



2024 Township Board Listening Sessions

UPDATE

November 1, 2024

In 2022, the Meridian Township Board established a goal to enhance the Township's communication outreach to our 45,000 residents. To help meet this goal, the board embarked on a series of six Listening Sessions throughout the community in the fall of 2023. These sessions brought out just under 300 residents to talk about everything from the Township's road program to public safety issues, County drain projects to land preservation and a wide variety of other topics. One of the Township Board's goals for 2024 was to further improve our Citizen Outreach and Communication, leading to another round of Listening Sessions in June.

The 2024 Listening Sessions started with Staff mailing an invitation to every resident in the Township, inviting them to one of three evening sessions, held at the Town Hall Room in the Municipal Building. In those three nights, over 200 residents shared their opinions and asked questions on a variety of topics. Each session was opened with updates from Staff and Trustees on four topics:

- Police and Public Safety related issues from Police Chief Grillo
- Road Construction updates from Deputy Township Manager Dan Opsommer
- Senior Community Center Design Development from Township Trustee Marna Wilson
- Economic Development Project update from Interim Township Manager Tim Schmitt

After those four updates, the Supervisor opened the floor to the general public to ask questions, which ranged from recreational marijuana to issues with invasive garlic mustard. Additionally, the Township Board stayed beyond the nominal end time of 7:30PM to continue to discuss and answer questions from constituents. Below is an update on the main topics that Staff have been working on since July.

POLICE UPDATE

Staffing Levels

The Meridian Township Police Department (MTPD) is funded to staff 42 police officers. Over the past five years, we have struggled to reach full staffing. The struggle is not unique to Meridian Township as many agencies across the area, the state, and the country have faced similar challenges. At the end of 2023, staffing levels sunk to 30 sworn officers. Thanks to the Recruiting and Retention Program which was passed by the Township Board in early 2024, the number of sworn officers has risen to 38 with 3 more recruits in the police academy. It is anticipated that by the end of 2024, MTPD will be have at least 41 sworn officers and may be fully staffed.

Traffic

The biggest concerns expressed by the residents of Meridian Township relate to traffic safety. In 2023, MTPD made 2,641 traffic stops and wrote 894 citations. So far in 2024, MTPD has made 3,458 stops and written 1847 citations, a marked increase. Pedestrian crossing signs have been placed in the roadways around schools in the crosswalks. Our 4 speed signs and our speed trailer are deployed daily to areas of concern around the township. Utilizing a traffic grant received from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 48 hours of targeted traffic enforcement have been conducted in specific areas where traffic crashes are most prominent.

The Township Board has approved additional funds in the 2025 budget to purchase speed monitoring equipment including new radars and speed signs with the ability to conduct traffic surveys, bringing our fleet of signs to seven. Allowing additional targeted enforcement.

Through our efforts this year, we are projecting a decrease of 5-8% in traffic crashes compared to 2023.

Emergency Alert System

There are over 7,500 subscribers to the new emergency alert system, RAVE, in Meridian Township. This is a great number, but we would love to see more! To subscribe to emergency alerts please visit <https://www.smart911.com/smart911/ref/reg.action?pa=ingham>

LOCAL ROAD/ROAD CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Mount Hope Road Diet Project

The Ingham County Road Department's Mount Hope Road Diet project is tentatively scheduled to begin construction in May of 2025 with an open to traffic date (meaning the roadway has been fully reopened to traffic, but there may be some additional restoration work to complete) of August 19. Although not a township project, we intend to keep the public informed of the project's progress.

Phase II of ELMWSA's Okemos Road Raw Water Main Project

Phase II of ELMWSA's Okemos Road raw water main project was completed in July of 2024.

Timberlane Water Main Replacement Project

The Timberlane water main project has been completed.

Blue Haven Drive Water Main Replacement Project

The Blue Haven Drive water main project is substantially complete. The Township's contractor still needs to touch up some of the grass restoration this fall.

MSU to Lake Lansing Trail

Phase II of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail officially opened to the public on Saturday, September 14.

The Township is currently working to acquire the land and design Phase III. The anticipated opening of Phase III will be announced once all land has been acquired and the project is ready to proceed to construction. Phase III is the final phase of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail and will provide a trail route from Marsh Road, just south of Haslett Road, all the way to Lake Lansing Park North in the northeast corner of the Township.

Once all three phases are completed, the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail will provide residents with approximately 6.75 miles of trail system, enhancing the region and township's trail system by connecting to the MSU and Lansing River Trails.

Local Road Program

The Township has completed all of the asphalt rejuvenator spray treatments and all of the paving and concrete work under the 2024 Local Road Program.

The Township's contractors also fixed three paving issues that arose during this year's construction cycle.

- A failure of the new asphalt caused by a rain event that occurred while our contractor was paving. This failure is on Riverwood Drive, immediately south of the Butternut Drive intersection.
- A drainage issue on the west side of the island in the cul-de-sac of Pine Creek Cir. The pavement does not have enough slope to properly drain the roadway.
- Paving the second a final layer of asphalt on Linden St and Timberlane Street where the Township compelled our contractor to remove all of the asphalt due to initial paving not being completed in conformance with the contract and road design.

The Township's contractors are currently working to finish raising manholes and touching up restoration in some of the work limits of the paving projects.

The Township completed the 2024 paving projects ahead of schedule. To make use of the remaining construction season, and get a jump start on the 2025 program, the Township is working to resurface these roads from the 2025

Local Road Program in September and October of 2024:

- York Way: Westminster Way to Everett Lane
- Tomahawk Road: Tacoma Blvd to Manitou Drive
- Tacoma Circle: Tacoma Blvd to End
- Kenosha Drive: Penobscot Drive to Birchwood Drive
- Redwing Drive: Birchwood Drive to End
- Dobie Circle: Dobie Road to End

The 2024-2025 crack fill contract is nearly ready to go out to bid, which will include over 20 miles of roadway.

Invasive Species

Ingham County Parks Department is looking into a grant opportunity from the DNR to address invasive species. The 2024 Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program application is now available and it is due by November 1, 2024. This grant may be able to aid with the invasive species (i.e. garlic mustard) that is spreading on the County Park North property.

COMMUNITY/SENIOR CENTER PROJECT

Facility Concept Plan

The current Meridian Senior Center is being demolished with the renovation of Chippewa Middle School. There is a demand for Parks and Recreation space in the winter as well as meeting room space for public use. The plan presented to the Township Board was for a multigenerational senior and community center. The Parks and Recreation Department would be housed in the facility. The facility would include space for a senior center, meeting rooms/multipurpose room, two regulation size basketball courts, badminton courts, pickleball courts, volleyball, two exercise rooms, warming kitchen, lockers, changing rooms, vending area, and youth activities. \$5 million has been given to the Township from State Legislators as a catalyst for the Project. In August, the Township Board opted out to proceed with a millage, but directed the Senior Community Center Task Force to revisit the concept and location.

Facility Location

The Community/Senior Center Committee reviewed six possible locations. Due to the fact that some of the location options had wetland issues and substantial tree removals, the Committee decided to go with the former Younkers location. After Township Board feedback in August, the Senior Community Center Task Force will be revisiting all possible options and reporting back to the Board and public with options.

Community Survey

The Township conducted the 2024 Community Survey with the consultation of Cobalt Community Research out of Charlotte. Final survey results were tabulated in September with a presentation to the Board at the October 1, 2024 meeting. Cobalt explained how the survey was conducted, how people can read the results, and what the high and low changes were across the several indicators. In general, Meridian Township maintains a high level of service and programs for our community. The Building permitting and engagement with Police Department were areas noted for improvement. The Board added three questions related to the Senior Center. Residents responded in favor of a Community/Senior Center, in favor of repurposing Younkers, and were split on passing a millage to finance the project.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/REVITALIZATION EFFORTS

Current Single Family Projects

Currently, the Township has four major residential projects under construction. These include the following:

- Silverleaf on Bennett Road-150 total homes, 25 in the first phase under construction.
- Copper Creek on Haslett Road-has completed 3rd and 4th phases underway with the addition of 37 homes.
- Grand Reserve on Central Park Drive-60 duplexes, 55 family homes, is set to begin vertical construction this

year. Each building will receive an individual permit and the property will be completed in “groupings” of buildings to assist Consumers Energy as they provide the necessary utilities. The permit for the Clubhouse has been issued.

- Newton Pointe on Saginaw-239 units in a variety of configurations with the 100 unit stacked flat building being open and occupants moved in.

Commercial Project Updates

The following updates were shared:

- ACE Hardware construction and design plans have been approved and will be issued a construction permit.
- Chateau Coffee is awaiting final approvals from the Health Department prior to final inspection. The site is next to the building near to Playmakers.
- Escapes Unlocked at 1831 Newman will host a ribbon cutting on November 8th at noon.
- I Heart Mac and Cheese has an open permit for construction as a new eatery in Hannah Plaza.
- Becky Beauchine Kulka is moving into the former bank site on Okemos Road.
- Tantay-first Peruvian restaurant in the region received occupancy in October and held ribbon cutting on October 25th.
- Consumers Credit Union held its ribbon cutting on September 24th.
- On October 28th, the Planning Commission held a public hearing for a drive through at Panda Express (former Wheat Jewelers).

Haslett Village Square

This Project has an approved MUPUD for a mixed-use space with apartments and commercial space. We are working through an issue with the Ingham County Drain Commission regarding detention of this site and the American House Meridian site. According to the Drain office, after the stormwater design for American House Meridian was approved, the storms in June and July (1000 year events) exceeded the capacity of the detention pond. Several conversations with all parties continue as we navigate getting approval for the project to begin phase 1 construction.

Village of Okemos

After conversations with Ingham County Road Department, it is apparent that the public road improvements and public infrastructure associated with the site must be handled by public entities for a project to be successful. History shows Okemos Road with on street parking which was eliminated by the County Road Department prior to 1980. The decline in the “Okemos Village” area began at that time and continued. Any project at the corner of Hamilton and Okemos will increase traffic within the area and the Road Department will require a left turn lane. A developer will not be able to finance public road improvements through traditional financing. Township Staff are working to address the public improvements that need to occur prior to construction. There is no movement on the approved project for now and the developer is evaluating their options.

OTHER ITEMS DISCUSSED

Order to Maintain Program

The Order to Maintain Program is a replacement program for sidewalks that is paid for through special assessments. The 2022 Program was just completed. We inspect neighborhoods and flag sidewalks for trip and fall hazards. If they reach a certain height, they are temporarily fixed with asphalt until that area is part of the Program. ADA ramps are upgraded and installed when missing as part of the Program. Concrete sidewalk has been repaired in front of Quality Dairy on Grand River at Central Park Drive/Dobie Road.

Road Diets

Deputy Manager Opsommer explained that Road Diets are studied nationally, not locally and they work best on roads that have 15,000 trips or fewer. The Mt. Hope Road Diet will not happen until 2025. The Ingham County Road Department will be doing the project. By cutting down thru lanes on Mt. Hope, it improves safety due to less distracted driving. You can contact the Ingham County Road Department for studies on it or questions. Also, reach out to the Ingham County Commissioners.

Recreational Marijuana Dispensaries

There was discussion regarding the dispensary at Okemos and Jolly Roads. Marijuana uses were approved initially in 2019/2020 for medical marijuana and approved for a recreational marijuana license in 2024. The Special Use Permit (SUP) was approved by the Township Board and they are now open. There is a possibility of four recreational dispensaries in the Township. These were previously medical marijuana locations. The Township has discussed marijuana licensing for over five years and this is the first location that is opened.