

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
REGULAR MEETING TOWNSHIP BOARD -**APPROVED**-  
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198 517.853.4000,  
Township Hall Room  
Tuesday, October 1, 2024, 6:00 pm

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

ABSENT: Trustee Sundland

STAFF: Interim Manager Schmitt, Chief Grillo, Director Tithof, Deputy Manager Opsommer,  
Director Clark, Director Wisinski, and Director Ianni

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor Hendrickson called the October 1, 2024, Regular Township Board meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS

Supervisor Hendrickson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

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

Trustee Sundland absent.

4. PRESENTATION

A. Introduction of New Police Officer-James Spenser

Chief Grillo presented our newest Police Officer James Spenser. He is from Virginia and served five years in the Marine Corps, next he went to Michigan State University to study International Relations. At MSU, he joined the National Guard and was referred to Meridian Township through a current Sergeant. Mr. Spenser worked in our Police Records shortly before attending the Washtenaw Police Academy. James resides with his family in Howell.

B. 2024 Community Survey Results-William Saintarmour, Colbalt Community Research

Director Clark introduced William Saintarmour, Director of Colbalt Community Research. He presented the results of the 2024 survey and why research matters. The goals of the survey include strategic planning, overall satisfaction and assisting with policy decisions. The 2024 survey was compared against the 2021 baseline survey measures. The overall score of the survey was 78 and consistent statistically with 2021. The things residents like about the community include the feeling of safety, being close to MSU and the schools. They would like to see more development downtown, better roads, more accessibility for bikes and disabled persons, Community Center/pool, more music and diversity in dining. Respondents want to see online permitting. Amenities people would like to see included more green space,

Community Center and more accessibility. 70% said they would use a Community Center and 50% said they would fund a community center through a millage.

It was a random survey based on 2,000 voters. Two mailings were done in July and August. People could respond via paper or online. 392 responded. Folks not included in the random survey also had a chance to participate online and had a similar responses to that of the random sample.

5. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Supervisor Hendrickson opened comments from the public at 6:26 pm.

Barb O'Kelly, Township resident and Advisory Board for the current Senior Center, shared her background and experience on survey research. She summarized an email she sent to the Board and urged the Board to not consider this community survey as representative of the entire community.

Supervisor Hendrickson closed comments from the public at 6:30 pm.

6. INTERIM TOWNSHIP MANAGER REPORT

Interim Manager Schmitt gave updates about the following:

- Held successful electronic recycling event. Thanks to the great volunteers.
- All the local road paving is complete for this year. Paving three of the Parks' parking lots.
- Heritage Festival will be held on Saturday from 10:00am-4:00pm.
- Fire Open House on Sunday from 10:00am-2:00pm.
- Phase 2 of the MSU to Lake Lansing trail is open from Grand River Avenue to the Service Center on Okemos Road.
- Community Block Grant for Homeowner Improvement Project is doing a mailing to targeted neighborhoods for low interest loans from the State to do home improvements. Contact the township if you receive the mailing and are interested in participating.

7. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS OF ACTIVITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Clerk Guthrie stated that the township does not yet have the new "I voted" stickers from the State. Absentee voters can go to the State of Michigan website and click on the upper left hand corner on the absentee voter notification sign up link. Sign up at [Michigan.gov/vote](http://Michigan.gov/vote) to receive updates about the processing of your absentee ballot. Thanks to the Police Department, Interim Manager Schmitt and Deputy Manager Opsommer for working on all the voting security needs for the township. Attended the Friends of the Okemos Library meeting last week and they have the following events coming up at the Okemos Library and you can sign up at [cadl.org](http://cadl.org):

- Guardians of Michigan presentation on Tuesday, October 8<sup>th</sup>
- Mud Lake Haslett presentation on Wednesday, October 16<sup>th</sup>

Attended the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission meeting last week for the first time. Discussed the Moving Mid-Michigan Transportation Plan. They will be at the Meridian Farmers' Market on Saturday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> doing public outreach. Mailed over 13,000 absentee ballots.

Treasurer Deschaine stated that he has been elected to the Michigan Townships Association Board of Directors. Sunday was the Autumn Classic that benefits Area 8 Special Olympics and mentioned the great work of volunteers at this event and throughout the community.

Supervisor Hendrickson mentioned he attended the Okemos Homecoming Parade. The inaugural reconstituted Senior/Community Center Task Force meeting was held on Tuesday, September 24<sup>th</sup>. He stopped by the banquet Parks held to thank their volunteers and attended a meeting with Michigan State University.

8. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**Trustee Wilson moved to approve the Agenda. Supported by Trustee McCurtis.**

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

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

9. CONSENT AGENDA

Supervisor Hendrickson listed the items on the agenda.

**Trustee Wilson moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Supported by Trustee Trezise.**

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

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

10. QUESTIONS FOR THE ATTORNEY

NONE

11. HEARINGS

NONE

12. ACTION ITEMS

A. ARPA Funding Reallocation

Interim Manager Schmitt stated as we are approaching the end of the calendar year, we need to allocate the remaining ARPA dollars. He proposed to invest \$262,850 of the remaining funds to replace the water main that has failed that serves Chili's and Olive Garden. Secondly, he proposed to invest the remaining balance of funds in the 2025 Local Road Program. This investment would be \$226,711.09 to allow the Township to reconstruct approximately .5-.6 more miles of roadway.

**Trustee Deschaine moved to reappropriate the Township remaining ARPA assets, and all additional interest revenue that is generated, as follows with any unspent funds as of December 31, 2024 being appropriated to the 2025 Local Road Program. Supported by Clerk Guthrie.**

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

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

**B. 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Budget Amendments**

Director Ianni presented the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter budget amendments. The largest item is the fire truck of \$950,000. Other items that had overages include personnel, drain projects, paving at Marshall Park and Ted Black Woods. Interest rates are still high and showing positive variances throughout all the funds. The ARPA dollars have been reallocated based on tonight's discussion.

Trustee Wilson confirmed that the \$950,000 will be restricted in the Motor Pool Fund for the fire truck. These funds will be paid on delivery of the truck in December.

**Trustee Trezise moved to approve the attached 2024 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter budget amendments with a decrease in budgeted fund balance for the General Fund in the amount of \$866,968 which projects a use of fund balance of \$1,588,365. Based on 2024 results, the projected fund balance at December 31, 2024, will be \$10,764,158 including a reduction of \$124,494 in transfer from the General Fund to the Local Roads Program. Supported by Trustee Wilson.**

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

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

**C. Resolution to Authorize Issuance of General Obligation Unlimited Tax Bonds, Series 2024**

Deputy Manager Opsommer reviewed the resolution to authorize the final years of the road bonds. This will be for the 2026, 2027 and part of 2028 construction seasons and will conclude the first 10 years of the road millage. The remaining amount is \$10,239,532. There is a target of issuing the bonds on November 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Trustee Wilson moved to suspend the rules to take up the Resolution to Authorize Issuance of General Obligation Unlimited Tax Bonds. Supported by Treasurer Deschaine.**

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

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

**Trustee Wilson moved to approve the resolution to authorize issuance of general**

**obligation unlimited tax bonds, series 24, in the amount of \$10,239,532. Supported by Trustee McCurtis.**

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

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

**D. Transportation Commission Dissolution**

Interim Manager Schmitt mentioned that the Commission began to review Redi-Ride and developed into the Transportation Commission. Treasurer Deschaine stated the Commission has done great work as is evident by the community survey results and it has served its purpose. Trustee McCurtis agreed. CATA will continue to give regular updates to the Township Board instead of the Transportation Commission.

**Trustee McCurtis moved to formally dissolve the Transportation Commission and thank all current and former members for their service. Supported by Treasurer Deschaine.**

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

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

**E. Police Department Contract with Michigan State University**

Interim Manager Schmitt stated the contract is the same as was presented at the last meeting and he is recommending approval. The contract provides for the township to receive payment in a timely fashion for police services rendered at large university events like football games.

**Trustee Wilson Motion to approve the Master Service Agreement for Law Enforcement Services between Michigan State University and Meridian Township for a period of three years and authorize the Supervisor to sign the contract. Supported by Trustee McCurtis.**

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

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

**Entered Recess at 7:14pm**

**Back in Session at 7:21pm**

## F. Township Manager Search Process

Supervisor Hendrickson introduced Barbie Sigers from Amy Cell Talent to present the draft job posting and schedule that has been created. She reviewed the tentative dates of the schedule which includes posting for 30 days ending October 30<sup>th</sup>, then conducting the background searches, phone screens, candidate surveys and distribute the 7-9 final candidates' information to the Board on November 5<sup>th</sup>. The Board would examine the final candidates in a closed session on November 12<sup>th</sup> and schedule interviews with 3-5 candidates on November 21<sup>st</sup> or December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Barbie Sigers passed around an updated posting which includes the following sections: strengths of the township, about the role, key challenges/issues, and about you. She emphasized that this is a marketing piece and they are trying to get the largest pool of applicants and narrow it down through screening.

Treasurer Deschaine suggested to change the second bullet that says "Is a financially strong community that has had 11% growth according to the 2020 Census" into two statements "Is a financially strong community which represents 22% of all the taxable value of all of Ingham County. Is a dynamic community that has had 11% population growth according to the 2020 Census." Regarding the role of the Township Manager, second sentence, ...collaborative relationship with the Township Board, add a comma, and "manage the Staff." Under key responsibilities, where it says "oversee the daily operation" change to "supervises the daily operations." Third bullet rather than saying "supervises" change it to "manages". Clerk Guthrie suggested instead of "managing the Staff" change to "leading the Staff."

Clerk Guthrie stated she feels that the job posting is getting buried in the marketing piece. The flyer about the Township has many redundancies and contradictions. She suggested it be a one page flyer about the Township and the top of the second page what we are looking for in a Township Manager.

Supervisor Hendrickson mentioned that the document should be run through our Communications Department to insure it meets brand standards. He agrees that the job posting piece needs lots of work and we need to state specific requirements.

Barbie Sigers stated that they are willing to go back and rework the job posting, but they typically do not post the number of years of experience necessary.

Trustee Trezise discussed he has been a part of many search processes in the past and agreed that the posting is missing what we expect for minimum qualifications. He suggested that the following be added at a minimum "significant experience in a high level management position in a municipal organization." He mentioned that it is confusing to say Williamston and East Lansing are a part of Meridian Township because they are not. They are as it relates to addresses and school districts.

Trustee Wilson suggested that the public health degree be removed from the posting. She stated the posting is poorly written and redundant. The assets and strengths portion needs to be reworked. There is too much focus on the Parks and it should lead with the other items listed.

Trustee McCurtis stated that the about you section was very confusing and does not think that needs to be in the posting.

Treasurer Deschaine suggested we have a Board subcommittee consisting of Trustee Wilson, Clerk Guthrie and Trustee Trezise rewrite the posting in the next few days and approve it to allow us to stay on the schedule and not need to wait until the next Board meeting to approve the posting. There was agreement on this and to include Human Resources Director Tithoff and the Communications Team.

Trustee Wilson mentioned there is no meeting scheduled for November 5<sup>th</sup>, the date the Board is to receive the candidates, Ms. Sigers stated the Board will receive the information electronically via a spreadsheet with links to the applications.

**Treasurer Deschaine moved to approve the manager search process timeline and job posting as amended by the subcommittee of the Board. Supported by Trustee McCurtis.**

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

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

Barbie Sigers mentioned she would like to discuss the salary range. Treasurer Deschaine mentioned \$170,000-\$225,000 range would appeal to candidates. Trustee Wilson state the former Township Manager was making \$160,000 with over 17 years of experience. Clerk Guthrie mentioned the former Manager also had many incentives. Discussion was had about incentives and that would be a contract negotiation. Trustee Trezise suggested an initial salary range \$160,000-\$185,000 that includes benefits. Trustee Wilson mentioned that Amy Cell Talent has access to the salary ranges for other similar sized communities. Supervisor Hendrickson mentioned we set the salary range of \$160,000-\$190,000 or \$195,000. There was agreement on this range for the job posting. Discussion of trying to stay as close to the timeline as possible and possibly posting the job for 3 weeks versus 4 weeks.

G. USBGN Proposal to Change the Name of Lake Lansing to Pine Lake

Deputy Manager Opsommer presented the proposal to change the name of Lake Lansing to Pine Lake. The Lake Lansing Advisory Board did vote unanimously to reject the proposal. The Lake Lansing Property Owners Association voted to not support the proposal unanimously.

**Trustee Wilson moved to reject the US Board on Geographic Names' proposal to change the name of Lake Lansing to Pine Lake. Supported by Treasurer Deschaine.**

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

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

13. BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

## A. Community Survey Results

Director Clark noted we had almost 10 residents use the visual assistant when completing the survey which was much higher than 2021. Treasurer Deschaine discussed the downward trend lines of the economy and police services. He did not think these were surprising given just coming out of the pandemic and the fact we have been short staffed Police Officers. The other trends look to be going in a good direction. He suggested the Community/Senior Center Task Force consider doing a needs assessment for the Center to drill down to what people would like to see.

Trustee Wilson commented that most people who completed the survey were elderly and had trouble getting around. The weighting was done by ethnicity, as in 2021, rather than age. Meeting the needs of young adults seemed to be lower than older adults.

Trustee McCurtis asked how we can attract more younger and diverse people to take the survey. Mr. Saintarmour suggested we may want to use another list instead of the voter list for the next survey. In addition, we can survey more of the younger/diverse people to get a larger result and encourage them to respond through social media or texting. Comments were made about making sure all voices in the Township are heard.

Director Clark mentioned that the timing of the survey with a summer delivery may be challenging with folks traveling and suggested about mailing during the traditional school year time may have a larger result.

Clerk Guthrie asked for bar graph on page 19 (in the packet)/page 17 (in the presentation) be updated for the official Board packet record. Two bars were mislabeled. Mr. Saintarmour will update the labels on the page and crosstabs.

Treasurer Deschaine suggested the Board consider doing the survey again in 2026 and three years may be too long to wait. Trustee McCurtis suggested working with the schools may be a way to get a broader sample of diversity.

## B. Williamstown Township Police Agreement

Chief Grillo stated that since 2011 we have provided police services to Williamstown Township. Every three years we go through a review of the contract. Chief and Interim Manager Schmitt met with Williamstown Township and they are pleased with the services we offer them and would like to enter into another three year agreement. A change in the upcoming agreement would be to increase our service hours from 40 hours per week to 60 hours per week provided our staffing levels stay at 37 solo performing officers. Another change for 2025 will be a 13% increase in the wages to match the increase given through the police recruitment and retention program and an additional 3% increase for 2026 and 2027. The Williamstown Township Board will be discussing this next week at their meeting.

Supervisor Hendrickson asked that Chief provide data on how many calls for service we receive outside of the hours that we have patrols there. He supports the wage increase for the upcoming contract along with the staffing level requirements.

## C. Amendment to Interim Township Manager Contract

Supervisor Hendrickson discussed the need to update the original contract because it had an end date of November 21<sup>st</sup> and based on the search timeline discussed tonight this

deadline will not be met. The Township attorneys have drafted an update which eliminates the end date of the contract. There seems to be agreement to this amendment and to bring it back for consent at the next Board meeting.

D. Memorandum of Understanding with Okemos Public Schools for Meridian Senior Center

Interim Manager Schmitt explained that during the original Senior Center Task Force discussion we realized that an agreement with the Schools had never been codified since 2011. The intention is just to get the agreement into writing. Superintendent Hood has the draft agreement to review with his Board. Clerk Guthrie asked when was the millage established. Supervisor Hendrickson stated that the Community Services Millage was renewed in August 2022 to be used for senior citizen programs, senior center recreation and human services throughout the township. Discussion was had regarding providing money for staffing versus programming. The staff that work at the senior center are Okemos Public School employees and the Township pays the operating costs for the senior center of \$140,000 plus \$15,000 of capital funds. Interim Manager Schmitt clarified that when the millage was approved by the Township Board it directed that 57% of the funds go to the senior center, 27% to parks and recreation and 16% to human services.

14. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Supervisor Hendrickson opened comments from the public at 9:02 pm

Barb O’Kelly, Township resident and Advisory Board for the current Senior Center, thanked Treasurer Deschaine for suggesting a formal needs assessment be done for the senior center and suggested the Board work to get that going as soon as possible. She requested the cross tabs from the community survey be given in excel format rather than pdf to pull out comments made by specific demographic groups.

Supervisor Hendrickson closed comments from the public at 9:06 pm

15. OTHER MATTERS AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Treasurer Deschaine mentioned there is a Meridian Township opening on the Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA) Board. If you are interested in serving, please submit a public service application.

16. ADJOURNMENT

**Treasurer Deschaine moved to adjourn. Seconded by Trustee Wilson.**

**VOICE VOTE**

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

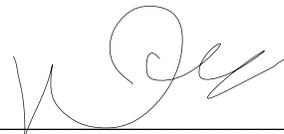
**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

**The meeting adjourned at 9:07 pm.**



Scott Hendrickson  
Township Supervisor



Deborah Guthrie  
Township Clerk