



AGENDA
MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP
COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
December 18, 2024 6:00 PM

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER
2. ROLL CALL
3. PUBLIC REMARKS
4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - A. October 7, 2024 Special Meeting DRAFT Minutes
6. COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER REPORT
 - A. 2024 4th Quarter Report
7. COMMISSION MEMBERS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS
 - A. Chair's Report
 - B. Township Board Liaison's Report
 - C. Commissioner Reports
8. ACTION ITEMS
 - A. Set 2025 Meeting Schedule
 - B. Chair and Vice Chair Appointments
9. DISCUSSION ITEMS
 - A. General Fund Allocation for Communications Commission Grants
10. COMMUNICATIONS
 - A. Compliments/Complaints
 - B. Correspondences
11. REPORTS
 - A. Video Service Provider(s)
 - B. Programming
 - i. Program Totals and Video On-Demand Analytics
 - C. Website & Social Media
 - i. Website Analytics
 - ii. Social Media Analytics
 - D. Promotions/Publications
 - i. 2025 Prime Meridian Magazine
 - E. Finance
 - F. HOMTV Internship/Alumni
 - G. Broadband
12. PUBLIC REMARKS
13. ADJOURNMENT

All comments limited to 3 minutes, unless prior approval for additional time for good cause is obtained from the Commission Chair.

Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the Meridian Township Communications Department; Communications Manager, Brandie Yates, 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864 or 517.853.4208 - Ten Day Notice is Required.
Meeting Location: 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864 Administrative Conference Room



CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN

Communications Commission Special Meeting **DRAFT** minutes

Wednesday, October 7, 2024 | 5:00 pm

PRESENT: Chair, Leslie Charlies; Commissioner, Lisa Whiting-Dobson; Alternate
Commissioner, Mike Nevells
ABSENT: None
STAFF: Samantha Diehl, Communications Manager
TOWNSHIP: None
COUNSEL: None
COMCAST/AT&T: None

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Charles called the meeting to order at **5:15 pm**

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Whiting-Dobson moved **TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS SUBMITTED.**
Seconded by Alternate Commissioner Nevells.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Whiting-Dobson moved **TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR WEDNESDAY,
JUNE 26, 2024 REGULAR MEETING.** Seconded by Alternate Commissioner Nevells.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

6. COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER REPORT

Manager Diehl went over the 3rd quarter report.

HOMTV received a Philo Award for their submission of a documentary made by their former intern Stella Govitz. The documentary was titled Young Environmentalists and focused on two Okemos High School students who were on the Environmental Commission in Meridian Township.

Nathan Beemer, a Boy Scout in Okemos, completed his Eagle Scout Project with HOMTV. His project consisted of digitizing 50 hours of old CDs and organizing them into a system where they were labeled with their names and date.

Manager Diehl wants the Communications Commission to look over and revise the HOMTV Operating Policies due to conflicting language in multiple sections.

Discussed big events that were promoted over the summer: Summer Concert Series, Wednesday Farmers' Market, Meridian Pride, puzzle competitions, Green Fair, Karaoke at the Marketplace, Senior/Community Center informational sessions, National Night Out, Beer in the Barn Fundraising Event, Touch-A-Truck, Pancake Breakfast.

Manager Diehl went over the Communications Department budget for 2025 and explained what each line item was used for.

7. **COMMISSION MEMBERS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Communications Chair: Chair Charles is working on a document requesting that the Township Board reinstate the Communications Director position.

Township Board Liaison: None.

Commissioners Report: None.

8. **ACTION ITEMS**

A. Televising Senior/Community center Task Force Meetings

The Township Board requested that the newly reformed Senior/Community Center Task Force meetings be televised on HOMTV. According to the HOMTV Operating Policies, the Communications Commission has to approve the expansion/limitation of HOMTV meeting coverage.

Alternate Commissioner Nevells moved **TO RECOMMEND THE APPROVAL OF THE REQUEST TO TELEWISE THE SENIOR/COMMUNITY TASK FORCE MEETINGS ON HOMTV BEGINNING IN OCTOBER 2024 AND LASTING UNTIL APRIL 2025.** Seconded by Commissioner Whiting-Dobson.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

B. Alternate Commissioner Appointment to Regular Member - Mike Nevells

Mike Nevells serves as an alternate member, with a term ending on December 31, 2024. At the June 26, 2024, regular Communications Commission meeting, Alternate Commissioner Nevells stated he would like to move the role of a regular member.

Commissioner Whiting-Dobson moved **TO RECOMMEND THE APPOINTMENT OF MIKE NEVELLS TO THE ROLE OF A REGULAR COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION MEMBER, WITH A TERM ENDING ON DECEMBER 31, 2024.** Seconded by Chair Charles.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

C. Communications Commission Application – Amol Pavangadkar

On August 19, 2024, Amol Pavangadkar emailed Manager Diehl asking for more information about the role of Communications Commissioner. She met with him on August 21, 2024, to explain the tasks of the Communications Department, as well as

the tasks of a Commission member. After the meeting, he stated his interest in applying, and his application was received on September 19, 2024.

Alternate Commissioner Nevells moved **TO RECOMMEND THE APPOINTMENT OF AMOL PAVANGADKAR TO THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION MEMBER, WITH A TERM ENDING ON DECEMBER 31, 2025.** Seconded by Commissioner Whiting-Dobson.

9. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. General Fund Allocation for Communications Commission Grants

Manager Diehl mentioned Clerk Guthrie's idea to have Meridian Connectivity Grants for residents where internet service does not exist or for households who are economically challenged. The Communications Commission was going to request \$30,000 from the Township Board to issue these grants, but because the March 2024 Communications Commission meeting was cancelled and the 2025 budget was due two days after the June 2024 Communications Commission meeting, Manager Diehl did not feel comfortable making that ask without having a concrete plan in place. Manager Diehl would like the Commission to discuss the manner forward before bringing it to the Board.

Commissioner Whiting-Dobson said she feels that broadband should be considered infrastructure and that it should be available to residents like water and sewer are.

Alternate Commissioner Nevells would like this program to initially be for financially challenged people who already have access but need help paying their bills, instead of it being about building the infrastructure.

Commissioner Whiting-Dobson would like the Commission to talk with the Community Resource Commission to learn more about the need and their criteria.

10. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Compliments/Complaints

None.

A. Correspondences

None.

11. REPORTS

A. Video Service Provider(s)

None.

B. Programming

None.

C. Website & Social Media

None.

D. Promotions/Publications

Manager Diehl informed the Commission that they have already begun working on the Prime Meridian Magazine and laid out the timeline. The goal is to have it released at the beginning of February.

E. Finance

Manager Diehl informed the Commission that PEG fees will be in their own restricted fund beginning in 2025. Commissioner Whiting-Dobson asked if the department would get back the money that was incorrectly put into the General Fund from 2020-2024. Manager Diehl explained that was her next step, but they will have to wait until a new finance director is selected.

F. HOMTV Internship/Alumni

None.

G. Broadband

None.

12. PUBLIC REMARKS

None.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Alternate Commissioner Nevells moved **TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**. Seconded by Commissioner Whiting-Dobson.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Chair Charles adjourned the meeting at 6:05 pm.



Communications
Commission

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER REPORT



**Communications Department
4th Quarter Report
October - December 2024**

Township Manager Search Process

By the time the Communications Commission holds their December 18 meeting, the Township Board will have selected the next Township Manager.

The three finalists are Robert Hillard, Timothy Dempsey, and Timothy Schmitt.

The finalists were interviewed by the Township Board on December 3, 2024. HOMTV televised all three interviews, and they are available on-demand on HOMTV's YouTube channel and website.

The new manager is expected to start in January 2025.

2025 Policies and Training:

In 2025, the Communications Department will develop an Internal Communications Policy and a Crisis Communications Plan. The Crisis Communications Plan is in the works and is expected to be wrapped up in early 2025. This plan will be the framework used when responding to a crisis. The Internal Communications Plan will need to be developed with HR and will be started on after the Crisis Communications Plan is complete.

The HOMTV Operating Policies also need to be updated, but that will be discussed at the January 2025 meeting that Manager Diehl requested further on in the agenda.

Manager Diehl and Specialist Stohlin would also like to hold social media training for the Meridian Township staff members who have access to the Township's social media pages.

Manager Diehl and Specialist Stohlin will also be completing the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Basic Public Information Officer (PIO) training in January 2025. Once this certification is complete, the goal is to move to the Advanced PIO training.

Marketing & Communications:

- Farmers' Market 50th Anniversary Mural Ribbon Cutting
- Halloween Events (Parks and Recreation, Police)
- General Election
- Heritage Festival
- Nokomis Holiday Market
- Senior/Community Center Information Session
- Christmas in the Village
- Farmers' Market Schedule/Location Changes
- Fall Native Plant Sale
- Fire Prevention Open House/Fire Prevention Month
- Harris Nature Center New Equipment Ribbon Cutting

Internship

There are currently four interns expected to join the Communications Department over the spring 2025 semester (January-April). There will be three HOMTV interns and one marketing and public relations intern.



Communications
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Commission Members Reports & Announcements



Communications
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Action Items



To: Communications Commission
From: Samantha Diehl, Communications Manager
Date: December 11, 2024
Re: Set 2025 Meeting Schedule

According to Rule 6.6 of the Communications Commission Rules and Procedures, the meeting schedule must be adopted at the beginning of the calendar year. Though the meeting schedule is set in advance, meetings can be cancelled, and special meetings called if need be.

6.6 Meeting Schedule. The Commission shall meet in regular session according to a schedule adopted at the beginning of the calendar year or as subsequently revised. Special meetings shall be called by the chairperson or shall be called at the request of three members of the Commission.

Though we only meet once a quarter, I would like to propose a January meeting as well. This is since we will have a new Township Manager, and I would like the chance to invite them to our meeting. I also think it would be beneficial to add an additional meeting prior to the June 25, 2025 meeting. If we go the same route as last year, our budgets will be due at the end of June and I would like to have a more concrete plan in place for the Meridian Connectivity Grants.

I also want to discuss the HOMTV Operating Policies and the 2025 Communications Department goals. The Board will set their goals at their December 17, 2024 regular meeting, so after that is complete, we will have further direction on where to go.

Proposed 2025 Communications Commission Regular Meeting Schedule:

- Wednesday, January 22, 2025 6:00 pm Town Hall Room
- Wednesday, March 26, 2025 6:00 pm Town Hall Room
- Wednesday, June 25, 2025 6:00 pm Town Hall Room
- Wednesday, September 24, 2025 6:00 pm Town Hall Room
- Wednesday, December 17, 2025 6:00 pm Town Hall Room

The Communications Commission **MOVES TO APPROVE THE 2025 COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING SCHEDULE AS PRESENTED.**



8.B

To: Communications Commission
From: Samantha Diehl, Communications Manager
Date: December 11, 2024
Re: Chair and Vice Chair Appointments

According to Rule 4 of the Communications Commission Rules and Procedures, a new Chair and Vice Chair must be selected at the last or first regular meeting in a calendar year.

RULE 4:

4.1 Selection. At the last or first regular meeting in a calendar year, the Commission shall select from its members a chairperson and vice chairperson.

Staff is requesting the Communications Commission MOVE TO APPROVE _____ AS THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION CHAIR FOR THE 2025 CALENDAR YEAR.

Staff is also requesting the Communications Commission MOVE TO APPROVE _____ AS THE COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION VICE CHAIR FOR THE 2025 CALENDAR YEAR.



Communications
Commission

Discussion Items



To: Communications Commission
From: Samantha Diehl, Communications Manager
Date: December 11, 2024
Re: General Fund Allocation for Communications Commission Grants

At the June 26, 2024 regular Communications Commission meeting, the Commission voted to request \$30,000 from the General Fund to the Communications Commission in order to administer grants to residents where internet service does not exist or for households who are economically challenged.

However, due to the cancellation of the March 2024 Communications Commission meeting and the 2025 budget being due on June 28, 2024, no time was left for the Commission and Staff to actually discuss what this project might look like.

As the person responsible for creating and submitting the Communications Department budget, I did not feel comfortable asking for \$30,000 from the General Fund when this program is not something that has been developed yet. I would like us to take the time to build out what this program could look like, and then make the budget ask in June 2025.

At the October 7, 2024 special Communications Commission meeting, the general consensus was that this program should be targeted towards low-income individuals who already have access to internet but may need assistance with their internet bill. It was also discussed that the Communications Commission should speak with the Community Resources Commission and the Human Services Specialist, Katie Love, to see how we can work together to accomplish this.

As a Commission, we need to dive deeper into what this program would look like, who would qualify, and how we would administer the funds. Now that we have a new member and our new Clerk, I'd like to begin discussing this so that we are ready when it comes time to submit the 2025 budget.



Communications
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Compliments/ Complaints



Communications
Commission

Video Service Provider



Communications
Commission

Programming



11Bi.

To: Communications Commission

From: Danneisha McDole, Multimedia Production and Operations Specialist

Date: December 4, 2024

Re: Program Totals and Video On-Demand Totals

Program Totals (Year to Date):

- Meridian Live: 66
 - Township Board: 24
 - Planning Commission: 15
 - Environmental Commission: 8
 - Zoning Board of Appeals: 4
 - Park Commission: 2
 - Senior/Community Center Taskforce: 3
- HOM Entertainment: 8

Video On-Demand Analytics on next page.

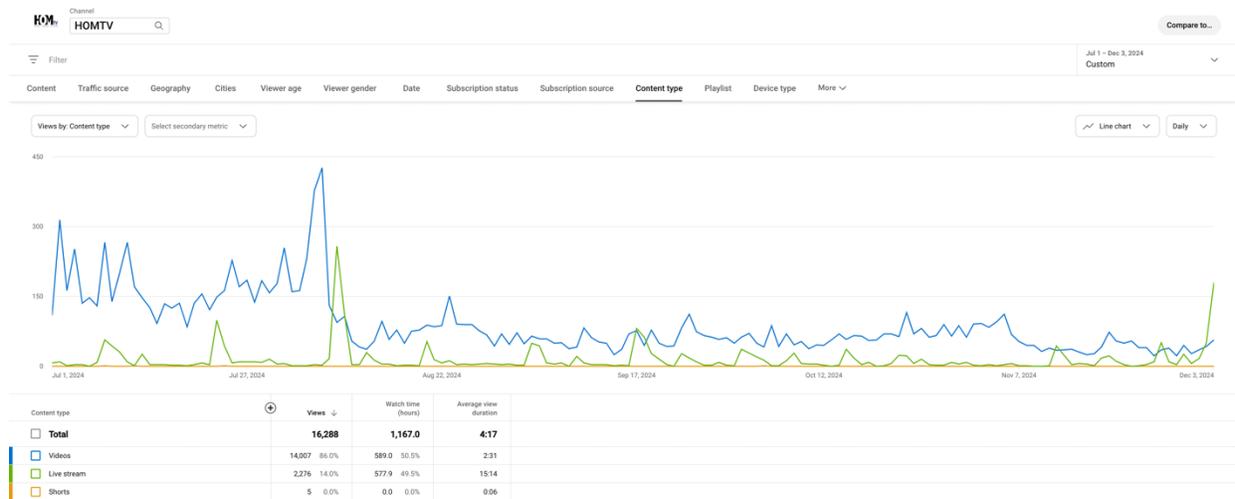
Memo to Communications Commission
December 4, 2024
Re: Programming
Page 2

HOMTV Website Video On-Demand (Swagit)

Currently unavailable due to not completing the migration process to update a newer version of Google Analytics.

YouTube Live vs. Uploaded Content Stats

This graph shows the amount of HOMTV YouTube views based on uploaded content and live streams. Of the 16,288 total views for the year, 86.0% of those were for uploaded content and 14.0% were for the video streamed live (Township meetings).





Communications
Commission

Website Analytics



To: Communications Commission
From: Rachael Stohlin, Marketing & Public Relations Specialist
Date: December 5, 2024
Re: Marketing Updates & Social Media Performance Summary

Updates

Meridian Townships' marketing slowed over the fall 2024 season. This decline is not unusual, as there are fewer events and news items to promote during this time of year. As we work to prepare the 2025 Prime Meridian Magazine and spring internships, our staff availability for general marketing will decline as well.

Over the fall, the department promoted several events, including:

- Fire Prevention Open House
- Heritage Festival
- Great Divide
- Halloween programming
- Farmers' Market
- General election
- Township Manager candidate interviews

This quarter, I fine-tuned our tracking processes for social media analytics and news coverage. Before my hire, staff rarely looked at marketing performance to guide future practices. Doing so will improve our department's work.

The communications department's marketing and public relations internship will continue in late January. Our selected intern, Juhyun (Julia), is enthusiastic about joining the team and growing in her career. We are excited to work with her next year.

In my previous report, I mentioned a department goal to improve media relations. This fall, Communications Manager Samantha Diehl and I connected with WLNS and City Pulse staff to use paid advertising for our Farmers' Market. Next, we wish to understand local media deadlines to improve the timing of our press releases. We also plan on building relationships with our neighborhood reporters, allowing for an improved flow of information between the media and government.

In January of 2025, Diehl and I will continue our professional development in crisis communications. In late January, we will attend a three-day course in public information basics. Completing this course will enable us to receive Basic Public Information Officer certifications through the Federal Emergency Management Agency.



Social Media Performance Overview

We have made the following observations in our social media performance:

Successes

- Township audiences continue to appreciate road and infrastructure construction updates.
- The use of videos and animated content on Instagram has improved engagement on that platform.
- Participating in trends or posting about relevant observances helps us reach our audience.

Opportunities

- Communicating in advance of commonly discussed topics, such as tax bills and development project news, could reduce the spread of misinformation or confusion.
- The Parks & Recreation accounts continue to need help with growth and engagement. A consistent post schedule could help with this issue.
- Filler posts, such as MABA sponsor spotlights and other small office closures, are not reaching the public. These can be cut from social media moving forward.

Facebook

Meridian Township:

- Facebook followers: 9,857 (+97 this quarter)
- Page reach: 108,183 (-42.7% this quarter)
- Content interactions: 3,391 (-45.3% this quarter)
- Content interactions/reach: 3.1% this quarter
- Content quantity: 70 (-34% this quarter)
- The top performing organic post of the quarter informed residents of road and lane closures to take place along Meridian Road.

HOMTV:

- Total Facebook followers: 2,467 (-1 this quarter)
- Page reach: 2,363 (-57.3% this quarter)
- Content interactions: 35 (-85.5% this quarter)
- Content interactions/reach: 1.5% this quarter
- Content quantity: 7 (-77.4% this quarter)
- The top performing organic post in the quarter included a drone video of Phase II of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail.

Meridian Township Parks & Recreation:

- Facebook followers: 3,716 (+30 this quarter)
- Page reach: 14,203 (-38.2% this quarter)
- Content interactions: 315 (-74.6% this quarter)
- Content interactions/reach: 2.3% this quarter



- Content quantity: 22 (-67.6% this quarter)
- The top performing organic post of the quarter promoted Halloween Spooktacular.

Harris Nature Center:

- Facebook followers: 4,543 (+57 this quarter)
- Page reach: 15,190 (+105% this quarter)
- Content interactions: 164 (+234.7% this quarter)
- Content interactions/reach: 0.8% this quarter
- Content quantity: 21 (+23.5% this quarter)
- The top-performing organic post of the quarter informed readers of a multi-day closure of Harris Nature Center.

Meridian Township Farmers' Market:

- Facebook followers: 14,657 (+410 this quarter)
- Page reach: 110,486 (-30.6% this quarter)
- Content interactions: 5,022 (-35.4% this quarter)
- Content interactions/reach: 4.5% this quarter
- Content quantity: 64 (-27.3% this quarter)
- The top-performing organic post for this quarter informed readers that the Meridian Township Farmers' Market is open all year.

Meridian Township Fire Department:

- Facebook followers: 3,177 (+53 this quarter)
- Page reach: 16,615 (+57.1% this quarter)
- Content interactions: 811 (+130.4% this quarter)
- Content interactions/reach: 4.9% this quarter
- Content quantity: 12 (+20.0% this quarter)
- The top performing organic post of the quarter promoted the Great Divide competition.

Meridian Cares:

- Facebook followers: 361 (+13 this quarter)
- Page reach: 513 (+48.0% this quarter)
- Content interactions: 52 (-16.1% this quarter)
- Content interactions/reach: 10.1% this quarter
- Content quantity: 16 (-33.3% this quarter)
- The top-performing organic post thanked The Meridian Company for a significant donation to the Emergency Needs Fund.

Instagram

Meridian Township:

- Instagram followers: 2,493 (+71 this quarter)
- Page reach: 4,283 (-30.7% this quarter)
- Content interactions: 458 (-21.8% this quarter)



- Content interactions/reach: 11.0% this quarter
- Content quantity: 19 (-62.7% this quarter)
- The top-performing organic post informed voters about National Voter Registration Day, using an Instagram trend to capture attention.

HOMTV:

- Instagram followers: 506 (+10 (gross) this quarter)
- Page reach: 269 (-77.1% this quarter)
- Content interactions: 27 (-77.1% this quarter)
- Content interactions/reach: 1.0% this quarter
- Content quantity: 6 (-81.2% this quarter)
- The top-performing organic post highlighted Wharton Center's invitation for the press to see Nick Rehberger, a Haslett High School graduate and main cast member in the Les Misérables US tour.

Meridian Township Parks & Recreation:

- Instagram followers: 287 (+16 (gross) this quarter)
- Page reach: 662 (-41.8% this quarter)
- Content interactions: 84 (-53.6% this quarter)
- Content interactions/reach: 12.7% this quarter
- Content quantity: 11 (-73.2% this quarter)
- The top-performing organic post informed the public about the start of the annual Deer Management Program.

Harris Nature Center:

- Instagram followers: 1034 (+43 (gross) this quarter)
- Page reach: 801 (94.9% this quarter)
- Content interactions: 205 (215% this quarter)
- Content interactions/reach: 25.6% this quarter
- Content quantity: 14 (27.3% this quarter)
- The top-performing organic post included a joke about ghosts, with one of the nature center's turtles dressed in a white tissue.

Meridian Township Farmers' Market:

- Instagram followers: 1601 (+72 (gross) this quarter)
- Page reach: 1203 (-11.4% this quarter)
- Content interactions: 472 (-33.1% this quarter)
- Content interactions/reach: 39.2% this quarter
- Content quantity: 50 (+26.5% this quarter)
- The top-performing organic post for this quarter informed readers that the Meridian Township Farmers' Market is open all year.

LinkedIn



Meridian Township

- Total followers: 835
- Unique visitors: 148

HOMTV:

- Total followers: 1,185
- Unique visitors: 39

Performance Summary

Nextdoor: Nextdoor continues to have the highest volume of followers and greatest engagement for the Township. Meridian Township has 14,963 subscribers, which is an increase of 213 this quarter.

Constant Contact: Currently, we have 9,455 contacts across the Township's three newsletters, with an average open rate of 56%, remaining well above the government industry average of 42%.



Communications
Commission

Publications/ Promotions



To: Communications Commission
From: Samantha Diehl, Communications Manager
Date: December 11, 2024
Re: 2025 Prime Meridian Magazine

The Prime Meridian Magazine is still set to release in late January. The Communications Department has been gathering information from all the department directors about what information they would like included. The deadline for their information to be submitted is December 13, 2024.

A schedule for the development of the magazine is provided below:

- Mid-December to late December:
 - Marketing & Public Relations Specialist to collect quotes from local printing companies.
- Late December to early January:
 - Marketing & Public Relations Specialist to complete magazine layout and content placement.
 - Marketing & Public Relations Specialist to request and receive proofreading assistance from at least three staff members or volunteers, including the Communications Manager.
- Early January to mid-January:
 - Magazine to be reviewed and approved by the new Township Manager.
 - No revisions will be permitted beyond this time.
- Late January:
 - Magazine to be sent to selected printer for publication and mailing.



Communications
Commission

Finance



Communications
Commission

Broadband Update