

SANKOFA SQUARE

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETING MINUTES MINUTES #2

Held at City Hall at 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, Ontario and virtually
on April 10, 2025 at 9:00 a.m.

Present:	Gideon Arthurs Aderonke Akande Carrie Ashfield Chris Hodgson Kim McDonald Councillor Chris Moise Emily Schimp Erin Smyth Samantha Summers	-	Chair (joined at 9:35 a.m.)
By Invitation:	Julian Sleath Anna Sebert Emily Atherton Bibiana Rico Marnie Grona Nicole Guy	-	General Manager, Sankofa Square Manager of Operations, Sankofa Square Manager of Events & Outreach, Sankofa Zoom Meeting Host, Sankofa Square Marketing & Communications, Sankofa Recording Secretary, MinuteTakers Inc.
Guests:	Tyler Johnson Kashif Khan Melanie Dugard Nadia Galati	-	City of Toronto, Ward 13 Chief of Staff Auditor, Doane Grant Thornton LLP Auditor, Doane Grant Thornton LLP Principal, SAFFY
Regrets:	Jeffrey Dea Ian Gemmell Irene Gryniewski Inspector Matt Moyer Simon Wong		

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Proper notice having been given and there being a quorum present, G. Arthurs called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and presided as Chair.

2. **OPENING REMARKS**

- (a) *Chair's Opening Remarks* – All present were welcomed to the meeting.
- (b) *Disclosure of Conflict of Interest* – No conflicts of interest were declared. J. Sleath clarified that Management has confirmed that affiliation with BIAs does not constitute a conflict.

- (c) *Land Acknowledgment* – G. Arthurs read the Indigenous Land Acknowledgement and the African Ancestral Acknowledgement as follows:

“As we gather in the heart of Tkaronto, as this place was traditionally called, we acknowledge the original stewards of this land – the Wendat, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinabek First Nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit. Tkaronto is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis people from across Turtle Island. We invite you to join us in honouring and celebrating their rich past, present and future.”

“As we gather for Sankofa Square, we acknowledge all Treaty peoples – including those who came here as settlers, migrants either in this generation or in generations past – and those of African descent who came here involuntarily through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and Slavery. Please join us in honouring these ancestors and their spirit of resilience, learning from the past to build a better future, together.”

3. **APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The Chair asked for any errors or omissions in the minutes of the Board meeting of February 13, 2025 that were circulated previously for review.

On Motion by S. Summers and seconded by C. Hodgson it was,
RESOLVED THAT the minutes of the Sankofa Square Board of Management meeting #1 dated February 13, 2025 be accepted as presented. Motion carried.

4. **GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT**

J. Sleath provided highlights from the written report as follows:

- (a) *Signage* – Variances to the signage will be discussed by the committee later today, which will affect Sankofa's signage permissions. Negotiations with a potential sponsor are being undertaken in good faith with hope that these variances will be approved to permit the desired signage to be used in the future.
- (b) *Banking Update* – The bank account and credit cards are being transferred from CIBC to the Bank of Nova Scotia.
- (c) *Staffing Update* – The Board was informed that A. Sebert has been hired by the City of Toronto as an advisor to the BIAs and will be departing Sankofa Square's management team. A. Sebert was thanked for her work with Sankofa Square.

5. **STAFF REPORTS**

5.1 **Marketing and Communications** – M. Grona provided a brief overview of the circulated written report, with highlights as follows:

- (a) *Branding Development Update* – Community consultations regarding brand identity are currently in progress. A package outlining the findings and recommendations will be provided to the Board once this work is complete.

5.2 **Operations** – A. Sebert provided a brief overview of the circulated written report, with highlights as follows:

- (a) *Update* – Fountains and washroom overdose detection sensors will be started up within the next few weeks.

5.3 **Events** – E. Atherton provided a report, with the following discussion highlights:

- (a) *Events* – An update on recent and upcoming events was provided for information. It was noted that fewer commercial clients are coming forward, likely due to the tariffs and counter-tariffs.
- (b) *Working Groups* – The draft Terms of Reference (TOR) for the three new working groups have been circulated to all members and feedback is pending; if no concerns are raised, the TORs will be enacted as presented. Potential candidates for each group are being considered.

6. **EVENT PLANNING**

N. Galati presented the SAFFY Events Report, with highlights of discussion noted as follows:

- (a) *Overview* – Key findings and recommendations arising from the Event Permit Pricing Study were presented. Six comparable venues were considered as part of this study, to look at financial structures, security models, financial relationships, suppliers, and event opportunities.
 - i) Financial Models – A tiered pricing structure is standard for community and commercial clients. Non-profit clients are often offered reduced fees.
 - ii) Event Management – Staff presence varies by size of venues and events, but mandatory risk assessments are common.
 - iii) Comparative Highlights – Fees at similar venues were provided as examples.

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- (a...iv) Financial Insights – Sankofa generated \$500,000 in event revenue in 2024, but this is expected to decrease to \$350,000 for 2025.
- v) Operational and Security Insights – It was noted that Sankofa tailors its security plans to event risk, and an on-site coordinator is present at all events.
- vi) Supplier Practices and Community Support – Some variation was noted in how other venues manage risk assessment and safety measures. Many venues use exclusive vendors for key services and offer in-kind rentals with reduced mark-ups for community events.
- (b) *Event and Permit Fee Policy* – The draft policy was presented for review. This policy includes permit rates, service fees, insurance, and vendor charges using a three-tier system. Community, commercial, and corporate commercial clients will pay different fees based on a sliding scale. Additional fees, services, and surcharges may also apply, with reduced costs for non-profits.
- (c) *Challenges* – Concerns were noted about financial model feasibility and health and safety risks.
- (d) *Recommendations* – Recommendations arising from SAFFY's assessment and report were provided as follows:
- i) Strategic Planning – The SAFFY report should be used to inform strategic planning going forward.
- ii) Policy Updates – The event and permit policy should be finalized to align with the strategic plan, once complete.
- iii) Working Group – It is recommended to launch a cross-departmental working group with other City event spaces to align all relevant parties on strategic initiatives.
- (e) *Strategic Discussion* – Strategic questions were provided for Board consideration, including whether Sankofa should align more with City-run spaces or stay distinct, whether TPA parking revenue could be leveraged to support Sankofa events, and what partnerships or philanthropy could be pursued to generate additional revenue. A member inquired regarding operating cost offsets for Sankofa as compared to other venues, and regarding the level of use in 2024; N. Galati suggested that some work on scaling comparables is needed to ensure the comparisons are fair and accurate. A question was also raised about the impact of unionized spaces. Further discussion is required regarding funding sources to ensure the Square is adequately supported.

N. Galati was thanked and excused at 9:35 a.m.

7. FINANCIAL MATTERS

K. Khan and M. Dugard presented the 2024 audit, with highlights as follows:

- (a) *Status Update* – The audit is substantially complete, pending Board approval and receipt of the signed management letter. Various risks, including potential revenue fraud, accounting manipulation, etc. were considered during the audit and no concerns were raised. Confirmation of independence was provided by the Auditor.
- (b) *Audit Results* – Financial assets at year-end totalled \$985,770, compared to \$1.43 million in the previous year. One adjustment was made during the audit to reflect the surplus repayable to the City of Toronto in the amount of \$230,898. Additional revenues were noted relating to the change of name, with a correlated decrease in event revenues.
- (c) *Surplus* – A member inquired regarding the surplus being returned to the City and expressed concern regarding the fees being charged to vendors; it was suggested that some of this surplus be used to subsidize or offset vendor payments. J. Sleath clarified that the surplus typically is a result of sales figures from event activations near the end of the year, and minimizing the surplus would require careful forecasting. However, the new pilot fee policy to reduce fees and mark-ups for certain clients may have an impact on this issue. It should also be reminded that those surpluses are intended to be put by the City into a reserve fund for Sankofa's use, which does not appear to have been done.

On Motion by S. Summers and seconded by C. Moise it was,

RESOLVED THAT the Sankofa Square Audited Financial Statements for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2024 as prepared by Doane Grant Thornton LLP be accepted as presented. Motion carried.

K. Khan and M. Dugard were thanked and excused at 9:53 a.m.

8. STRATEGIC PLANNING

J. Sleath and G. Arthurs provided an update on strategic planning and next steps, with highlights as follows:

- (a) *Request for Proposal (RFP) Review* – A summary of the RFP submissions was provided for review and it was noted that the working group recommends proceeding with Belleville Placemaking, QdSi & ccxa. The Board authorized the management team and working group to negotiate the financials and other agreement considerations with the successful proponent.

9. **ADJOURNMENT FOR CLOSED SESSION**

- 9.1 **Adjournment of Regular Meeting** – The Chair requested a motion to adjourn the regular portion of the meeting and move to confidential matters.

On Motion by C. Hodgson and seconded by E. Smyth it was,
RESOLVED THAT the regular portion of the meeting be adjourned to allow the Board to meet in a closed session to discuss matters dealing with the security of the Board's property and other confidential matters. Motion carried.

The regular portion of the meeting was adjourned at 9:57 a.m. for a closed session.

- 9.2 **Reopening of Regular Meeting** – After the closed session, the Chair requested a motion to reopen the regular portion of the meeting.

On Motion by S. Summers and seconded by C. Moise it was,
RESOLVED THAT the regular portion of the meeting be reopened. Motion carried.

The regular meeting then resumed at 10:10 a.m.

10. **OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was raised for discussion.

11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next regular meeting of the Board will be held at City Hall at 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, Ontario and virtually on May 15, 2025 at 9:00 a.m.

12. **TERMINATION**

There being no further business, the meeting was concluded at 10:11 a.m. on motion by C. Moise and seconded by C. Hodgson.

Gideon Arthurs
Gideon Arthurs (Jun 18, 2025 10:44 EDT)
Chair

Date: May 15- -2025

Kimberly McDonald
Kimberly McDonald (Jun 18, 2025 19:34 EDT)

Secretary

Date: May 15 - 2025

Julian Sleath

General Manager

Date: May 15 - 2025










April 10-2025-Sankofa Square BOD

Final Audit Report

2025-06-18

Created:	2025-06-18
By:	Julian Sleath (julian@sankofasquare.ca)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAgwh-rkvazKuSVtheOwX2coWxdJdl7w7t

"April 10-2025-Sankofa Square BOD" History

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