



2023

Township Board Listening Session Summary

Charter Township of Meridian



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GENERAL SUMMARY OF EACH LISTENING SESSION

In December 2022, the Meridian Township Board established their top three goals for 2023, which included:

“Enhance the Township’s communication outreach to our 45,000 residents through various existing and newly developed channels.”

In July of 2023, the Meridian Township Board developed a plan to conduct six Listening Sessions geographically spread throughout the Township so residents would have a better opportunity to speak to issues affecting their neighborhood and geographic area of the Township.

The Township Board then mailed a personal invitation to each resident and business in the geographic area. Attendance at each Listening Session ranged from 30-60 residents.

Members of the Township Board opened each Listening Session by presenting:

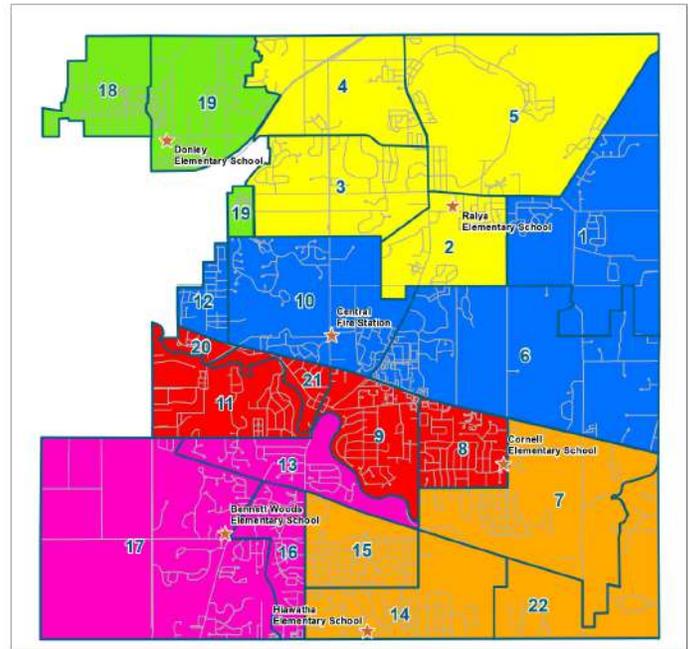
1. An update on Proposal 2, which was approved by the voters of Michigan in the November 2022 Election to expand voting rights. [Please click here for more information regarding Proposal 2 and the new opportunities you have to cast your vote in future elections.](#)
2. An overview of how property taxes are allocated to all of the taxing jurisdictions in our region and what specific services they fund on a percentage basis. [Please click here for more information on where your property tax dollars go.](#) Only 18% of your property taxes go toward Township services, with the vast majority of the Township resources being invested in Police, Fire/EMS, roads, parks, and pathways and trails.
3. The current status of the potential to establish a new Senior and Community Center.

The Meridian Township Community/Senior Center Task Force was extremely active in 2023. The Task Force, led by Trustee Wilson, visited several thriving Community/Senior Centers, secured a \$5,000,000 state grant, met with the Senior Center Advisory Group, had serious discussions with CBL, and retained a professional architect/engineering company to help us work with the community regrading next steps. No question, the group made meaningful progress in 2023 gathering information that will be helpful as we move forward.

Police Chief Rick Grillo and Deputy Township Manager Dan Opsommer also presented the following information at each Listening Session:

1. An update on staffing levels within the Police Department. [Click here and refer to page 26 of the Township Board packet to learn more about the new Township Public Safety Recruitment & Retention Program that the Township Board adopted at their December 12 Board Meeting.](#)

Listening Session Location Map



2. An overview of who is responsible for various roads in the Township, what services the Township's new Local Road Program provides to residents, and the biggest challenges we face as we work to reconstruct the 153 miles of local roads in the Township after 50 years of neglect. [Click here for more information.](#)

The top four issues that residents expressed across all six of the Listening Session were:

1. A desire for more speed limit and traffic enforcement. The Police Department is 25% below approved and budgeted staffing levels, causing shortages in all areas of the Department and limiting our ability to proactively enforce traffic laws. The Township has adequate funding. The greatest challenge we face with police staffing is being able to recruit enough quality officers, given the very small pool of viable candidates due to how few people are currently pursuing the profession.

In 2023, Chief Grillo, Chief Hamel and Township Manager Walsh created the Public Safety Recruitment and Retention Program, which was unanimously approved by the Township Board. The program has already seen success as the Police Department has four officers attending the Police Academy and multiple certified officers in the background phase of the hiring process. Once staffing levels increase, there are plans to form a team to enforce traffic issues in areas of greatest concern.

[Click here and refer to page 26 of the Township Board packet to learn more about the new Township Public Safety Recruitment & Retention Program that the Township Board adopted at their December 12 Board Meeting.](#)

2. How is the Township progressing with the new Local Road Program? [Click here for more information.](#)
3. Improving pedestrian safety, especially in proximity to schools. [Please refer to page 5 of this document for more information.](#)
4. The condition of Downtown Okemos and the status and timeline of the Village of Okemos project. [Please click here for more information.](#)



SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED AT EACH LISTENING SESSION

Listening Session #1: Tuesday, September 12 at Bennett Woods Elementary

The ideas, concerns and suggestions raised by the 27 residents in attendance ranged from speeding on Okemos Rd, how the Township is progressing with the new Local Road Program, a desire for more speed limit and traffic enforcement, and congestion around the traffic circle at the Hulett Road and Bennett Road intersection.

There was very positive support for the potential of a new Senior and Community Center. One of the issues raised by a number of residents was the need for a community pool.

The final comment of the evening was a heartfelt thank you to the Board for taking the time to schedule the Listening Session and meet with the residents.

Listening Session #2: Tuesday, September 26 at Ralya Elementary School

The ideas, concerns and suggestions raised by the 67 residents in attendance ranged from the increasing cost of property taxes, the pedestrian traffic around various Haslett Public School campuses, the proximity of the new gas station at the Haslett Road and Marsh Road intersection to the roadway, the number of new residential units being constructed at the former Haslett Village Square property (i.e. the old L&L site), the lack of quality parks in Haslett that are in walking distance, a desire for more speed limit and traffic enforcement, and the noise from large events held at Ingham County's Lake Lansing Park South.

Specifically, the speed on Haslett Road was mentioned by several residents who pointed to the young girl that was hit while crossing Haslett Road earlier in 2023.

Residents in Old English Estates were very happy that the Township completed overlay paving to address the undesirable road surface created by the chip and fog treatment that was applied in 2022. Residents in Old English Estates were also upset about the Ingham County Drain Commissioner's Office's drain project that occurred in June through August, which the Township has also expressed opposition to.

The feedback to the Senior and Community Center was mixed with the residents interested in learning more about the cost, location and amenities.

The final comment of the evening was a thank you to the Board for coming out and meeting with the residents and listening to "our concerns."



Listening Session #3: Tuesday, October 10 at Hiawatha Elementary School

The ideas, concerns and suggestions raised by the 57 residents in attendance ranged from a desire for more speed limit and traffic enforcement, how the Township is progressing with the new Local Road Program, and traffic congestion on Jolly Rd.

However, a majority of the 90 minutes centered on school zone safety. Several residents spoke regarding the recent accidents involving students in front of Chippewa Middle School and Kinawa Middle School.

The discussion turned to the lack of police staffing in the Township and residents urged the Board to find a solution to fully staff the Police Department.

There was general support for the concept of a new Senior and Community Center with a lot of questions regarding the location, cost and amenities.

At the end of the 90 minute meeting, residents applauded the Board and staff for taking the time to meet and listen to their concerns.

Listening Session #4: Tuesday, October 24 at Donley Elementary School

The concerns raised by the 26 residents in attendance ranged from how the Township is progressing with the new Local Road Program, traffic on Lake Lansing Rd, and a desire for more speed limit and traffic enforcement.

Residents on Skyline Dr were very pleased that the Township completed overlay paving to address the undesirable road surface created by the chip and fog treatment that was applied in 2022.

There was a mix of opinions on the proposed Senior and Community Center with an acknowledgement that the current Senior Center is “quite a drive” for seniors living in the northern portion of the Township. The future location was the main topic for the residents in discussing a potential new Center.

Listening Session #5: Tuesday, November 14 at the Central Fire Station

The concerns raised by the 63 residents in attendance ranged from the map of where the emergency sirens are located, how the Township is progressing with the new Local Road Program, Police Department staffing, the rezoning application on Park Lake Road which was ultimately denied by the Township Board, the number of large apartment and multi-family developments, and the status of the Village of Okemos development project.

The range of opinions regarding the potential new Senior and Community Center were mixed. Many in the audience were very receptive to learning more regarding the cost, location and amenities. Some residents had specific concerns and questions, which resulted in a meeting being held with Township officials, Senior Center staff, and members of the current Senior Center to answer their specific questions and concerns.

The residents expressed appreciation to the Board and staff for taking the time to come out and meet with them and “we really felt listened to.”

Listening Session #6: Tuesday, November 28 at Cornell Elementary

The concerns raised by the 58 residents in attendance ranged from speeding and congestion in front of Cornell Elementary School, the County Drain Commissioner’s Office handling of the Daniels Drain project, the lack of traffic enforcement in Forest Hills, the future of development or preservation of natural areas along Powell Rd, the further commercialization of Grand River Ave to the east, how the Township is progressing with the new Local Road Program, and Police Department staffing.

Two residents expressed opposition to changing the Urban Services Boundary. One resident also expressed a desire for the Township to ban the use of gas-powered lawn equipment.

MORE DETAILED ACTIONS THE TOWNSHIP HAS TAKEN TO DATE TO RESPOND TO VARIOUS ISSUES RAISED DURING THE LISTENING SESSIONS

A desire for more speed limit and traffic enforcement was the most prevalent theme across all of the Listening Sessions:

- [The Police Department has a Traffic Concern Form available to the public on its website. The public can log on anytime and submit their concerns directly to the Police Department.](#)
- Speed limit enforcement on Okemos Road was the biggest theme of the first Listening Session held on September 12. The Township placed one of our speed trailers on Okemos Road in the fall to help calm traffic.
- The Police Department has conducted speed surveys of areas citizens have expressed concerns, to determine where and when to deploy our resources.
- The Police Department was the recipient of a state-funded traffic grant that funds overtime throughout 2024 for traffic enforcement in specific areas where traffic crashes are most prevalent.



Improving pedestrian safety, especially in proximity to schools, was a theme across all of the Listening Sessions (requires approval from the Ingham County Road Department):

- With the Ingham County Road Departments approval, the Township installed new in-street yield to pedestrian signs at the two main crosswalks serving Chippewa and Kinawa Middle Schools on Kinawa Dr. Under state law, the Township does not legally own any of the roads in the Township. Therefore, the Township must obtain approval from the Ingham County Road Department for all work that occurs in the road right-of-way.
- With the Ingham County Road Department's approval, the Township installed new in-street yield to pedestrian signs at the three main crosswalks serving Ralya and Wilkshire Elementary Schools on Haslett Rd.
- Residents expressed a desire to see more pedestrian refuge islands installed, similar to the new islands on Grand River Ave. At this time, the Ingham County Road Department is opposed to allowing pedestrian refuge islands. However, the Ingham County Road Department agreed that the new in-street signs on Haslett Road and Kinawa Dr would serve as a pilot for evaluating the prospect of adding refuge islands in the future. The Township and Ingham County Road Department agreed to meet in May to revisit this issue, near the end of the school year.

Thus far, the Township has received very positive feedback regarding the new in-street signs on Haslett Road and Kinawa Dr. If the Ingham County Road Department were to allow pedestrian refuge islands, the Township would likely start by installing pedestrian refuge islands on Hulett Road to serve the main

crosswalk to Okemos High School and on Haslett Road to serve the two main crosswalks to Ralya and Wilkshire Elementary Schools. The Township would wait on installing them on Kinawa Dr until the plans for the new school campus are finalized.

- Installed new ADA compliant sidewalk ramps and no-parking signs at the Alderwood Dr and Silkwood Dr intersection to improve pedestrian safety immediately west of the Cornell Elementary School campus.
- The Township will be designing the pathway on the south side of Haslett Road from Okemos Road to Park Lake Road as soon as staff availability allows. The Township has numerous trail and pathway projects that we are working to design and construct, including the [MSU to Lake Lansing Trail](#).
- Residents also expressed the need for additional crossing guards at many of the Listening Sessions. The Township ran digital ads for a month to try and attract more crossing guard applicants. We were only able to get one new applicant. Finding crossing guards continues to be an issue. [Those interested in serving as a crossing guard are encouraged to apply by clicking here.](#)

Pathways and Trails:

- One resident expressed a desire to see a pathway installed on the west side of Meridian Rd. This would require a change to the Pathway Master Plan and would be a significant deviation in policy from the Township's longstanding policy of preserving the rural character of the eastern third of the Township.



Storm Drains (Ingham County Drain Commissioner's Office):

- A resident in Old English Estates asked about the status of the special assessments for the emergency maintenance work that was performed on the Mud Lake Outlet, Old English Estates Branch Drain. The Township has kept this resident apprised, but at this time, the Ingham County Drain Commissioner's Office is unable to answer any of the specific questions.
- One resident requested that the Township help facilitate a correction to some new asphalt that was ponding/holding water. The resident was requesting that work performed as part of the Daniels Drain project be corrected. The Township assisted this resident by working with the Ingham County Drain Commissioner's Office to have the asphalt repaired so that it would not pond/hold water.

Streetlights:

- Streetlights was another theme across many of the Listening Sessions. Residents have very mixed opinions on streetlights. Some residents would prefer that the Township continue to limit the amount of light pollution that we experience by limiting the number of streetlights. However, some residents expressed a

desire to see more streetlights added to improve visibility at night. At this time, the Township is working on some new streetlights as it relates to pedestrian safety in proximity to schools.

- One resident expressed a desire to see a streetlight district on Marsh Road and/or Haslett Rd, similar to the streetlights on Okemos Road south of Grand River Ave. Funding would have to be identified for such a project and there are no tax increment financing mechanisms in place in this area of the Township.
- The Township is actively working with Consumers Energy to install two new streetlights on Hulett Road at the main crosswalks to Okemos High School.