



AGENDA
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
September 1, 2021 7 pm

ZOOM MEETING: **867 3903 8953** Password: **5151** (click [here](#) or phone 646 558 8656 or 301 715 8592)

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER
2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA
3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES
4. PUBLIC REMARKS
5. NEW BUSINESS
 - A. Wetland Outreach and Awareness
 - B. Other
6. OLD BUSINESS
7. CHAIR'S REPORT
8. STAFF REPORT
9. Commission, Committee, Study Group and Trustee Reports (*if applicable*)
 - A. Board and Commissions
 - Board of Trustees
 - Brownfield Redevelopment Authority
 - Land Preservation Advisory Board
 - Planning Commission
 - Transportation Commission
 - B. Teams and Study Groups
 - Earth Club and Student Groups
 - Energy Team
 - Environmental Justice
 - Green Infrastructure Grants
 - Green Neighbors
 - Green Team
 - Tree Team
 - C. Other
 - Capital Area Sustainability Partnership and Ingham Environmental Commission
 - State of Michigan
10. PUBLIC REMARKS
11. ADJOURNMENT



ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION Summary August 4, 2021

Highlights of the meeting:

- The E.C. met with Meridian's new Planning Director Tim Schmitt. Schmitt invited the E.C. to guide the Township in transitioning from a "greenfield" to a "brownfield" where there will be more of a focus on redevelopment. He sees opportunities for changes related to parking, stormwater management, partnering with the Drain Commissioner, and Master Plan revisions – including recommendations from the [Green Infrastructure Audit](#). All agreed to develop an outreach and education campaign related to wetlands.
- Colby was unanimously elected as Vice Chair.
- New applicants were invited to share a few words. Valerie Lafferty and Ana Rivera-Rivera spoke. Harvey shared a note from Jean McDonald and a brief video from Graham Diedrich. Harvey shared minutes with Supervisor Styka who will make the appointment.
- A resolution to honor Vadnais for her work with the E.C., Tree Team, and other efforts was unanimously approved.
- Reports were received from the Chair, Staff, the Board of Trustees, Land Preservation, Planning, Transportation, Okemos High School, Energy Team, Environmental Justice, Green Infrastructure Grants, Gree team, Tree Team, and the Capital Area Sustainability Partnership.

View the meeting: <https://meridianmi.new.swagit.com/videos/130039>



ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION Summary August 4, 2021

Conversation with Planning Director Tim Schmitt: Schmitt invited the E.C. to guide the Township in transitioning from a greenfield to a brownfield community. He sees opportunities for changes related to parking, stormwater management, partnering with the Drain Commissioner, and Master Plan revisions – including many recommendations outlined in the recent [Green Infrastructure Audit](#). Grasseschi asked about wetland education and enforcement. All agreed to develop an outreach and education campaign.

Vice Chair Nomination: Colby was unanimously elected as Vice Chair.

New Commissioner Applicants: New applicants were invited to share a few words. Valerie Lafferty and Ana Rivera-Rivera spoke. Harvey shared a note from Jean McDonald and a brief video from Graham Diedrich. Harvey shared minutes with Supervisor Styka who will make the appointment.

Resolution to Honor Rose Vadnais: A resolution to honor Vadnais for her work with the E.C., Tree Team, and other efforts was unanimously approved.

Chair's Report: Sarver mentioned progress on the Okemos to MSU Trail/Pathway.

Staff Report: Harvey mentioned a Green Fair on August 28 and Oct Solar Tour.

Board of Trustees: Wisinski mentioned progress on the Pathway Plan, an upcoming Groundwater Management Board meeting, and a training on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Land Preservation Advisory Board: Grasseschi encouraged people to sign up for MCC's Ecology Tuesdays and Stewardship Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Planning Commission: McConnell reported discussion about a Sparrow emergency structure on Jolly Road.

Transportation Commission: McConnell reports an upcoming joint meeting of E.L. and Meridian.

Student Groups: Herchert-Walton asked about the Green Fair. Osborn mentioned Lansing Earth Uprising and Climate Change Club at Chippewa that might collaborate.

Energy Team: Sarver mentioned a new Solarize Meridian project.

Environmental Justice: Grasseschi provided a definition of and interest in environmental justice.

Green Infrastructure Grants: Projects are proceeding reps may present at a future E.C. meeting.

Green Team: Frazier mentioned the Green Fair and Electronics Recycling Event.

Tree Team: Grasseschi mentioned a Re-Leaf Michigan Project called the Big Tree Hunt that is a fun way to get people involved and learn about trees. <https://www.releafmichigan.org/big-tree-hunt.html>

Capital Area Sustainability Partnership: Several E.C. members are involved.

Public Comment: Lafferty suggested a letter to the Greater Lansing Board of Realtors about wetlands. A bike tour was suggested to complement the Solar Tour.

View the meeting: <https://meridianmi.new.swagit.com/videos/130039>



MINUTES (DRAFT)

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

August 4, 2021

Attending: Commissioners: Anna Colby, Tom Frazier, Kendra Grasseschi, Ned Jackson, Bill McConnell, Bernadette Osborn, Annaka Saffron, John Sarver, and Courtney Wisinski; Staff: Emma Campbell, LeRoy Harvey, Tim Schmitt, and Samantha Diehl; Guests: Valerie Lafferty, Ana Rivera-Rivera, and Audrey Hirschert-Walton

Approval of the Agenda: McConnell motioned to approve. Seconded by C. Wisinski. Unanimously approved.

Approval of Minutes: McConnell motioned to approve. Frazier seconded. Unanimously approved.

Conversation with Planning Director Tim Schmitt: Director Schmitt feels that the Township is transitioning from a greenfield community to a brownfield community and that the Environmental Commission can help shape positive changes related to parking, stormwater management, and the upcoming Master Plan revisions). Sarver asked about the follow up to the Green Infrastructure Audit. Schmitt sees some easy wins movement on both local and regional levels. He recommended picking a topic or two and building momentum. Schmitt sees opportunities to partner with the Drain Commissioner by sharing standards and going beyond standard practice, but can't currently tell a developer to do something that the Drain Commissioner won't support. Schmitt is excited about long term opportunity to redevelop portions of the Mall and include creative stormwater management. Grasseschi asked how to educate about wetlands and enforce our ordinance. Schmitt responded that our no net loss policy is helpful but enforcing the natural feature setback is a challenge. He does not feel that the Township will take a heavy stick approach to the buffer strip, especially because of our bifurcated system (if a lot was platted before 1991, it is exempt from the buffer requirement). He has no problem enforcing the wetland and floodplain boundary. Sarver asked about disclosure about the 20' buffer when a house is sold. Jackson asked if there any licensing requirements related to realtors. C. Wisinski suggests that the disclosure at time of sale could be explored as part of the Wetland Ordinance. McConnell mentioned a similar restrictive covenant when it comes to toxic waste. Grasseschi asked how do we educate the community and handle it once issues emerge. Schmitt responded that typically the Township currently responds on a case-by-case basis and that usually a resident will ask a question and they respond to that particular circumstance. Grasseschi feel that there are environmental justice issues that need to be addressed. Schmitt suggested that the reason we have commissions is so that we can better educated the entire community about wetlands and related issues. Campbell feels that we all need to work together to achieve our goals. Because of the greenspaces we have and the potential to work together. She hopes to help with the education through welcome packets and other general education. She's doing more outreach with pictures and brochures and offered to be the eyes and ears to help identify challenges and opportunities. Wisinski appreciates a pro-active educational approach and has reached out to Brandie Yates (Communications Manager) about an educational campaign. She feels that this will help reduce reactive responses. Jackson asked about education designed for realtors, existing homeowners (like folks on Lake Lansing who learn about pesticide application), landscaping companies, and neighborhood associations. Grasseschi agreed with Jackson and suggests that all the Commissions might work together to understand the ordinances and wetlands. Hirschert-Walton also suggested that homeowner associations would be a great place to start. Harvey suggested that we continue the conversation about a wetland education campaign. He has invited the Drain Commissioners' office to a future meeting as well. Schmitt is hopeful that the next planner hired may have environmental planning or landscape architecture experience. Campbell noted that Jane Greenway in Parks is a Landscape Architect.

Vice Chair Nomination: Sarver nominated Anna Colby. McConnell seconded. Wisinski welcomed Colby to the E.C. and asked about her top priorities. Colby responded in her interest in food systems, local farming, and food waste reduction... and that it is a “low hanging fruit.” She is also interested in wetlands but is also new to the topic. Unanimously approved

New Commissioner Applicants: The following people have applied to the Environmental Commission:

- Valerie Lafferty
- Graham Diedrich
- Ike Iyioke (recently placed his application on hold)
- Jean McDonald
- Ana Rivera-Rivera

Sarver invited the attending applicants to say a few words.

Valerie Lafferty shared that she has attend several E.C. and subcommittee meetings. She’s been a long time Township resident. She served on the Planning Commission and helped with the Master Plan revisions. She’s also been on the Cable Commission and has been the League of Women Voter Natural Resource person. She helped adopt a Citizen Climate Commitment project. She’s also attended Green Dialogue, worked on Marshall Park with Campbell, and participated in Energy Team Meeting. She’s assisted with the Green Neighbors Network and is working with a “Listening Session” in Meridian around environmental issues. She likes the idea of working smarter, from the bottom up, and working together and feels the E.C. is a great way to get involved.

Rivera-Rivera shared that she is within walking distance of the Meridian Mall and is a PhD candidate in Geography and Environmental Sciences. Her research uses spatial and statistical analysis to explore weather impacts on the built environment and health. She’s researched the impact of extreme heat impacts and help local governments identify vulnerable neighborhoods and develop solutions. She’s interested in environmental justice issues and helping advise Meridian on how best to achieve resilience, sustainability, and adaptation. Frazier asked about her timeline for PhD. Rivera-Rivera state that she will be around for at least 2 years.

Recognizing the level of interest and quality of applicants, McConnell and Jackson stated that they will be happy to reduce their commitment to the Township. Sarver encouraged both to consider the offer before resigning, and if they choose to do so, a bike race between Jackson and McConnell might be necessary to determine which, if either gets to move on.

Sarver encouraged all the candidates to get involved with any of the subcommittees. Grasseschi is interested in candidates that are willing to put in time and energy beyond just attending E.C. meetings. Sarver also encouraged subcommittee members to invite others to get involved with their efforts.

Harvey shared a note from Jean McDonald and a brief video from Graham Diedrich who were unavailable to attend. McDonald is interested in being on the Tree Team. Diedrich has experience with international environmental issues and has recently become more interested in local environmental topics.

Sarver invited Harvey to share the results of the discussion and pass them on to Styka. Harvey asked about voting and/or running a draft by the Commission before submitting. Other comments:

Sarver expressed interest in the three candidates with local environmental experience: Iyoke (who has since placed his application on hold), Lafferty, and McDonald. Colby expressed interest in someone with a background in environmental justice such as Rivera-Rivera. Grasseschi asked how many spots we have to fill. She feels Valerie has been very involved locally and appreciates Rivera-Rivera’s knowledge of environmental justice. She also reiterated her interest in candidates with time to devote

and long-term availability. McConnell mentioned that the E.C. has at times been over-represented by MSU faculty which has not necessarily been representative of the community. He feels that engaging people, like Laffery with connections to local organizations such as the League of Women Voters, could be hugely valuable. Jackson said he will be happy to remain as a consultant to the Commission, but that his retirement will free up space for at least one more candidate. Jackson also feels that his time availability is more limited as a recent grandfather. McConnell also mentioned Jackson's budding singing career. Frazier expressed appreciation for Jackson and McConnell long-time experience and to seriously consider staying on the Commission.

Resolution to Honor Rose Vadnais: Harvey read a draft resolution. Grasseschi motioned to approve the resolution. Several seconded and the resolution was unanimously approved. Grasseschi added that Vadnais did a lot that was unseen and certainly deserves the recognition.

Chair's Report: Sarver mentioned progress on the Okemos to MSU Trail/Pathway including recent work along Okemos Road.

Staff Report: Harvey mentioned an upcoming Green Fair on August 28 and an Oct Solar and Sustainable Tour. He invited comments and suggestions. Both could be vehicles to promote wetland education and Solarize Meridian 2.0. He also mentioned that the Energy Team will meet next week to discuss next year's solar investments. He mentioned recent discussion in the Green Dialogues recycling and McConnell's report on an [MSU School of Packaging Grant](#). McConnell also has a worm bin will donate to a good cause.

Board of Trustees: Wisinski expressed appreciation to Jackson and McConnell and their value to the Commission. Wisinski likes the idea of sharing a booth and include wetland education. The Board approved the Meridian Pathway proposal. The DPW did a great job with planning. The drain consolidation plans are moving forward. She has a Groundwater Management Board meeting next week which will include updating the groundwater map which will help with long term water quality. She also mentioned Schmitt's interest in reducing parking requirements and permeability.

Brownfield Redevelopment Authority: Jackson reports that no meeting has occurred. He also mentioned the connectivity of issues such as parking, trails, fire safety, wetlands, groundwater, and the challenge of holistic education.

Land Preservation Advisory Board: Grasseschi reported that the LPAB did not meet. She encouraged people to sign up for MCC's Ecology Tuesdays and Stewardship Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Planning Commission: McConnell reported that the PC met on July 26. The main item of discussion has been discussion about the application for a Sparrow free-standing emergency department on Jolly Road.

Transportation Commission: McConnell reports that there will be a joint meeting of E.L. and Meridian Transportation Commission.

Student Groups: Herchert-Walton and Anna Hicks are co-chairs of the Earth Club. She asked what do next about a booth at the Green Fair. Harvey encouraged discussion and collaboration amongst student groups. Osborn mentioned a Lansing Earth Uprising and Climate Change Club at Chippewa that might collaborate.

Energy Team: Sarver mentioned a new Solarize Meridian project that is modeled after a neighborhood-based model that includes workshops, site assessments, discounted systems, and group purchase.

Environmental Justice: Grasseschi provided a definition of environmental justice from the State of MI. “EJ is the equitable treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, abilities, or income and is crucial to the development and application of laws, regulations, and policies that effect the environment as well as the places and people that live, work, play, worship, and learn.” Grasseschi stressed the importance of consistency in policies, procedures, and enforcement. More at <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>.

Green Infrastructure Grants: Harvey reported that both projects are proceeding and that it might be nice to invite the teams to a future E.C. meeting.

Green Team: Harvey reports upcoming Green Fair and need for volunteers at the upcoming electronic recycling event. Frazier mentioned his experience working at the successful medicine collection. Some had accumulations dating back 30 years and is hopeful for another event in the future.

Tree Team: Harvey reports that there are ongoing tree planting activities Grasseschi mentioned a Re-Leaf Michigan Project called the Big Tree Hunt that is a fun way to get people involved and learn about trees. Deadline is Aug 18th. More at <https://www.releafmichigan.org/big-tree-hunt.html>.

Capital Area Sustainability Partnership: Several E.C. members are involved with subcommittee which are just starting to meet.

State of Michigan: Frazier reports that not a lot is happening in the legislature right now.

Public Comment: Wisinski mentioned an initial training on diversity, equity, and inclusion. She will report at the next meeting. This fits with the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force. Lafferty suggested that a letter to the Greater Lansing Board of Realtors about a wetland training would be helpful. She also suggested that Paul Pratt with the Drain Commissioners Office may be able to join us. She also mentioned that the October Solar and Sustainable Home Tour might include a bike tour. Jackson asked about the next Solarize Meridian project and whether it includes permitting and interconnection with the grid. Sarver reports that there have not been any complaints about the permitting process. He also reports that Consumers is better than DTE, but that speedy interconnection is an ongoing challenge and that it might be helpful to talk to the Township’s contact with Consumers to discuss further. Harvey invited participants or viewers to contact him if interested doing minutes for the E.C. meeting(s).

View the meeting here: <https://meridianmi.new.swagit.com/videos/130039>

Wetlands in the Township

Most people are familiar with the cattail or lily pad wetland found in areas with standing water, but wetlands can also be grassy meadows, shrubby fields, or mature forests.

Many wetland areas have only a high ground water table and standing water may not be visible.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, over 50% of Michigan's original wetlands have been drained or filled, thereby making the protection of remaining wetlands that much more important.

Over 25% of Meridian Township is covered in wetlands (5778 of 20,160 acres), making wetland stewardship an important responsibility and opportunity in every neighborhood.

The Township has a wetland ordinance that protects wetlands as small as 1/4 acre. This ordinance requires a 20-foot natural vegetation buffer.

Want to help protect our wetlands?

Volunteer with the Meridian Township Conservation Corps! Call Emma Campbell at 517.853.4614 for more info!

Also visit MyWatersheds.org, MGROW.org, and Meridian.mi.us/gogreen to learn more about local water protection efforts.

Your actions can help keep our water clean, reduce pollution, and prevent flooding!



*Help keep Meridian Township beautiful!
Find out how and spread the word!*

Meridian.mi.us/GoGreen
www.MyWatersheds.org



**POLLUTION
ISN'T PRETTY.**



Protect Our Wetlands

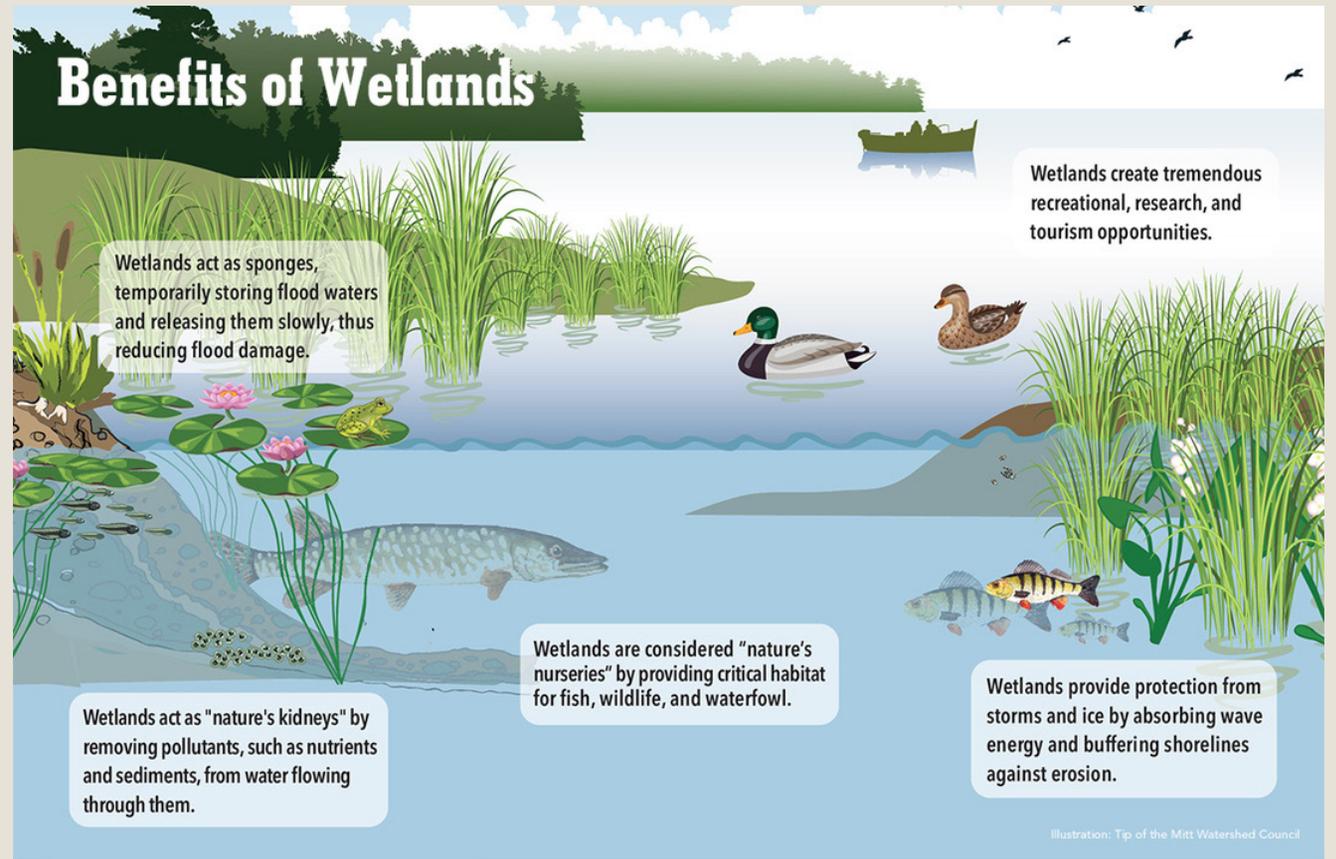
*Your actions can help
keep our water clean*



Wetland Services

Wetlands are a critical part of our environment helping reduce flooding, clean water, provide habitat, and offer other benefits:

- **Water storage** – wetlands act as a sponge to absorb water during floods and slowly release the water back during droughts. They also slow down the water's momentum and decrease erosion.
- **Water filtration** – wetlands allow pollutants like sediments and nutrients to be absorbed or settle to improve water quality.
- **Habitat and nurseries**– wetlands are diverse ecosystems that are home to a wide variety of plants and animals.
- **Recreation** – wetlands offer opportunities to hike, birdwatch, canoe and enjoy nature along with educational opportunities for youth and adults alike
- **Reduction of mosquito populations** – a healthy, functioning wetland can actually reduce mosquito populations by providing proper habitat for the natural enemies of mosquitos and by preventing or reducing flooding.



Together We Can Protect Our Wetlands

- DO plant native vegetation on your property and remove invasive species.
- DO protect the required 20 foot natural vegetation buffer around the wetlands.
- Do not remove trees, stumps, roots and other natural vegetation from the wetlands or buffer.
- Do not mow in the wetlands or within the buffer.
- Do not use chemicals, fertilizers and pesticides in the wetlands and the 20 foot natural vegetation buffer. For information about invasive species removal, call 517.853.4614.
- Do not put yard waste or "fill material" (soil/ dirt, stones, mulch, etc.) in wetlands or within the 20 foot natural vegetation buffer.
- Contact the Planning Department at 517.853.4560 if you are planning construction or landscaping within 40 feet of a wetland.
- Contact Public Works at 517.853.4440 if you are moving dirt or disturbing soil. A Soil Erosion/ Sedimentation Control Permit may be required.
- Inform neighbors, developers, and state and local decision-makers about the importance of wetlands.