



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

MINUTES
TIFA Targeted Development Committee
January 8, 2026, 5:30 PM
Conference Room (2nd Floor), Hillsdale City Hall

I. Call to Order at 5:30 PM

- a. Members Present: Chair Chris Bahash, Kevin Conant, Andrew Gelzer, Luke Robson
- b. Members Absent: None
- c. Others Present: Mary Wolfram (Friends of the Dawn), Jack McLain, and Olivia Smith (Zoning Administrator)

II. Old Business

- a. Dawn Theater Management Proposal – Continued
 - i. Discussion regarding background and experience of each applicant
 - 1. Venue Management Team
 - a. Conant – Hudson is an experienced promotor but in poor health. Osmun is an experience DJ. Addressed RFP standards, but can they afford it? Hoping to bring diverse entertainment.
 - b. Gelzer – Goal of Dawn should be to bring diverse entertainment with original community component. Needs to be profitable and sustainable.
 - c. Bahash – has experience. Only addressed half of what TIFA is requiring. Money is an important aspect.
 - 2. North Point Events
 - a. Gelzer – Had extensive conversation with applicant team. They possess relevant experience. Applicant expressed that they do not desire to invest a ton of initial capital. Desire to be part-time to begin. Hope to coordinate with Friends of the Dawn for long-term investment into the property. Gelzer expressed that they were energetic and enthusiastic about the position.
 - b. Conant – Do they have local ties?
 - i. Gelzer confirmed for Committee members that they were employed and/or living locally. They were very prompt to respond to any communication with them.

3. Dena Rushton
 - a. Gelzer has not yet had the opportunity to speak directly with her.
 - b. Unclear on her current employment status
 - c. Bahash – concerns on her expressing “interest in the Director position”
 - i. Gelzer suggested reaching out for clarification
 - ii. Gelzer expressed to applicants he was able to speak with that there is not immense pressure or a hard deadline, but that the Board is moving with purpose.
 - iii. Bahash – Need for NDA in process?
 1. Committee requested that Smith verify with legal about OMA standards for closed meeting conversations with applicants as they move forward.
 - iv. Replace RFP language with “Application”
 - v. Gelzer asked Committee members about spending additional money on advertisement.
 1. Robson suggested that the Committee/Board wait until further communication with applicants has occurred and all local options have been exhausted.
 - vi. Gelzer requested that City Staff place manager advertisement sign be placed on City Facebook page.
 - vii. Motion by Robson to direct Smith to email applicants, include RFP document as a guideline for responses, and provide applicants with a 2 week deadline. Second Conant. Motion carried.
 - viii. Gelzer asked Committee when they believed other interest parties (Friends & DTGB) should be involved in the process.
 1. Bahash asked for that to be on agenda for January 22, 2026 meeting

III. Public Comment

- a. Wolfram – Thanked Committee for handling the managerial search. Friends could advertise on their website and Facebook page if needed. Event Planner Association could advertise to a more specific audience. Believed that profit center for the theater is to serve as a wedding venue.
- b. McLain – Asked when next full TIFA Board meeting was. Requested that the Committee meet prior to the full Board meeting so that they could update the Board on the search. Regarding weddings at the Dawn, believes that the Dawn is too small. No place to mingle and park.

IV. Adjournment

- a. Motion by Gelzer to adjourn the meeting. Second by Conant. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:19 PM.

Letter of Intent to Assume Management and Operational Oversight of The Dawn Theater

To: The Board of Directors / City of Hillsdale TIFA

From: Ryan Hudson and Kory Osmun

Date: November 10th, 2025

Subject: Proposal for Management and Revitalization of The Dawn Theater

Dear Members of the Board,

We respectfully submit this Letter of Intent to assume management and operational responsibility for The Dawn Theater in downtown Hillsdale. Our intent is to restore this historic landmark into a sustainable, multi-purpose performance and event venue that serves as both a cultural cornerstone and a key driver of economic and community development.

1. Vision and Commitment

The Dawn Theater possesses immense potential to become the premier mid-sized (approximately 300-capacity) entertainment and event venue in the region. Our vision is to re-establish The Dawn as a centerpiece of downtown Hillsdale—one that attracts visitors, supports local businesses, and offers a versatile space for both public and private events.

Our management approach will balance community accessibility with financial sustainability, ensuring that The Dawn remains active, inclusive, and profitable.

2. Infrastructure and Facility Improvements

We have identified several key areas requiring immediate attention to optimize safety, efficiency, and functionality:

Bar Area Configuration:

The current bar layout is overly restrictive and congested, leading to traffic flow issues and blocked exits during large events. We propose a full reconfiguration to improve service efficiency, customer movement, and ADA accessibility.

Lighting and Sound Systems:

A permanent, professionally installed lighting and sound system will enhance show quality, reduce recurring event costs, and add long-term asset value to the facility. The system should be “flown” (suspended) to maintain clear stage space and ensure optimal coverage throughout the room.

Side Stage / Load-In Access:

We propose creating a direct, unobtrusive load-in path for performers and production teams. This will minimize disruption to guests and ensure safer, more professional stage operations. Reinstallation of stage curtains and a projection screen will also improve visual aesthetics and functional flexibility for various event types.

Backstage Facilities:

If the adjoining building remains part of the theater property, we recommend retrofitting the rear section—complete with restroom access—into a dedicated backstage and green room area for touring artists. This addition will elevate the venue’s profile among professional acts and touring agencies.

3. Programming and Community Integration

Under our management, The Dawn Theater will serve as a multi-use, community-centered facility suitable for:

- Live music, theater, and comedy performances
- Weddings, reunions, and private celebrations
- Corporate and civic events
- Film screenings and cultural showcases

We will prioritize affordable rental options for Hillsdale residents and local businesses to ensure continued community access while maintaining a calendar of high-quality, revenue-generating events that sustain operations year-round.

4. Strategic Partnerships and Industry Expertise

Our management group brings over 30 years of collective experience in entertainment production, venue operations, and artist relations. Our team has previously managed both The Dawn Theater (formerly The Roxy) and The Underground, achieving significant growth, multiple sold-out shows, and positive recognition within the touring community.

Through our existing partnerships, The Dawn will gain direct access to major national booking agencies, eliminating intermediary costs and ensuring competitive artist rates. Additionally, we will implement an in-house digital ticketing system with online sales and on-demand printing capabilities to streamline customer engagement and reporting.

We are also aligned with a professional entertainment marketing agency specializing in business-to-business promotions and regional partnerships. This collaboration will ensure that The Dawn—and downtown Hillsdale as a whole—receives strategic, high-visibility promotion across Michigan and surrounding markets.

5. Next Steps and Confidentiality

Our team is eager to collaborate with the City and the Board to further outline operational goals, timelines, and investment needs. We respectfully request a formal meeting to present a detailed management plan, including budgetary projections and phased implementation strategies.

Given the proprietary nature of our professional relationships, booking networks, and operational processes, we ask that in-depth discussions of these elements occur once management selection is finalized. This ensures that the unique value we bring to The Dawn remains directly tied to a committed partnership with the City and its stakeholders.

6. Conclusion

We believe The Dawn Theater can once again become a vibrant hub of culture, entertainment, and community pride for Hillsdale. With thoughtful management, modernized infrastructure, and experienced leadership, this historic venue can attract consistent audiences, generate meaningful economic activity, and serve as a lasting point of local distinction.

We appreciate your consideration of this proposal and look forward to the opportunity to collaborate in bringing new life and purpose to The Dawn Theater.

Respectfully submitted,

Ryan Hudson

Kory Osmun

Venue management team

517-320-1956 (Kory)

517-206-4236 (Ryan)

Klosmun@gmail.com

NORTH POINT EVENTS, LLC

William Daguanno & Hannah Rowe



December 17, 2025

Tax Increment Financing Authority
Dawn Theater Governance Board
The City of Hillsdale
97 N Broad Street
Hillsdale, MI 49242

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing to formally express our interest in managing the Dawn Theater. We recognize the Dawn as not only an event venue, but as a historic cornerstone of the community. With our combined experience in the hospitality and live event industries, we bring practical operational expertise along with a strong understanding of public-facing venues.

William Daguanno is a recent resident of Hillsdale County and brings over 10 years of experience with live events and production. He currently serves on the board of a community theater in Dearborn, Michigan, and is deeply committed to fostering community engagement.

Hannah Rowe has been in the hospitality industry for over 13 years, with a background in food and beverage service, sales, and finance administration. As a long-term resident of Hillsdale County, Hannah cares deeply for the community and wants to see vitality restored to a venue that holds so many cherished memories for its members.

We are committed to honoring the Dawn Theater's historic character while revitalizing the space in ways that ensure its relevance, accessibility, and sustainability for years to come. We would like to schedule a meeting to discuss the specifics further, with the intention of submitting a formal proposal.

Sincerely,

William Daguanno
Hannah Rowe

North Point Events, LLC
northpointevents915@gmail.com
William: 517-320-4726
Hannah: 517-610-3566

Dena E. Rushton

1431 W. Mosherville Rd. | Jonesville, MI 49250

517-607-8449 | dena_foulk@yahoo.com

December 18, 2025

Olivia Smith

City of Hillsdale

97 N. Broad St.

Hillsdale, MI 49242

Dear Olivia Smith,

I am writing to formally express my interest in the Director position for the Dawn Theater. As a local resident with a deep commitment to the revitalization of downtown Hillsdale, I am eager to leverage my extensive background in customer relations and operational excellence to ensure “The Dawn” remains a premier destination for our community.

The Dawn Theater is more than just a venue; it is a cornerstone of Hillsdale’s cultural identity. I have followed the theater’s progress with great interest and am impressed by the diverse programming and high standard of service already in place. My professional background is built on a foundation of creating exceptional experiences for clients and patrons. I possess the organizational skills necessary to manage complex event schedules and the interpersonal skills required to build lasting partnerships with local businesses, performers, and residents.

My goal as Director would be to build upon the theater’s current momentum by:

- **Enhancing Patron Engagement:** Ensuring every guest receives a high-tier experience that encourages repeat visits.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Applying my background in client relations to streamline event coordination and community outreach.
- **Local Advocacy:** Promoting the theater as a catalyst for downtown economic growth.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss how my local insights and professional expertise can contribute to the continued success of the Dawn Theater and the City of Hillsdale. Thank you for your time and for your dedication to our city's landmarks.

Respectfully,

Dena E. Rushton