

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
REGULAR MEETING TOWNSHIP BOARD -**APPROVED**-
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198
517.853.4000, Township Hall Room
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2024, 6:00PM

PRESENT: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Demas, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Lentz, Trustee Wilson, Trustee Trezise and Trustee Sundland

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Interim Manager Schmitt, Deputy Clerk Gordon, Police Chief Grillo, Chief Hamel, Deputy Manager Opsommer, Fire Marshal Millerov, Director Gebes, Neighborhoods and Economic Development Director Clark

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor Hendrickson called the December 17, 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

Deputy Clerk Gordon called the roll of the Board.

Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Demas, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Lentz, Trustee Wilson, Trustee Sundland and Trustee Trezise present at 6:02 pm.

4. PRESENTATION

a. Introduction of New Police Officers- Sara Hanson and Taylor Berman

Chief Grillo introduced Officer Sara Hanson and Officer Taylor Berman.

5. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Supervisor Hendrickson opened comments from the public at 6:07 pm.

Curt Armbruster, Township resident, spoke in opposition of the East Reynolds Street paving.

Rod Arnst, Township resident, spoke in opposition of the East Reynolds Street paving.

Mike Christie, Township resident, spoke in opposition of the East Reynolds Street paving.

Supervisor Hendrickson closed comments from the public at 6:16 pm.

6. INTERIM TOWNSHIP MANAGER REPORT

- The first of two fire trucks should be delivered next week.
- The Harris Nature Center dedicated the new Log Jam structure last week. The next structure to be completed is the Hawk's Nest, with fundraising currently underway.
- Deer management program has culled 132 deer as of Monday which is on track with past years. The cull will continue through January 15th and then the Police Department will assist as needed. MDNR has authorized up to 300 deer.
- One police officer will be sworn in on January 6, 2025, along with two police promotions. This will bring the Police Department to 40 sworn officers.
- Senior Community Center Task Force continues to meet and information will be provided to the Board in January.

7. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS OF ACTIVITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee Wilson attended Santas First Responders party. The Rotary Club delivered 100 holiday baskets to Grange Acres.

Clerk Demas congratulated the new officers and thanked Chief Grillo for the officer swearing in, attended the Log Jam ribbon cutting ceremony at Harrison Nature Center, went to the Christmas in the Village event, and supported Friends of Okemos Library Book Sale last weekend.

Treasurer Deschaine attended Harris Nature Center Log Jam ribbon cutting and announced that the Township offices will be open 8pm to 5pm December 23, 26, 27, and 30 for people who want to come in and pay their taxes.

Supervisor Hendrickson spoke about the senior community center task force meeting, noting that cost is being discussed.

8. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

VOICE VOTE: YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Demas, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Lentz, Trustee Wilson, Trustee Sundland and Trustee Trezise

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

9. CONSENT AGENDA

Supervisor Hendrickson listed the items on the Consent Agenda and noted that he noticed two misspellings on items 9.B(3) and 9.D which he asked to be corrected.

Trustee Wilson moved to approve the Consent Agenda with spelling corrections. Supported by Clerk Demas.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Clerk Demas, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Lentz, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson, and Supervisor Hendrickson

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

10. QUESTIONS FOR THE ATTORNEY

NONE

11. HEARINGS

NONE

12. ACTION ITEMS

A. Township Manager Interview/Hiring

Supervisor Hendrickson gave background information on the process of the search and process for finding a new Manager.

Treasurer Deschaine explained how he came to his choice.

Trustee Wilson explained how she came to her choice.

Clerk Demas explained how she came to her choice.

Trustee Lentz explained how he came to his choice

Trustee Sundland explained how she came to her choice.

Trustee Trezise explained how he came to his choice.

Supervisor Hendrickson explained how he came to his choice.

Treasurer Deschaine moved to offer Tim Dempsey the position of Township Manager for the Charter Township of Meridian. Supported by Trustee Wilson.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Lentz, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson, Supervisor Hendrickson, and Clerk Demas

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

Trustee Trezise moved to authorize the Supervisor to negotiate the Manager's contract with the assistance of Legal Council and the Human Resources Director on behalf of the Board. Supported by Trustee Wilson.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustee Lentz, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson, Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Demas, and Treasurer Deschaine

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

B. Text Amendment 2024-19-RN-Village of Nemoka Update-Introduction

Interim Manager Schmitt outlined the work that has been done to date.

Trustee Trezise asked if it will place any properties into non-conforming use. Interim Manager Schmitt clarified that it will not.

Trustee Trezise moved to adopt the resolution approving for introduction Text Amendment #2024-09 to amend the Code of Ordinances of the Charter Township of Meridian at Section 86-377 to update the standards for the RN, Village of Nemoka zoning district. Supported by Trustee Wilson.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson, Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Demas, Treasurer Deschaine, and Trustee Lentz

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

C. 4th Quarter Budget Amendments

Interim Manager Schmitt gave an overview of the Amendments being requested. He stated that there were two changes uncovered today that needed to be incorporated. The first change is that line item 101-700.701-821.000 needs to be increased by \$10,270 for the second payment for the community survey. The second change is that line item 101-170.270-825.000 will not change because of a late item that is in the budget and should not be taken out.

Trustee Trezise noted that revenue went up and there is a surplus of funds. Interim Manager Schmitt gave some information about the trim operations across Township departments.

Treasurer Deschaine expressed concern that interest rates were likely to drop. Interim Manager Schmitt indicated that the 2025 budget does not rely upon high interest rates.

Trustee Trezise moved to approve the 2024 Fourth Quarter Budget Amendments, with two changes from what is presented in the packet, increasing by \$10,270 line item 101-700.701-821.000 to pay for the final bill on the community survey, and not changing line item 101-170.270-825.000 resulting in a projected fund balance at December 31, 2024 of \$11,366,254. Seconded by Trustee Wilson

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson, Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Demas, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Lentz, and Trustee Sundland

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

Supervisor Hendrickson called for a 5-minute recess at 6:54 PM. The meeting resumed at 7:01 pm.

13. BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Fire Code Update

Fire Marshal Tavis Millerov gave background information on the Fire Code updates.

Trustee Lentz asked how many communities have updated to the Code and if there are additional resources available for municipalities that update their Code. Fire Marshal Millerov indicated that he isn't sure about local communities, but it is standard for fire departments to update as the International Code is updated. Updating allows newer technologies as the Building Code gets updated.

Trustee Trezise asked for more details about how this Code works with the Building Code. Fire Marshal Millerov stated that the Fire Code builds off of the Building Code to require a more precise standard.

Supervisor Hendrickson asked if it would be more appropriate to adopt an Ordinance that states that the Township will automatically update to the International Code to avoid the need to update the Code every three years. Interim Manager Schmitt came to the podium to explain that legally the Township is not permitted to do that, and the Township is permitted to opt out of certain sections and those can change.

B. I Heart Mac N Cheese Class C Liquor License

Director Clark spoke about the Class C Liquor License process and ordinance criteria.

Trustee Wilson noted that this license, if approved, would be very near to a quarter of the other licenses that have been issued in the Township and that she is concerned that it is not being issued in any of the designated PICA areas. Director Clark indicated that until the most recent update, diversifying the licenses geographically had not been addressed. Treasurer Deschaine concurred.

Trustee Trezise noted that in addition to other Trustee's concerns, the applicant's business model seems to be mainly carry out which does not seem to be compatible with a Class C liquor license.

Clerk Demas noted that other locations within the same franchise as the applicant's business operate without liquor licenses and it does not seem to be necessary that the applicant needs a liquor license to operate their business. Director Clark concurred.

Supervisor Hendrickson stated that he concurred with the other Trustees and advised that the Board proceed with caution.

Trustee Wilson asked if the applicant had other options for acquiring a liquor license. Director Clark indicated that there are other options available.

C. Youth Commission Establishment

Director Clark outlined the process for establishing a Commission. Suchir Nagisetty gave information about the reasons for establishing a Youth Commission.

Trustee Lentz, noting that Mr. Nagisetty is a Senior at Okemos High school, asked if he had spoken with students from Haslett High School students. Mr. Nagisetty stated that he has spoken with a few students and, while he hasn't spoken with many, they think it is a good idea.

Treasurer Deschaine asked if the students' other activities could present an obstacle to the commission's success, stating his concern that interest may wane after only a few years. Mr. Nagisetty didn't think it would be an issue so long as meeting times could be flexible throughout the school year. Treasurer Deschaine asked what the result of the Commission would be in a year or two years' time. Mr. Nagisetty replied that the goal would be to get youth involved in local government and be available to speak to the Board

Clerk Demas indicated her support for a Youth Commission, stating that this helps to create an environment where youth can be heard. She asked if it would be possible to provide course credit or another incentive to encourage students to be involved. Mr. Nagisetty indicated that he is open to the idea of an incentive.

Trustee Trezise asked for more details about what the Commission will do and the issues it will address, acknowledging that some of those details may not be available until the Commission has met. Mr. Nagisetty stated that he thinks a Youth Commission would be most involved in addressing environmental concerns, participating in service tasks for parks, driving mental health initiatives, and supporting community and cultural events. He thinks that there would be crossover between other existing service clubs within the schools.

Trustee Lentz indicated his support for a Youth Commission.

Trustee Wilson stated that the description sounds like the vision for this Commission is community action. Mr. Nagisetty concurred, stating that he expects that it will branch out into different ideas from there. Trustee Wilson suggested that it would be beneficial for individuals to interact with Board Members and staff to learn more about how local government works. She asked if Youth Commission members would be attending other Commission meetings to share Youth Commission ideas. Mr. Nagisetty indicated that would be the case.

Treasurer Deschaine asked if other communities have Youth Commissions. Director Clark gave details about how other Youth Advisory Commissions around the state operate.

Supervisor Hendrickson indicated his support for a Youth Commission and put forth ideas for things a Youth Commission might accomplish for the Township. He also stated that if interest wanes, the Commission can be dissolved. He asked how this would impact staff. Interim Manager Schmitt indicated that it would either be under the Manager's purview or housed within Community Planning & Development.

Trustee Trezise recommended there be a liaison to this Commission.

Supervisor Hendrickson recommended the meeting calendar based on the academic calendar. Trustee Trezise added that it is important to have continuity.

Clerk Demas asked how parental consent would be handled. Director Clark indicated that there would be a modified application for public service to accommodate a parental consent component.

D. Supervisor Pro-Tem Appointment

Supervisor Hendrickson spoke regarding his choice to have Trustee Wilson. Treasurer Deschaine and Trustee Lentz spoke in favor of Trustee Wilson.

E. Board 2025 Goals

Interim Manager Schmitt outlined the work staff has done to create the goals they would like the Board to focus upon.

Clerk Demas asked if there could be more focus on citizen outreach. Treasurer Deschaine indicated that he thinks citizen outreach is implicit in the functions of government and doesn't think listening sessions need to be included as part of the goals statements.

Treasurer Deschaine stated that he thinks the goals list is too long and asked for it to be reduced to five. Supervisor Hendrickson concurred and offered a suggestion for making list shorter and changing the wording to combine the third and sixth goals into one. Trustees Wilson, Trezise, and Lentz concurred.

Clerk Demas asked that the first goal be more direction oriented by including the current focus on personnel policy. Trustee Wilson explained that the goals usually do not include that level of detail, instead relying upon staff to communicate with the Board the ways in which they plan to meet the goal. Supervisor Hendrickson clarified that the board sets the goals and staff brings action items to the Board to show how they will achieve the goal, that this discussion is to inform the intent of the goals.

Supervisor Hendrickson noted that the use of the acronym "PICA" might be confusing and suggested rewording that would eliminate the need for the acronym. Trustee Trezise concurred and suggested naming the four PICAs directly in the goal. Trustee Lentz, and Treasurer Deschaine concurred.

Treasurer Deschaine asked that more detail be added to the infrastructure goal to indicate that it is limited to Township Public Works infrastructure essential to the community. Trustee Wilson noted that this goal was to be combined with the third goal. Supervisor Hendrickson concurred, adding that if infrastructure were to fail, the Township would repair in regardless of its age.

14. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Supervisor Hendrickson opened public comments at 8:13 pm

Roger Taylor congratulated the board on being re-elected and asked how the Board handles disagreements.

Paul Hamby, I Heart Mac and Cheese owner, offered to answer questions from the board regarding his license application.

Tim Schmitt thanked the board

Chief Hamel thanked Interim Manager Schmitt

Supervisor Hendrickson closed public comments at 8:19 pm

15. OTHER MATTERS AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Clerk Demas commended Interim Manager Schmitt for the work he has done as Interim Manager. She expressed that she appreciates public comment. She noted the importance of discussions which happen during open meetings and expressed the danger of suggesting the Board makes decisions outside of open meetings.

Treasurer Deschaine also thanked Interim Manager Schmitt for his service as Interim Manager.

Trustee Lentz thanked fellow Board Members and Interim Manager Schmitt for helping him as a new Board Member.

Supervisor Hendrickson also thanked Interim Manager Schmitt and thanked staff for their work through the transition time.

16. CLOSED SESSION

At 8:24 pm the Board entered closed session

Trustee Lentz moved to enter closed session to discuss trial or settlement strategy regarding the Ingham County Circuit Court case Meridian Township v West Shore Inc, with legal counsel, pursuant to Sections 8(e) and 8(h) of the OMA. Supported by Clerk Demas

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustee Wilson, Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Demas, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Lentz, Trustee Sundland, and Trustee Trezise

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

The Board returned to open session at 9:33 pm

17. ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Trezise moved to adjourn. Seconded by Trustee Lentz

VOICE VOTE YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Demas, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Lentz, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, and Trustee Wilson

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

The meeting adjourned at 9:33 pm



Scott Hendrickson
Township Supervisor



Angela Demas
Township Clerk