

PRIME MERIDIAN

magazine

WINTER | SPRING 2021



1 ➤

SERVING
our **COMMUNITY**

3 ➤

MARKETPLACE
on the **GREEN**

9 ➤

CADL in
your **COMMUNITY**



A PRIME COMMUNITY
meridian.mi.us

A MESSAGE to the COMMUNITY



The past year has brought challenges and obstacles that most of us have not faced in our lifetime. The COVID-19 worldwide pandemic gave us a direct challenge to protect our staff and the community from the virus, while providing essential services that you depend on as residents. I thank the Meridian Team for their stalwart and unwavering determination and commitment to protect our 42,424 residents.

For this edition of the Prime Meridian Magazine, we have chosen "Serving Our Community" as the theme because it's important to highlight the many positive things that occurred in 2020, while focusing on the Township's vision for 2021.

Together, as we move into 2021, we will continue our customer service efforts

and assist our most vulnerable during this global pandemic.

We will expand and measure our efforts with Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, maintain our unwavering promises made to voters relating to public safety and road improvements, expand our solar footprint, enhance our community signage and complete phases of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail.

Coming off a successful 2020, we have set the bar higher for 2021. Our united Township Board and Team will deliver. We will serve the public with unbridled passion, performance and pride.

Frank L. Walsh
Township Manager



Best Places to Live in Michigan

- Okemos #1
- Haslett #13



Best Small Town to Raise a Family in Michigan

- Okemos #1

ELECTED OFFICIALS

Township Board Members

Supervisor Ronald J. Styka	styka@meridian.mi.us
Clerk Deborah Guthrie	guthrie@meridian.mi.us
Treasurer Phil Deschaine	deschaine@meridian.mi.us
Trustee Patricia Herring Jackson	pjackson@meridian.mi.us
Trustee Dan Opsommer	opsommer@meridian.mi.us
Trustee Kathy Ann Sundland	sundland@meridian.mi.us
Trustee Courtney Wisinski	wisinski@meridian.mi.us

Park Commission Members

- Commission Chair Amanda A. Lick
- Commissioner Michael McDonald
- Commissioner Mark Stephens
- Commissioner Mary Nardo Farris
- Commissioner Amy Van Antwerp



WATCH exclusive LIVE coverage of Township meetings in your home or on the go only on:



Comcast Channel 21



www.homt.v.net

"Your Source for Community News"

PRIME MERIDIAN MAGAZINE

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PORTABLE OUTDOOR **service centers**

With limited access available to Township Buildings, Portable Outdoor Service Centers were established at the Municipal Building to reduce the spread of COVID-19, while safely serving the public in-person. Although currently closed for the season, the Portable Outdoor Service Centers are expected to be utilized again in 2021. For additional details, visit meridian.mi.us/TownshipReopeningPlan.

HISTORICAL VILLAGE **upgrade**

A new, accessible "Gateway Bridge" and restroom facility was completed in the Meridian Historical Village. This project was made possible through a Land and Water Conservation Fund through the National Park Service and the Meridian Township Park Millage.



OUR COMMUNITY

HNC improvements

The Harris Nature Center has welcomed new additions in 2020 including an observation deck with binoculars, pavilion with a brick patio and a restroom building. For more information, visit meridian.mi.us/HNC.



TREE PLANTING initiative

Community volunteers planted 40 trees at Chippewa Middle School as part of the Township's Tree Team's 2020 Tree Distribution and Planting Initiative. Benefits of the new trees include beautification, shade, habitat improvements and opportunities for environmental education. Contact Environmental Programs Coordinator LeRoy Harvey at harvey@meridian.mi.us if you wish to be involved in future community planting days.



2020 CENSUS #becounted

Special thank you to all Meridian Township residents for shaping their community and being counted in the 2020 Census. The Township's self-response rate surpassed the Michigan state average by 5%. Data from the Census is expected to be released by the end of April 2021. For additional information, visit meridian.mi.us/Census2020.

LOCAL ROAD program

2020

- 1st year of Township's 10-year plan to fix the roads
- Over 26 miles of local roads were improved
- 10.24 miles of neighborhood streets were reconstructed
- 16 miles of local roads received crack seal treatment

2021

- 8.87 miles of rehabilitation work
- 7.61 miles of preventative maintenance crack sealing work
- 1.5 miles cape seal work

For the 2021 Local Road List and construction updates, visit meridian.mi.us/TownshipProjects

HVAC overhaul

The Municipal Building's heating and cooling system which was originally installed in 1971, was completely overhauled in 2020.



The new system has improved energy efficiency and air filtration.

MARKETPLACE on the GREEN



MARKET days
1st & 3rd Saturday
February - April
11:00 am - 1:00 pm
meridian.mi.us/FarmersMarket

FARM FOOD CRAFTS

Enjoy the new home to Meridian Township's Farmers' Market! Marketplace on the Green officially opened in October 2020. The new facility consists of a large 14,650 sq. ft. pavilion complete with restrooms, a music stage, playground, patio area with seating, a courtyard with site furnishings and more. The Marketplace is equipped with LED lighting, solar panels, rain gardens, landscaping and a shared parking area for energy efficiency.

In addition to the Farmers' Market, this social and economic centerpiece will provide a community gathering space for Township-wide events, craft fairs, adult and youth sports, LIVE music and more. Pavilion rental is also available through the Parks & Recreation Department.



JOHN VEENSTRA memorial

This special place in the Marketplace is dedicated to former Township Trustee and Ingham County Commissioner John Veenstra. The Liaison for Inter-Neighborhood Cooperation (LINC) funded a park bench, bike rack and repair station and memorial plaque in honor of Veenstra's legacy.



LARGE dog park

Across from the Marketplace, large dogs now have a new space to call their own. The park features a natural walking path, control gate, dog fountain, open grassy and shaded areas. Local dog lovers are invited to visit both of the Township's Prime Dog Parks! Visit meridian.mi.us/DogParks for rules and registration.



EXPLORE nature

The Harris Nature Center is hosting Chipmunk Story Time each month virtually. Registration includes a craft kit and link to a Naturalist reading the monthly story online. Self-guided and private-guided nature programs are available upon request. Email hnc@meridian.mi.us or call 517.349.3866 for details.



PAVILION & brick patio

The Harris Nature Center now features a pavilion with a brick patio and outdoor restrooms.

The restrooms will be open year-round and the pavilion will be available for use by school groups, private groups, HNC's summer camp program and the general public. You can still help to enhance the brick patio by purchasing a personalized engraved brick through the HNC Foundation at hncfoundation.org.

SENIOR community

The senior community found ways to stay fit and engaged during COVID-19. The Meridian Senior Center continues to offer virtual fitness and educational classes for members.

meridianseniorcenter.weebly.com

Approximately 50 seniors also gathered three times a week for exercise and socialization in Township parks during the Senior Stretch Program.



PARKS & recreation

DEER management

Meridian's Deer Management efforts continue into 2021. Under a special permit from the Michigan DNR, the Police Department is conducting a deer cull through March 2021. The purpose of the cull is to reduce deer-related incidents and support biological diversity in natural areas. Contact MTPD at 517.853.4800 with questions.



October - December 2020 DEER ARCHERY program

- 75 Returning Hunters
- 176 Deer Harvested
- 2,400 lbs. Venison Donated to Food Banks
- 9,600 Meals Provided
- \$26,376 Worth of Venison
- 75 Roadkill Deer Removed (not donated)

meridian.mi.us/DeerManagement

COMING SOON...

2021 park projects

- Develop Community Ice Rink at Marketplace on the Green
- Expand and Improve Central Park South Parking
- Expand and Improve North Meridian Road Park Parking
- Complete Central Meridian Regional Trail Connector



Harris Nature Center

3998 Van Atta Road
Okemos, MI 48864
517.349.3866



Parks & Recreation

Service Center
2100 Gaylord C. Smith Court
Haslett, MI 48840
517.853.4600



Meridian Senior Center

4000 Okemos Road
Okemos, MI 48864
517.706.5045

HR diversity, equity & inclusion

DEI task force

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) remains a vital and motivating element of the Township's work. The Township's DEI Task Force views this as a process that brings staff and leadership together, improves internal and external communication and unites the Township with those they serve. The Township Board recently adopted the Non-Discrimination and Fair Employment Practices Policy to remove questions that could inadvertently limit the ability to see job-related strengths of applicants. Contact the Human Resources Department at 517.853.4210 with questions regarding the Township's DEI efforts.

Township **WELCOMES** New Human Resources Director



“ It is a pleasure serving the people who serve our Township and community. Our dedicated employees and first responders work with the clear intention of contributing to a better experience for the collective, making our daily work and interactions feel more rewarding, connected and meaningful. I am grateful to be a part of the team, providing HR guidance and support. ”

Abigail "Abby" Tithof joined the Meridian Team in August 2020. She brings over 20 years of experience in HR and has been a Meridian Township resident for over 10 years.

WELCOME to meridian township



Kamic Jok
IT Technician



Megan Heinemann (left)
Sierra Alvarado (right)
Police Officers



Christine Cassidy
Administrative Assistant
Fire Department



Police Officer
Paramedic/Firefighter

meridian.mi.us/Careers

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meridian.mi.us/Careers



Human Resources
5151 Marsh Road
Okemos, MI 48864
517.853.4210

ECONOMIC development

SMALL BUSINESS grants

The Township Board and Meridian EDC continue to provide ways to support the Township's small business community. Through a Small Business Relief Grant Program, the Township was able to award grant opportunities to small businesses affected by COVID-19. Two rounds of grants were distributed with 42 small businesses receiving \$4,000 each in June 2020 and 105 small businesses receiving up to \$7,000 each in January 2021. A full list of awardees can be found on the Township website, meridian.mi.us/SmallBusinessReliefGrant.



DEVELOPMENT updates

Two major development projects will begin in 2021: Pine Village at Haslett Village Square and the Village of Okemos. The Pine Village Development will be the first keystone piece in bringing new life to the Haslett and Marsh Road intersection. This intersection will see a lot of activity as the Haslett Marathon also begins renovations.

The Village of Okemos reimagined kicked off the new year with demolition and construction is expected to begin in the spring. We encourage the public to keep their eyes on the progress as we continue through the year and crown this moment as we look to new beginnings.

Follow updates at meridian.mi.us/DevelopmentProjects.



“

My time with Meridian Township proves that not only did I pick a great community to live in, but also to serve. The more I engage with neighborhood leaders and business owners, the more I am aware of how special our community truly is; we are a Prime Community!

”

Amber Clark was welcomed as the new Neighborhoods & Economic Development Director in September 2020.

With this new position, the Township is looking to enhance relations with the neighborhoods and strengthen its economic development efforts.



Economic Development
5151 Marsh Road
Okemos, MI 48864
517.853.4568



Community Planning & Development
5151 Marsh Road
Okemos, MI 48864
517.853.4560

GREEN MERIDIAN sustainability



Launched in 2020, the Meridian Conservation Corps (MCC) is designed to increase community involvement in the parks and preserve areas.



The program will help to build awareness of volunteer opportunities involving the care and conservation of the Township's expansive local green spaces.



2020 Stewardship accomplishments

- 498.5 hours of habitat restoration completed
- 263 pounds of litter removed from 12 parks
- 135 corps members
- 65 volunteers actively working across 7 parks
- 22 native plant species cultivated in preserves
- 10 different species of invasive plants removed
- 15 Stewardship Workdays at 10 different parks
- 4 conservation programs launched
- 1 sentinel tree adopted by Forest Watch volunteers

Learn more about the Meridian Conservation Corps at meridian.mi.us/MCC.

RENEWABLE energy systems

Meridian's solar footprint continues to expand. In 2020, two solar arrays were installed:

- 3.84 kW solar array located on the south-facing roof of the restrooms at the Marketplace on the Green producing approximately 4,906 kWh/year.
- 36.48 kW solar array located on the south-facing roof of the South Fire Station producing approximately 44,260 kWh/year.



Photo Courtesy: Absolute Solar Power

Upon installation of the additional 120 kW panels in 2021, the Township will be at 60% of the required 300kW needed in combination with energy efficiency measures and renewable energy provider purchases to meet the 100% goal.

MSU to lake lansing trail

This project will create a continuous trail system from the Lansing River Trail, through MSU's campus and out to the Ingham County Parks around Lake Lansing.

Once completed, the trail system will provide direct access to several Meridian Township facilities and will provide safe and enjoyable paths for non-motorized commuters between MSU and the Township.



Phases I and II are currently in the process of the final design and layout. Construction of multiple segments will begin in spring 2021.

Land Stewardship Parks & Recreation
2100 Gaylord C. Smith Ct.
Haslett, MI 48840
517.853.4614

Environmental Programs
5151 Marsh Road
Okemos, MI 48864
517.853.4466



PROTECT OUR WATERS

STOP THE SALT ASSAULT

De-icing salt dissolves in melted snow and ice, flows into storm drains and is discharged into our rivers and streams. This saline water threatens drinking water supplies and aquatic ecosystems.

- Don't leave salt open to rain and snow.
- Avoid spreading clumps.
- Don't dump grease or oil into a storm drain, catch basin or other stormwater structure.

meridian.mi.us/StormwaterManagement

TOWNSHIP information



“
When I think about the job of, and the role of, a public servant, it is to serve the people, be transparent and communicate information in the best way that we can.
”

Township Residents Elect New Clerk

Meridian Township voters elected Deborah Guthrie as the Township's new Clerk. Deborah has over 20 years of experience of public service with the Township in the Communications Department and will serve the residents in her new role for the next four years.

2021 Election Information

- Tuesday, May 4, 2021 Special Election
Polls open 7:00 am - 8:00 pm
- Local School Proposals:
Okemos Public Schools Operating Millage Renewal Proposal

Okemos Public Schools Sinking Fund Millage Proposal
- March 20 - Absentee Voter Ballots will be available to voters who are on the Permanent Absentee Voter list or who have submitted an Absentee Voter Ballot Application by this date.
- April 19 - Last day to register to vote in any other manner than in-person at the Meridian Township Clerk's Office for this election.

For ballot language, absentee voter information, precinct locations and voter registration information visit meridian.mi.us/Elections.

become an ELECTION WORKER

Election workers are needed in 2021 and are a valuable piece of our democracy, ensuring free and fair elections for all. Serving as an election worker is a paid position which includes training on proper election procedures. Any registered Michigan voter over the age of 18 is eligible to work an election. Serve your community and be a part of the democratic process, apply online at meridian.mi.us/Elections.

Tax Collection Due Dates

- WINTER TAXES
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16
- SUMMER TAXES
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14

Tax Bills are due by 5:00 pm on the dates listed above. For more information about taxes or other Township services, visit the Township website, meridian.mi.us.

Tax & Bill Payment Options

Stay safe by paying your taxes and utility bills online. Paying online is fast, accurate and convenient. There is no cost for paying your tax or utility bill online, if you pay with an electronic payment from your checking or savings account.

For easy to use instructions, visit meridian.mi.us/BillPayment.

Payments may be dropped off 24 hours a day at one of the secure white drop boxes located outside the Township Municipal Building, or mailed to the Treasurer's Office.



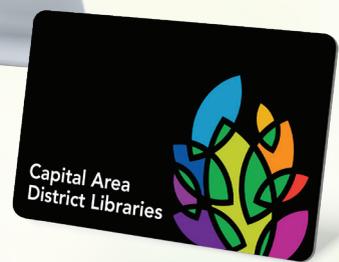
Phil Deschaine
Township Treasurer



Treasurer's Office
5151 Marsh Road
Okemos, MI 48864
517.853.4140



Clerk's Office
5151 Marsh Road
Okemos, MI 48864
517.853.4300



CADL in Your Community

Two of Capital Area District Libraries' 13 branches are located in Meridian Township. Visit cadl.org for membership information and more.

Visit our website or use the CADL app to enjoy our digital services on any device. Top quality education resources and exciting entertainment options—it's all right here.

LinkedIn Learning

This industry leader offers thousands of high-quality instructional videos on the latest software, creative and business skills. Log on and learn at your own pace.

tutor.com™

A Service of [The Princeton Review](http://www.PrincetonReview.com)

A little rusty on your algebra skills? You can still help with your kids' homework—just connect them with our free online tutoring service, available seven days a week.

pronunciator:

This user-friendly language learning tool lets you choose from 80 languages, including English and ASL. Download it to your computer, tablet or smartphone and get started today.



Books, Movies & More

Stream or download thousands of ebooks, audiobooks, movies, TV shows or albums from CADL's digital collection. Comics and podcasts, too! There's no contact, no fines, nothing to return—just great entertainment whenever you want it.



5 THINGS TO KNOW | CADL Haslett

- I am happy to be back at CADL Haslett, serving as the new Head Librarian. I met many of you in my former position as Library Assistant (2007–2009) and look forward to reconnecting.
- In 2020, despite being closed for several months, we filled nearly 900 Grab & Go requests and checked out over 80,000 items.
- Haslett members have made our Storytime to Go kits a big hit! In an average month we give out over 500 of them, filled with activities to support early literacy.
- We are tapping into your creative talents with some fun community art projects, including a “stained glass” window display. Watch for more creative opportunities throughout 2021.
- Thanks to the Friends of the Haslett Library, we are adding new Picture Book Bins in the youth area. The goal is to make browsing more fun for our youngest readers.

Thomas Moore, Head Librarian
CADL HASLETT
1590 Franklin St. • 517-339-2324

5 THINGS TO KNOW | CADL Okemos

- We are very excited to be working with Okemos Schools to issue a Student Success card to students in grades 5–12. That’s 2,800 students who will have free access to books, digital resources, learning tools and much more.
- Thanks to a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the help of our Teen Advisory Board, we now have native plants around the building that support natural habitats of birds in the area.
- Each month we checked out over 12,000 library items and filled an average of 200 Grab & Go requests.
- Whether in person or online, our storytimes (led by the amazing Mr. Tom) helped hundreds of local children learn the early literacy skills of reading, writing, talking, singing and playing.
- CADL Okemos is always open, with a digital collection of books, audiobooks, movies and music, available any time. In 2020, members checked out more than 135,000 titles from the comfort of their homes.

Betsy Hull, Head Librarian
CADL OKEMOS
4321 Okemos Rd. • 517-347-2021

Our physical collection is available, too! Call your branch or browse for books, movies and more at cadl.org/catalog. Schedule a pickup by phone or at cadl.org/MyTime.





EMERGENCY warning sirens

The 9th outdoor warning siren was installed in 2020 at Marshall Park on Bliss Street. Warning sirens are used in emergency situations and can be found throughout the Township. Each siren covers a 5,000 ft. radius.

In 2018, the Township Board set a goal to have all Township residents within coverage area of a siren. Six more sirens are expected to be installed by 2026.



NEW FLEET ADDITION meridian fire department

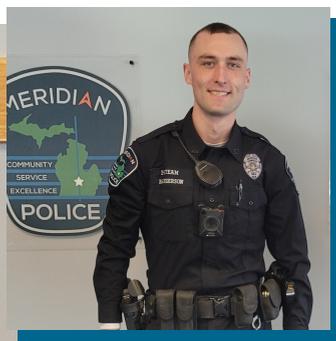
The Fire Department is getting a new Ladder Truck to replace the current Ladder Truck from 1999. The new truck will take up to 14 months to build and is expected to be delivered in February 2022.

The E-ONE 78' Rear Mount Typhoon Aerial Ladder Truck will be built with the ability to be used as a Ladder or Engine depending on the emergency. The Police & Fire Protection Millage, approved by Township voters in 2017, covered all the costs associated with this purchase.

NEW K9 TEAM meridian police department



2020
41 Total Searches
20 Narcotics Searches



“ Being a canine handler has been an extremely rewarding experience for me. No matter if Ares and I are tracking a suspect, meeting people at a community event or helping to find a missing person, I feel like I am making a difference in the community. ”

With the retirement of K9 Officer Yukon in 2019, the Police Department purchased another K9 in 2020. Officer Blaine Anderson and his partner K9 Officer Ares are the new K9 Team. K9 Ares is a 2-year-old German Shepherd imported from Poland and purchased through Mid-Michigan Police K9. The Team is trained in article searches, building searches, narcotics detection and tracking.



AWARDS and recognition

ARCHIE VIRTUE award recipient



Robin Faust

Meridian Township celebrates Robin Faust for her commitment and dedication to the community as the 2020 Archie Virtue Excellence Award (AVEA) Recipient.

Robin celebrated 31 years with Meridian Township in October 2020. She received the award for her hard work and dedication to the Township and to the residents she serves as the Administrative Assistant for the Parks & Recreation Department.

In 2017, Meridian Township began the AVEA honoring Meridian Township employee, Archie Virtue. He was known for his long-term commitment to Meridian Township, his extremely positive attitude and unparalleled work ethic. Archie was an employee of Meridian Township for 57 years, retiring in June 2018. Archie passed away in November 2018. He was beloved by all who knew him and is greatly missed.

BEST OF THE BEST top assistant manager



Derek N. Perry

The Michigan Municipal Executives (MME) held its annual conference to recognize and honor this year's recipients for the "Best of the Best" in Michigan awards. Meridian's Deputy Township Manager Derek N. Perry was selected for the Best of the Best Top Assistant Manager award.

The MME works to provide members' professional development, support their personal growth and promote the municipal executive profession in Michigan. The MME seeks to enhance management excellence, continuous improvement, and high ethical standards by recognizing top executives across Michigan through the "Best of the Best" awards.

The "Top Assistant Manager" award recognizes a deputy or assistant that has demonstrated outstanding performance, particularly with a special project or during a period of unique conditions and circumstances.



Meridian Cares Emergency Needs Fund Supports the Community

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit early in 2020, the Meridian Cares Team provided information on resources available to the community. As the pandemic continued, Township staff worked with community partners to try and ensure that residents could remain safely housed, with their basic needs met. Approximately 400 Meridian households were connected to resources in the community, keeping 29 households from being evicted and providing food baskets to over 200 local households for the holidays.

If you or someone you know needs assistance, please contact Meridian Township Human Services Specialist Darla Jackson at jackson@meridian.mi.us or call 517.853.4204. For information about the Meridian Cares Program or to make a tax-deductible donation, visit meridian.mi.us/MeridianCares.



5151 Marsh Road
Okemos, MI 48664

Connect With Us

#APrimeCommunity

 MeridianTownship

 @meridiantwp

 @meridiantownship

 Meridian Township

 Meridian Township

 517.853.4000

 communications@meridian.mi.us

 meridian.mi.us