Bieszk. 10-0. Motion passed.
    c. Gelzer introduced $3,000 quote from George Stump regarding. Approved at last full Board meeting (06/02/2026). Contractor requesting check for 50% down.
        i. Motion by Gelzer to approve a check for 50% down following an on-site meeting with the contractor and a few representatives of the TIFA Board. Second Bieszk. 10-0. Motion passed.

VI. Old Business

a. Liquor License Update
    i. Gelzer – Moving license into escrow. Payment made to Keefer House Hotel LLC fulfilling the last portion of the written agreement with Keefer.
b. Utility Billing Update – Dawn Theater
    i. Rate charge has been corrected. Credit for overpayment.

VII. New Business

a. None

VIII. Economic Development Update/Board Round Table

a. Gelzer – Members of TIFA took a tour of the Keefer Hotel. Project has advanced significantly. Provided details. Received an email from Brant Cohen on behalf of CL Real Estate Development regarding the promissory note.
    i. Discussion took place regarding what fulfilled the promissory note.
    ii. Will ask Keefer representatives to come to the next meeting to address the note.

b. Robson – St. Joe's Pizza is closing. No new location is confirmed at this time. Reach out if restaurateur is looking for a location and Class C liquor license.
c. Gelzer – 37 McCollum St is complete and all units are rented.
d. Gelzer – Inquired if Share the Warmth project was approved. Advised TIFA members that reside on City Council or other boards that he believes this approval should be a one-off event. Approval process be reconsidered. Not part of TIFA district, but does not want continued breakup of the economic corridor.
    i. Smith confirmed Planning Commission approval.
e. Review Committee members present scheduled their next meeting for Wednesday, July 29, 2026 at 4:30 PM.

IX. General Public Comment

a. Wolfram – (comment not representing Friends of the Dawn) – Friends submitted a great proposal, but would love to work with a competent private operator. Regarding date requests – Trying to honor the wishes of the Targeted Development during this transitional period. Not seeking out events. Willing to turn over scheduled events to new operator. Concerns regarding business-specific alterations to the Dawn that are/were proposed by other applicants.
b. Mayor Scott Sessions – Thanked the Board members for serving

X. Adjourned at 8:40 AM

a. Motion by Conant to adjourn. Second Brandon. 10-0. Motion passed.
b. Next Meeting: Tuesday, August 18, 2026 at 6:00 PM (2nd Informational Meeting)