

**SANKOFA SQUARE**  
**BOARD OF MANAGEMENT MEETING MINUTES**  
**MINUTES #2**

Held at City Hall at 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, Ontario and virtually  
on April 27, 2026 at 3:30 p.m.

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|----------------|------------------------|---|---------------------------------------------------|
| Present:       | Gideon Arthurs         | - | Chair                                             |
|                | Karen Carter           |   | (proxy for A. Akande)                             |
|                | Scott Barrett          |   |                                                   |
|                | Adamo Donatucci        |   |                                                   |
|                | Chris Hodgson          |   |                                                   |
|                | Kim McDonald           |   |                                                   |
|                | Councillor Chris Moise |   |                                                   |
|                | Emily Schimp           |   |                                                   |
|                | Erin Smyth             |   |                                                   |
|                | Samantha Summers       |   |                                                   |
|                | Simon Wong             |   |                                                   |
| By Invitation: | Marnie Grona           | - | Interim General Manager, Sankofa                  |
|                | Taylor Balint          | - | Manager of Operations, Sankofa Square             |
|                | Emily Atherton         | - | Manager of Events & Outreach, Sankofa             |
|                | Fayez Bilal            | - | Manager of Community Safety, Sankofa              |
|                | Bibiana Rico           | - | Zoom Meeting Host, Sankofa Square                 |
|                | Nicole Guy             | - | Recording Secretary, MinuteTakers Inc.            |
| Guests:        | Allyson Amster         | - | Solicitor, Municipal Law Section, City of Toronto |
|                | Melanie Dugard         | - | Doane Grant Thornton LLP                          |
|                | Kashif Khan            | - | Doane Grant Thornton LLP                          |
|                | Melanie Zerker         | - | Doane Grant Thornton LLP                          |
| Regrets:       | Carrie Ashfield        |   |                                                   |

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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Proper notice having been given and there being a quorum present, G. Arthurs called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.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.
- (c) *Land Acknowledgment* – G. Arthurs read the Indigenous Land Acknowledgement and the African Ancestral Acknowledgement as follows:

- (c...) *“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 12, 2026 that were circulated previously for review.

On Motion by S. Summers and seconded by E. Schimp it was,

**RESOLVED THAT the minutes of the Sankofa Square Board of Management meeting #1 dated February 12, 2026 be accepted as presented.** Motion carried.

### 4. **FINANCIAL MATTERS**

Melanie Dugard, Melanie Zerker, and Kashif Khan of Doane Grant Thornton LLP were welcomed to the meeting to present the 2025 Audited Financial Statements. Highlights were noted as follows:

- (a) *Update and Audit Procedure* – The audit is substantially complete, pending receipt of the signed management representation letter and Board approval. Potential audit risks tested during the audit process were noted for information, with no concerns identified. The auditor's independence was confirmed.
- (b) *Accounting Standards* – It was noted that variance accounting standards are being updated which will impact the audited financial statements in future years.
- (c) *Audit Results* – The auditor's report and financial results were presented. Total revenue has decreased from \$4.1 to \$3.6 as compared to the previous year, due to reduced signage revenue and City of Toronto funding; it was clarified that 2024 funding was higher to support the renaming and rebranding initiative.

- (c...) There was a year-end operating deficit of \$511,632, with \$461,833 receivable from the City; it was noted that the receivable from the City is anticipated to arrive in August 2026. There was a net accumulated surplus of just over \$138,000 and net balance of approximately \$88,000 at year-end.
- (d) *Outstanding Payables* – A member inquired whether all 2025 payables have been resolved or if any payables are outstanding, including the payable pushed back in January 2026. M. Grona clarified that all 2025 payables have been completed, and a payment schedule has been implemented to manage payables on an ongoing basis.

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, 2025 as prepared by Doane Grant Thornton LLP be accepted as presented.** Motion carried.

*M. Dugard, M. Zerker, and K. Khan were thanked for their presentation and excused from the meeting at 3:48 p.m.*

5. **GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT**

M. Grona provided highlights from the written report as follows:

- (a) *Board of Management Dashboard* – The 2026 Sankofa Square dashboard was presented for review. The dashboard has been implemented as a tracking tool for important dates, links to resources, and deadlines for decisions required from the Board. The dashboard will be further revised based on feedback from the Board going forward.
- (b) *Strategic Planning* – Completion of the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan has been shifted to Q1 2027, to allow for adequate review of new opportunities and establishment of baselines and recommended new protocols following the current time of transition.
- (c) *Board Meeting Schedule* – The Board discussed the frequency of Board meetings and reports from staff to ensure appropriate oversight and transparency. Concern was expressed that monthly is too often for the entire Board to meet, but smaller Executive Committee meetings may be held between regular Board meetings. It was suggested to review best practices recommendations and the specific needs of Sankofa to determine the best procedure. **Action: Management to prepare a proposal and recommendation to the Board with respect to the Board of Management meeting schedule.**

- (d) *Operational Support and Staffing Framework* – An organizational chart was presented, accompanied by the Functional Pillars of Support document outlining the roles and responsibilities of the Board and staff members. Upon inquiry, it was clarified that the chart will be updated and incorporate the work of the consultant in the future as new protocols are implemented, roles are clarified further by the City, and the Strategic Plan is finalized; the current chart has been prepared to outline the responsibilities of each role and illustrate the relationships between the Board, staff, external contractors, etc. for Board information.

## 6. **STAFF REPORTS**

- 6.1 **Marketing and Communications** – M. Grona provided an overview of the circulated written report, with highlights as follows:

- (a) *Renaming and Branding Campaign Update* – It was noted that brand sentiment is beginning to stabilize in the marketplace and media.
- (b) *Events Marketing* – A brief campaign preview of #HotSquareSummer 2026 was provided.

- 6.2 **Operations** – T. Balint provided a brief overview of the circulated written report, with highlights as follows:

- (a) *Operations Update* – Preparation for the 2026 summer season is in progress. The contractor compliance program is underway as per the Sankofa Square Contractor Safety Program.
- (b) *Capital Planning Update* – A summary of capital planning was provided in the written report. It was clarified that the intent of this process is to align with the capital plan of the City and the new Sankofa Square Strategic Plan. It was noted that some funding is available to support capital planning initiatives, and desired initiatives are being prioritized with a focus on service improvements.

- 6.3 **Events and Outreach** – E. Atherton provided a report, with the following highlights:

- (a) *Events Update* – A breakdown of community, commercial, internal, and partner events for 2026 was provided for information; a 50% increase on total event days overall was noted, in comparison to 2025 results. It was noted that \$100,000 of the \$115,000 permit fee goal has been confirmed to date.
- (b) *Summer Programming* – An overview of summer programming was provided, including the launch of #HotSquareSummer, monthly markets, movie screening, weekly fitness classes, etc. A calendar of upcoming events was presented.

- (c) *World Cup 2026* – As approval from FIFA has not yet been received to broadcast the games on the Square, no license is currently in place for community viewing parties at Sankofa. Sankofa is working with partners to present at least two of the events hosted by third-party clients. A member inquired whether the City's license could apply to Sankofa as well and it was clarified that Sankofa is following the approval process as directed by the City of Toronto. It is hoped that the licensing will be approved in the near future.
- (d) *Sankofa Fest* – A three-day festival, including Sankofa Day, is being planned for August 21-23 2026.
- (e) *Revenue Diversification* – Sankofa will be partnering with Epilepsy Toronto's Café for a Cause during summer 2026, as a pilot project to test implementation of social enterprise kiosks and micro-retail outlets for additional revenue.

## **7. STRATEGIC PLANNING**

M. Grona provided an update on development and implementation of the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan, with highlights noted as follows.

- (a) *Strategic Planning Update* – Sankofa is working with the Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area (BIA) on a vendor and retail study, in cooperation with the third-party consultant. This process will look at what is required to convert the event office to a food and beverage spot, consider back-of-house management impacts, etc. This work will inform the capital plan and strategic planning initiatives as well.
- (b) *Consulting Support and Implementation Framework* – Following completion of the contract, Sankofa is currently looking at fine-tuning the scope and scale of its continued engagement with BellevillePlacemaking. Sankofa will be looking for support in two areas: governance and design, and partnership sales, including funding and securing corporate sponsorships. The team will be considering how this will fit into the budget, and will be working on a commission-based structure going forward. Further details will be provided at the next Board meeting.
- (c) *Revitalization Plan* – The Phase One plan for the site revitalization was presented, and T. Balint provided an overview.
  - i) Beautification – Creative lighting is being explored, as well as horticulture, public art, signage, and seating, to ensure the Square is more interactive and welcoming, with different zones for various community uses. A preview of branding interventions and beautification was provided, and it was noted that this will be implemented in smaller phases due to budget constraints.

- (c...ii) Security and Information Signage – Upon inquiry, it was clarified that the information to be included on directional and informational signage is still being fine-tuned. Ambassador presence on the Square is also being increased to allow guests to ask questions and obtain information directly. A member also suggested preparing a pamphlet that can be provided to visitors.
- iii) Events Calendar – A member suggested posting an events calendar in the Square to allow visitors to see upcoming events. It was clarified that this information will be included on the digital screens; additional options can be considered, though concern was expressed regarding changes in the calendar impacting maintenance costs associated with physical media.

## 8. **PROCUREMENT POLICY, CONTRACTS & AGREEMENTS**

M. Grona and A. Amster presented recommendations on implementation of policies governing procurement and contracts, with highlights of discussion noted as follows:

- (a) *Historical Agreements and Recommendations* – Staff are reviewing legacy agreements and current contracts to identify any existing agreements, expiries, renewal and extension provisions, signing authority, etc. A proposal will be prepared summarizing all the agreements that may not have clear spending caps, proper signing procedures, etc. so that all agreements can be brought up to date and implemented with proper protocols.
- (b) *Security Agreement Extension* – A proposed extension to the agreement with Sword Security was presented for review, and it was noted that the current agreement indicates an hourly rate but does not specify the spending cap. Management recommended the extension to ensure specialized crowd-control security for the upcoming 2026 events. A formal amendment to the contract will be included capping the total cost to a maximum of \$100,000.

On Motion by S. Summers and seconded by E. Smyth it was,

**RESOLVED THAT the agreement with Sword Security be extended for a one-year period, with an amended total cost for services of no more than \$100,000.** Motion carried.

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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 E. Schimp and seconded by C. Moise 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 adjourned at 4:54 p.m. for a closed session.*

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

On Motion by E. Schimp and seconded by K. McDonald it was,  
**RESOLVED THAT the regular portion of the meeting be reopened.** Motion carried.

*The regular meeting then resumed at 5:38 p.m.*

10. **OTHER BUSINESS**

- (a) *Busking* – A member noted that a motion around busking was raised at the last Council meeting, as this is not currently permitted in downtown Toronto without special approval from the Downtown BIA. It was suggested that the Board members read this motion to fully understand the impacts of this issue on the Square.

11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next regular meeting of the Board will be held in person at City Hall at 100 Queen Street West, Toronto, Ontario and virtually on Thursday, May 14, 2026 commencing at 9:00 a.m.

12. **TERMINATION**

There being no further business, the meeting was concluded at 5:41 p.m. on motion by K. McDonald and seconded by C. Moise.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

Date: May 14, 2026



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Interim General Manager

Date: May 14, 2026