

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
REGULAR MEETING TOWNSHIP BOARD -**APPROVED**-
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198
517.853.4000, Township Hall Room
Tuesday, September 17, 2024, 6:00 pm

PRESENT: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis,
Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise

ABSENT: Trustee Wilson (arrived 7:02)

STAFF: Interim Manager Schmitt, Chief Grillo, Manager Diehl, Deputy Manager Opsommer,
Director Clark, Director Wisinski, Stewardship Coordinator Campbell, Director Tithof,
Human Services Specialist Love, Director Ianni

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor Hendrickson called the September 17, 2024, Regular Township Board meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS

Supervisor Hendrickson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Deputy Clerk Gordon called the roll of the Board. Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Sundland, and Trustee Trezise present at 6:00 pm.

Trustee Wilson absent.

4. PRESENTATION

A. 2024 Meridian Township Deer Management Program

Stewardship Coordinator Campbell gave an overview of the program and detailed the plan for 2024.

Trustee McCurtis asked for the estimated population of deer in the Township. Coordinator Campbell stated that MDNR biologists estimate between 800-1,100 deer in the Township, that there should be approximately 20 deer per square mile which means that the Township should have around 650 deer and explained the difficulty of estimating deer populations. She explained that the management plan tracks information about where deer are encountered to determine the number of deer to be harvested.

Clerk Guthrie asked who initiates deer management on private properties. Coordinator Campbell explained that the Township sends letters to residents to ask if they would like to allow a hunter on their property and when a resident responds, the property is analyzed to determine if it is suitable.

Treasurer Deschaine commented that there are high populations of deer in the neighborhood and stated that the numbers seem to be getting lower in the land preserves and parks. Coordinator Campell concurred and explained that the management plan reviews previous year's data to determine locations to harvest and that staff are open to creative means of controlling deer in areas where it isn't safe to hunt. She also stated that residents can choose different landscaping to help reduce deer populations in their neighborhoods and explained the pressure on deer populations created by development.

Trustee McCurtis asked for details regarding how residents are notified that a hunt is occurring. Coordinator Campbell indicated that the program sends letters to neighboring residents, publishes press releases, utilizes the Township website, and posts signs at the parks and preserves that are being hunted in order to notify residents of the presence of archers. In addition, the archers are required to post identification on their vehicles when they are present in an area.

5. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Supervisor Hendrickson opened comments from the public at 6:27 pm.

Jane Southwell, Township resident, spoke about the need for maintenance and upkeep at River Side Cemetery and provided pictures for the record.

Ellen Portnoy, Township resident, spoke in opposition to the proposal for the Senior Center Advisory Committee.

Steven Vagnozzi, Township resident, spoke in opposition to the proposal for the Senior Center Advisory Committee.

Supervisor Hendrickson closed comments from the public at 6:37 pm.

6. INTERIM TOWNSHIP MANAGER REPORT

Interim Manager Schmitt gave updates about the following:

- MSU to Lake Lansing Phase II is open and is being heavily used and the official ribbon cutting is Friday, September 20.
- 2025 Road Projects that have been pulled forward will be done at the end of the month which puts the project ahead of schedule.
- Deputy Manager Opsommer and Director Clark have been working on the Haslett Village Square project.
- Sergeant McCready retired, and a new police officer, James Spencer, was sworn in today.
- The Fire Department has done their annual physical fitness test, which Manager Schmitt participated in and passed.

7. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS OF ACTIVITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee Sundland attended the Michigan Municipal League Convention 2024 and had an opportunity to speak with other municipal leaders about many topics, in particular using technology and how to develop thriving communities.

Clerk Guthrie stated that it is National Voter Registration Day and the Township has received around 150 voter registration applications since the first announcement. She gave information about how to register to vote and apply for an absent ballot, and updated the Board with current voter data.

Treasurer Deschaine reminded residents that the Recycling Event is at Meridian Mall on Saturday, September 21. He gave details about how the waste is managed and recommended use of the recycling center for residents who cannot attend the Recycling Event.

Trustee Trezise remarked that the Rotary Luncheon was well attended and complemented Chief Grillo and Chief Hamel for their presentations.

Supervisor Hendrickson reported that the DDA is working on replacing the sign that was taken down when the bridge in Okemos was replaced.

8. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Treasurer Deschaine moved to approve the Agenda. Supported by Trustee McCurtis.

VOICE VOTE: YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 6-0

9. CONSENT AGENDA

Supervisor Hendrickson listed the items on the agenda.

Clerk Guthrie gave a brief overview of the resolutions to Support National Voter Registration Month and to Commemorate Constitution Week.

Trustee Trezise moved to approve the Consent Agenda with the appropriate amendments. Supported by Trustee McCurtis.

ROLL CALL VOTE YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 6-0

10. QUESTIONS FOR THE ATTORNEY

NONE

11. HEARINGS

NONE

12. ACTION ITEMS

A. 2025 Township Budget

Interim Manager Schmitt gave an overview of discussions that have occurred and detailed the changes made because of those discussions. He gave answers to the questions Board

members had regarding individual line items. He recommended eliminating the line item in the fee chart for cemetery deed buy-back because there is no current process for doing that work.

Trustee Trezise stated the need for a Utility Billing Supervisor. Trustee Deschaine concurred. Interim Manager Schmitt stated that he will proceed in determining the amount required to support the request for a Utility Billing supervisor and offered to bring a plan for an amendment for the 2024 budget if necessary. Treasurer Deschaine and Trustee Trezise indicated their support. Clerk Guthrie asked for clarification as to whether the motion on the table is for an amendment to 2024 budget or of the motion is to include the position in the 2025 budget. Supervisor Hendrickson clarified that this motion is to add to the 2025 budget a Utility Billing supervisor, which will need to be brought as an amendment to the 2025 budget, and that there has been additional discussion about bringing forward an amendment for the 2024 budget.

At 7:02, Trustee Wilson arrived.

Trustee Trezise moved to add another employee, a supervisor in utility collections. Supported by Treasurer Deschaine.

VOICE VOTE YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

Trustee Trezise moved to strike the cemetery buy-back fee from the 2025 budget. Supported by Trustee McCurtis.

VOICE VOTE YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

Trustee Wilson asked for more information regarding the cost of the RFP for the proposed cricket pitch. Interim Manager Schmitt clarified that the discussion was left that the budgeted amount would remain until a RFP has been prepared and responses received, then have the conversation about the amount to be spent. Supervisor Hendrickson added that the State has recently assisted with funding for another community's cricket pitch.

Trustee Wilson moved to adopt the resolution approving the 2025 recommended Budget with the changes discussed by the Board at the September 3, 2024 Budget Public Hearing meeting and the amendments made at the September 17, 2024 meeting. Supported by Trustee Trezise.

ROLL CALL VOTE YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

B. Township Manager Review Process

Supervisor Hendrickson gave an overview of the process and the discussion that has occurred to date. He indicated that there are more updates recommended for the evaluation form and asked the Board to consider tabling this item until October 1st, 2024.

Trustee Wilson moved to table the Manager Review Process as presented and adopt the Township Manager Review Form to the October 1st, 2024 meeting. Supported by Clerk Guthrie

VOICE VOTE

YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

13. BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Board Policy Update

Clerk Guthrie briefed the Board on the work that has occurred to date. She directed Board Members to highlighted parts of the draft document to see where changes have been made from the current documents. Trustee Trezise added that it would be appropriate to review the goals and mission statements from the old to make them more timely for 2025, but they were omitted from the draft because they are items that should be reviewed every few years and reviewed by the entire Board instead of a subcommittee. Trustee Wilson concurred with Trustee Trezise.

Treasurer Deschaine asked how an ethics policy will be addressed and asked to add “to the residents of Meridian Township” at the end of the fiduciary responsibility statement. Clerk Guthrie explained that the personnel policy includes ethics and that all staff and elected officials are expected to adhere to that policy. Trustee Trezise stated that a reference to the ethics policy can be included.

Treasurer Deschaine suggested a signature page be added to the end of the document, to be signed by Board Members and retained in records.

Trustee Wilson asked for clarity regarding the highlighted statements. Clerk Guthrie gave details about how the highlighted areas reflect the changes made. Trustee Wilson asked for a copy without the highlights and strikethroughs for ease of reading. Supervisor Hendrickson concurred.

Trustee Wilson asked that the first sentence under Rule and Authority of the Board be rewritten for clarity. Supervisor Hendrickson and Clerk Guthrie indicated that it can be rewritten.

Supervisor Hendrickson and Trustee Trezise suggested keeping the mission and vision statements in the document and taking up discussion for a revision at a later date.

Supervisor Hendrickson asked for clarity regarding disciplinary action to hold Board Members accountable, or to remove the statement from the document. Trustee Trezise indicated that he is only aware of disciplinary action through the State. Clerk Guthrie suggested striking that component. Supervisor Hendrickson concurred.

Supervisor Hendrickson asked to add nuance to Rule 1, Number 8 in order to ensure that the Supervisor does not become an unintentional barrier to another Board Member seeking access to the Township attorney. Treasurer Deschaine suggested allowing Township Clerk and Township Treasurer to request access through the Township Manager for items that arise during the working day.

Supervisor Hendrickson suggested removing the portions that detail the Open Meetings Act and replace them with statements that defer to the Open Meetings Act.

Supervisor Hendrickson expressed his concern regarding number 6 of the Procedures for Establishing Board Meetings. He would prefer to see a list of the school boards, bordering municipalities, and county authorities that Board Members will meet with in order to keep Board Members from being stretched too thin for ability to meet this requirement.

Supervisor Hendrickson asked that the last statement of Rule 5 eliminate "maximum one hour". Clerk Guthrie indicated that can be struck from the document.

Supervisor Hendrickson asked that the agenda still be physically posted as well as online.

Supervisor Hendrickson asked for an explanation for the Agenda Planning section. Treasurer Deschaine suggested that the language change from "annual agenda" to annual goal setting"

Supervisor Hendrickson stated that the attorneys have stated that there needs to be a temporary Clerk and suggested adding that to Rule 6.

Treasurer Deschaine asked if there are time limits for Board discussions, in reference to "Disorderly Conduct." He indicated that it has not been an issue with the current Board, but it has been an issue in the past. Trustee Wilson stated that it would be difficult and seems arbitrary. Trustee Trezise referred to "motion to call the question" in Roberts Rules of Order. Treasurer Deschaine stated that that motion would end discussion entirely, disallowing other Board Members to speak. Supervisor Hendrickson suggested researching regulatory framework to look for a way to address the issue.

Supervisor Hendrickson asked for closed session minutes procedure be revised to ensure that closed session minutes are being reviewed and approved before being sealed.

Trustee Wilson noted that conflicts of interest are not limited to financial conflicts and she would like to see the statement "with respect to their fiduciary responsibility" stricken so as to include all conflicts of interest.

Clerk Guthrie stated that the attorneys have not seen this document yet, that she wanted to bring it for Board Discussion first. She will bring a clean copy to the next meeting. She thanked Trustee Trezise and Director Tithof for their work on the document.

B. Police Department Contract with Michigan State University

Interim Manager Schmitt outlined the need for changes in the services provided to Michigan State University and the changes being reviewed by Township and University attorneys, and asked the Board for feedback.

Trustee Trezise suggested adding a component to the contract that allows for revision of the hourly rate.

Trustee Wilson asked if the \$75 rate was sufficient to cover costs. Interim Manager Schmitt stated that it was calculated by Chief Grillo and is sufficient. Clerk Guthrie asked if the \$75 is per officer per hour. Interim Manager Schmitt clarified that it is.

Treasurer Deschaine asked if the officers enjoy the work and if there are problems with providing staffing. Chief Grillo stated that there are officers who enjoy signing up for the shifts and clarified that it is usually overtime hours.

C. Transportation Commission

Interim Manager Schmitt gave an overview of the staff recommendation to dissolve the Commission.

Treasurer Deschaine stated that he thinks CATA has addressed the concerns that the Commission took up and the Commission's goals have been met.

Trustee McCurtis stated that, provided residents' safety concerns are being addressed, he is comfortable dissolving the Commission. Supervisor Hendrickson concurred, adding that other Boards and Commissions are currently able to address those concerns and that it can always be reconstructed if the need arises. Clerk Guthrie concurred.

Clerk Guthrie suggested reviewing all of the Boards and Commissions to determine if they are still necessary or if their need has been met.

D. Community Survey Initial Data

Interim Manager Schmitt noted that the data provided is the raw data and has not been fully analyzed. In two weeks, the final presentation will be available and will be brought to the Board for discussion.

Supervisor Hendrickson noted that in almost all categories, respondents are more satisfied with services than three years ago and he thanked staff for their work to provide services to residents.

Trustee Wilson asked if the comments could be grouped by subject versus a list sorted alphabetically by the verbatim comments. Trustee McCurtis added that he would like it more reader-friendly to allow for quicker analysis of the data. Interim Manager Schmitt indicated that the final presentation will provide clarity and summarize the hard data.

Treasurer Deschaine suggested the Board use the data from this survey to make sure Board goals are in alignment with what residents want.

E. Community/Senior Center Task Force

Supervisor Hendrickson outlined the discussion that has taken place to date. He proposes a formal Task Force to address the community need for a new Senior Center and the community desire for a Community and Senior Center. This Task Force will operate similarly to other Boards and Commissions, publishing an agenda and packet in advance of meetings and minutes after each meeting. The plan is to complete the process by the end of March to allow time in April for the Board to discuss the work of the Task Force.

Treasurer Deschaine indicated his support and asked that funding sources outside of tax increases be reviewed. He also asked that the meetings be televised, periodic updates be provided to the Board, and the Board allow staff to lead to avoid criticism that the Board is not making objective decisions.

Clerk Guthrie asked for the reasoning behind selecting the proposed members of the Task Force. She expressed her desire that both Haslett residents and Okemos residents are represented equally. Supervisor Hendrickson explained the reasoning behind the selections. Clerk Guthrie asked that the Board Member who sits on the Task Force not chair the Task Force. She also supported Treasurer Deschaine's suggestion to televise the meetings

Supervisor Hendrickson noted that the Board Rules, Policies, and Procedures document requires the presence of a Board Member on Task Forces created by the Board and indicated his interest in being that person. Treasurer Deschaine suggested Trustee Trezise be the Board Member appointed to the Task Force because of his experience with the school districts because he thinks it is inappropriate for the Board Supervisor to be on the Task Force.

Trustee Trezise requested that public comment be allowed at the meetings.

Trustee McCurtis expressed his support for televised meetings.

F. Alaiedon Township Building Services

Interim Manager Schmitt explained the proposal from Alaiedon Township and noted that Meridian Township staff is easily able to do the work.

14. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Supervisor Hendrickson opened comments from the public at 8:53 pm

Peggy Frisch, President of the Senior Center Advisory Board, spoke in opposition of a combined Community & Senior Center and supports a standalone Senior Center.

Ellen Portnoy, Township Resident, asked that the Senior Center discussion be placed higher up the agenda so as to be discussed earlier

Supervisor Hendrickson closed comments from the public at 8:47 pm

15. OTHER MATTERS AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Trustee McCurtis asked about the sign in front of the dispensary on Okemos Rd. Interim Manager Schmitt stated that the monument sign is permitted, and the logo is legal because it does not use the words cannabis or marijuana.

Clerk Guthrie cited HOMTV policies and requested that coverage be provided for the upcoming Community/Senior Center Task Force meeting. The Board agreed and Manager Schmitt stated he would put in the request for coverage.

16. ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Wilson moved to adjourn. Seconded by Trustee McCurtis.

VOICE VOTE

YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

The meeting adjourned at 9:01 pm.



Scott Hendrickson
Township Supervisor



Deborah Guthrie
Township Clerk