



CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
Communications Commission Regular Meeting Minutes  
Virtual via Zoom Conferencing  
Wednesday, August 25, 2021 | 6:00 pm

PRESENT: Vice Chair, Walter Benenson; Commissioner, Leslie Charles; Commissioner, Mike Nevells; Commissioner, Brian Seipel;  
ABSENT: Chair, Tunga Kiyak; Alternate Commissioner, Riti Adhi  
STAFF: Brandie Yates, Communications Manager  
TOWNSHIP: Deborah Guthrie, Township Board Liaison/Township Clerk  
COUNSEL:  
COMCAST/AT&T: Ben Miller, Comcast Regional Director, External Affairs; Yvette Collins, AT&T

1. **CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Vice Chair Benenson called the meeting to order at **6:07 pm**.

4. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Commissioner Nevells moved **TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS SUBMITTED**. Seconded by Vice Chair Benenson.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Charles moved **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 2021 REGULAR MEETING**. Seconded by Commissioner Nevells.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

6. **COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER REPORT**

**Department Goals & Project Updates:**

Township website refresh is moving along and the launch date for the new website is November.

Ingham County has put together an RFP for Broadband proposals, and looking to select a company to do a gap analysis across the county.

The Citizen's Survey for the Township ended yesterday. There were broadband questions on the survey, so results will be passed on to the commission.

Summer Internship ended and the next semester starts on September 13. Trying to recruit additional interns. Thank you to everyone that attended the Intern Appreciation Event.

Staff has been working on reorganizing the noise room and removing old equipment that is no longer in use. These items have been added to the Action Item section of the agenda for

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this meeting. This reorganization will help with the archiving process. Edit Share is offering training for the archiving.

Census data was released. The Township grew in population by 11%.

Commissioners asked about the t-shirt fundraisers, are they still on sale and how much money do we get back from the fundraisers.

7. **COMMISSION MEMBERS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Township Board Liaison: Six broadband questions made it to the Citizen's Survey. Recommendation to send the Communications Commission letter to State Representatives. Commission will look at the letter again and then send out to representatives.

Special meeting with DDA was held to discuss Village of Okemos. Minor amendments since original proposal that the Township Board doesn't agree with (they are vastly different) and is supposed to come back to the Board.

Special meeting is being held to discuss Daniels Drain Project. Near Tom's Grocery Store, Grand River, Waldon Pond and a portion of Forest Hills neighborhood. Public meeting for residents to attend. Meeting to discuss money to go into the project.

The Township Board approved a ballot initiative on the November ballot asking voters to ban recreational marijuana facilities in the Township. Petition with over 1500 signatures submitted. The Clerk's Office verified over 1400 of those signatures. The Township attorney made a recommendation to the Board for a Resolution of Support to have the language on the November ballot. The Board approved, however a letter from the County Clerk's office sent a letter stating that it would need to be on the next regular election for the Township.

There is an emergency Township Board meeting to discuss whether the Township will follow the election laws or the marijuana laws. The group may have to ask for signatures all over again to have on the next election ballot.

The Township won a grant from LEAP for \$10,000 to select an artist for an art piece that will be located at Marketplace on the Green.

Last concert for the Summer Concert Series – Two Men and a Tenor

The Board approved a special use permit for Sparrow stand-alone emergency center.

The Board has been discussing the sign ordinance, so a new sign ordinance is being drafted by the new Community Planning Director. Signing should not discriminate.

Smart zones have also been discussed, tax capture areas for improvements.

The commissioners asked about the spelling of Marijuana. Marijuana is spelled with an "h" in government.

**Commissioners Report: N/A**

**8. ACTION ITEMS**

**A. Disposal of Surplus Equipment**

There is a lot of access equipment in the Studio and Server Room. Looking to recycle, sell or dispose of these items. A list has been provided for the commission. Items that still hold value will be sold and if not able to be sold will be recycled. Asking the Commission's permission to dispose of items.

Commissioner Charles moved to **MAKE A RECOMMENDATION TO THE MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP BOARD TO APPROVE THE DISPOSAL OF SURPLUS EQUIPMENT**. Seconded by Commissioner Nevells.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

**B. Communications Commission Rules & Procedures Revisions**

Updated CC Rules and Procedures. Rule 3.3 was in question about removing a commission member. The word was removable vs a suggested word removed. "Can be subject to removal" was the final wording agreed upon.

Commissioner Nevells moved to **APPROVE THE AMENDMENT TO THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION RULES & PROCEDURES REVISIONS**. Seconded by Commissioner Charles.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Commissioners discussed adding Zoom wording for virtual meetings, but this could not be changed due to the open meetings act.

Commissioner Nevells moved to **MAKE A RECOMMENDATION TO THE MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP BOARD TO APPROVE THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION AMENDED RULES & PROCEDURES REVISIONS**. Seconded by Commissioner Charles.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

**10. COMMUNICATIONS**

3G Wireless connection being phased out now that 5G is being launched. Yvette from AT&T commented that it is just part of technology and being progressive.

**11. REPORTS**

**A. Video Service Provider(s)** – AT&T transferring the franchise agreement to Direct TV LLC to be managed. The agreement will remain the same.

**Comcast** – working with the Communications Department on better support of internet service across YouTube and Facebook. Also looking at Haslett & Okemos PEG channels operation. Comcast has reached out to Okemos about their channel and airing content,

but has not been able to solve the problem. The Communications Department is still working with Haslett about the sound on the channel.

The Township Board and the Communications Commission supports the Communications Department in working with the schools to keep the channels running with content and get them operating to their full potential. Comcast has been willing to work with the schools, as well.

- B. Programming** – slowly adding new programs to the channel
- C. Website & Social Media** – Question on the bounce rate of the website. The bounce rate is when a visitor gets to the website and then leaves immediately. They don't stay or move around. The rate should go down with the new website because a service finder will be implemented.
- D. Promotions/Publications** – The next Prime Meridian Magazine will be at the beginning of 2022. Looking at possibly only doing one issue a year and then multiple smaller online digital issues. This is a huge expense and the Township Manager is looking to reduce the Departments budget. The Township Board may decide differently.

The Commission commented that most information comes online with links to click to a pdf. The Commission agreed to once a year, which is reasonable. The comment was made that printing for Sports Illustrated has dropped 82%. A question was asked about whether the Parks Department is concerned about only one issue. There has been conversations about various options. Is there staff strength to do multiple magazines?

If you need the commissions support or the boards support, you can write letters to let the Board know what you need and if your budget was cut. A letter could be written by the Commission to the Board showing support of at least one magazine, making sure the magazine is in the budget for next year.

It is hard to gage printed materials. Online materials offer analytics for clicks, use, etc. The Commission discussed putting the question out on Nextdoor about how residents receive their information.

Commissioner Charles moved to **APPROVE A LETTER BE WRITTEN TO THE BOARD SUPPORTING AT LEAST ONE PRIME MERIDIAN MAGAZINE BE IN THE BUDGET FOR 2022.** Seconded by Vice Chair Benenson.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

The Commission discussed drafting the letter. Commissioner Nevells offered to assist. Commissioner Seipel suggested extra copies be distributed and be available for people to pick up. If the printed magazine is only done once a year then the suggestion was to print even more copies to be available.

Comcast representative asked if the magazine contains advertising options. The magazine will hold ads, but the goal is to have the ad look like and blend into the magazine. Ads can help offset the cost of the magazine.

- E. Finance** – The Board will be approving the budget at the next Township Board meeting. The Township Clerk asked if there was a recommendation for the Communications Manager to be the Communications Director.

**C. HOMTV Internship/Alumni**

**12. PUBLIC REMARKS**

N/A

**13. ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Nevells moved **TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**. Seconded by Commissioner Charles.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

Vice Chair Benenson adjourned the meeting at 7:14 pm.