

Downtown economic group elects officers

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Kansas City's new Downtown Economic Stimulus Authority elected officers as the new body starts to get down to business.

The officers will serve under DESA's co-chairs, Kansas City Mayor Kay Barnes and Peter Yelorda, an executive at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City and chairman of the Kansas City Tax Increment Financing Commission.

The DESA officers are:

Vice-chairwoman Cathy Brown, a real estate broker with CB Properties.

Treasurer Michael Clarke, CEO of Neighborhood Housing Services of Kansas City Inc.

Secretary Helen Ragsdale, a member of the Kansas City Board of Education.

Assistant treasurer Debbie Carter, a staff member of the Economic Development Corp. of Kansas City, which staffs the authority and the TIF Commission.

Assistant secretary Charles Myers, a lawyer with Lathrop & Gage LC.

Affirmative action committee chairwoman Gwen Grant, a TIF Commission member and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Kansas City.

Finance committee chairman Joe Serviss, a TIF Commission member and former chief of staff to Barnes.

Also serving on the authority are Kansas City Councilman Troy Nash, Barbara Pendleton, Chester Wittwer, Ron Yaffe and John Paul Chaurand.

The authority will administer state taxes captured by the Missouri Downtown and Rural Economic Stimulus Act, better known as Modesa. Barnes led efforts to pass the act, which will reimburse developers' infrastructure costs.

The authority was established last year to avoid conflict-of-interest questions surrounding the Greater Downtown Development Authority that Barnes established to lobby state legislators for Modesa. Barnes co-chairs the development authority with Tom McDonnell, CEO of Kansas City-based DST Systems Inc., a large downtown property owner.

The DESA will next meet on May 19 to consider a financing request for the South Loop that includes Kansas City-based H&R Block Inc.'s proposed headquarters at 13th and Main streets and a surrounding entertainment district.