

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
TOWNSHIP BOARD VIRTUAL REGULAR MEETING **-DRAFT-**  
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198  
517-349-1232, Virtual Meeting via Zoom  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2020 **6:00 pm.**

PRESENT: Supervisor Styka, Clerk Dreyfus, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Opsommer, Sundland, Wisinski

ABSENT: Trustee Jackson

STAFF: Township Manager Walsh, Director of Public Works Perry, Fire Chief Hamel, Police Chief Plaga, Community Planning Director Kieselbach, Information Technology Director Gebes, , Parks and Recreation Director Maisner, Finance Director Mattison, Human Resources Director Tithof, Economic Development and Neighborhoods Director Clark, Communications Manager Yates, Principal Planner Menser

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor Styka called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS

Supervisor Styka led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Clerk Dreyfus called the roll of the Board.

4. PRESENTATIONS

A. Okemos Boys Tennis Team – Coach Silker introduced the State MHSAA Championship Team to the Board. It was their third Division 1 level win in four seasons.

B. Environmental Commission Tree Planting – postponed to next meeting

5. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Supervisor Styka opened public remarks at 6:10 pm.

Robin Lewis, 2295 Barnsbury Road; introduced herself as potential candidate for the appointment to the CATA Board of Directors.

Bill McConnell, 4376 Manitou; asked about poll watchers observing procedures in the Town Hall and drop box procedures for absentee ballots.

Ody Norkin, 3803 Sandlewood Drive; asked the Board to reconsider the decision to not reappoint Donna Rose to the CATA Board of Directors.

Donna Rose, 6207 Cobblers Drive; current CATA Board of Directors appointee, asked why she is being dismissed as the Township's representative and as an individual with disabilities, she feels she is a good representative of the residents with disabilities.

Fred Wurtzel, President of the Capital Regional Chapter of the Federation of the Blind, 1212 N. Foster, Lansing; asked the Township Board to reconsider their decision to not reappoint Donna Rose to the CATA Board of Directors.

Karla Hudson, 6009 Skyline Drive; stated only two users of the CATA system are on the CATA Board, spoke in support to reappoint Donna Rose because she is also a person with a disability.

Phyllis Vaughn, 6100 Balog Court; stated you do not have to have a disability to advocate for persons with disabilities and supports Redi-Ride and Spec-Tran.

Lily Hudson, 6009 Skyline Drive; stated she is transportation user, spoke in support of re-appointing Donna Rose a user of public transportation, and to use inclusivity and equity in the decision on the appointment to the CATA Board.

Michael Hudson, 6009 Skyline Drive; CATA rider for 29 years, appreciates having a representative with disabilities on the CATA Board, supports Donna Rose re-appointment on the CATA Board.

Adam Carlson, 1495 Birchwood Drive; Meridian Economic Development Corp (EDC) member, supports applicant for the Meridian Township Redevelopment Fund. The EDC reviewed the application in October and supported it.

Supervisor Styka closed public remarks at 6:35 pm.

## 6. TOWNSHIP MANAGER REPORT

Manager Walsh reported on development projects, address change issue on Meridian Road, resident questions on millage proposals, Brownfield Board approved Pine Village Brownfield Plan, Marketplace on the Green updates, road project update.

## 7. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Clerk Dreyfus Election Update:

- To register, go to Clerk's Office 15 days before election up to 8pm Election Day, November 3
- Issued and mailed out over 18,000 Absent Voter ballots, huge increase since August
- Executed the agreement with Ingham County Clerk's Office for a joint Absent Voter Counting Board, will be located at Sheriff's Office in Mason, provided list of 24 election inspectors for the AVCB
- Full staffing achieved for all precincts, no need for recruitment
- Township has 24-hour secure drop box in front of Municipal Building, checking drop box throughout day and on weekend
- Ballots retrieved, signature on envelope is verified, then received into voter database
- Currently in 40-day election cycle, all residents can come into the Township building during business hours and receive a ballot and vote; this is called "early voting"

- Clerk's Office open until on 7 pm Thursdays and will be open Saturday, October 31 from 9 am – 5 pm to assist voters
- Two poll watchers at times observing Town Hall Room polling locations; guidelines they have to follow, cannot interact with voters, COVID safety precautions in tight space have presented challenges
- Clerk staff and temporary election workers have been working long hours

Treasurer Deschaine reported:

- Attended October 8 EDC meeting which reviewed the Redevelopment Fund Application
- Attended October 8 Election Commission meeting with Trustee Sundland
- Attended October 7 ribbon cutting for the Marketplace on the Green
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Trustee Sundland reported:

- Attended October 8 EDC meeting
- Attended October Communications Commission meeting, they are updating diversity policies
- Attended October 8 Election Commission meeting

Trustee Opsommer:

- CATA Board will be meeting on October 21, developing a bus advertising policy that could generate \$1 million on an annual basis
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Supervisor Styka:

- Attended Marketplace on the Green ribbon cutting
- Attended Zoom Meeting with Congresswoman Slotkin regarding financial relief for citizens and local businesses

Treasurer Deschaine:

- Millage questions on Police and Fire millages have been straightforward, but questions on the Land Preservation Fund are not, voters may mistakenly think if they vote "no" then millage will revert to current .33 mill, if Millage does not pass, current Millage will expire and there will no longer be a Land Preservation Millage collected.

## 8. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**Treasurer Deschaine moved to approve the Agenda as amended. Seconded by Trustee Sundland.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Supervisor Styka, Clerk Dreyfus, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Opsommer, Sundland, Wisinski

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6-0

## 9. CONSENT AGENDA

Supervisor Styka reviewed the consent agenda.

**Trustee Wisinski moved to adopt the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded by Clerk Dreyfus.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustees Opsommer, Sundland, Wisinski, Supervisor Styka, Clerk Dreyfus, Treasurer Deschaine

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6-0

A. Communications

**Trustee Wisinski moved that the communications be received and placed on file and any communications not already assigned for disposition be referred to the Township Manager or Supervisor for follow-up. Seconded by Clerk Dreyfus**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustees Opsommer, Sundland, Wisinski, Supervisor Styka, Clerk Dreyfus, Treasurer Deschaine

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6-0

B. Approval of Minutes – October 6, 2020 Virtual Regular Meeting

**Trustee Wisinski moved to approve and ratify the minutes of the October 6, 2020 Virtual Regular Meeting, as submitted. Seconded by Clerk Dreyfus**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustees Opsommer, Sundland, Wisinski, Supervisor Styka, Clerk Dreyfus, Treasurer Deschaine

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6-0

C. Bills

**Trustee Wisinski moved to approve that the Township Board approve the Manager’s Bills as follows: Seconded by Clerk Dreyfus**

Common Cash	\$	959,207.76
Public Works	\$	332,875.90
Trust & Agency	\$	96,228.58
<b>Total Checks</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,388,312.24</b>
Credit Card Transactions	\$	7,587.99
10/01/2020 – 10/14/2020		
<b>Total Purchases</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b><u>1,395,900.23</u></b>

**ACH Payments**

**\$ 733,417.38**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustees Opsommer, Sundland, Wisinski, Supervisor Styka, Clerk Dreyfus, Treasurer Deschaine

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6-0

10. QUESTIONS FOR THE ATTORNEY – NONE

11. HEARINGS

A. Meridian Township Redevelopment Fund Application

Manager Walsh outlined the Meridian Township Redevelopment Fund.

Eric Helzer, Advanced Redevelopment Solutions (ARS); outlined the funding for the demolition of blocks 1 and 2 in downtown Okemos: request from Meridian Township is for \$85,481.44; \$691,000 from Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) and \$232,000 from the applicant; project will be going out for bid; one building will remain after demolition.

**Supervisor Styka called the public hearing to order at 7:06 pm.**

No public comments.

**Supervisor Styka closed the public hearing at 7:07 pm.**

12. ACTION ITEMS

A. Board and Commission Appointments

Supervisor Styka outlined the proposed candidates for appointment.

**Treasurer Deschaine move to approve Supervisor Styka’s appointments to the Township Boards and Commissions and those recommendations are: Robin Lewis to the CATA Board for a term with an expiration date of September 20, 2022; Kris Parnell to the Land Preservation Advisory Board for a term with an expiration date on December 31, 2024 and James Ecklund to the East Lansing Meridian Water and Sewer Authority for a term with an expiration date on June 30, 2022.**

Supervisor Styka asked to clarify that these will be the Township Board’s appointments and he is submitting recommendations.

**Treasurer Deschaine moved that the appointments be made by the Township Board based on Supervisor Styka’s recommendations. Seconded by Trustee Wisinski.**

Discussion:

- Three excellent candidates; well served by the Township volunteers; support moving new people onto Township boards and commissions; this is not an insult and Ms. Rose has served very well on the CATA Board and thanked her for her service on the CATA Board
- Appreciate input and capturing all voices to serve on Township boards and commissions
- CATA appointee Robin Lewis has served on the CATA Board as the Lansing representative previously for 6 years; questioned reason given as wanting new voices on our boards and commissions when this individual has already served on the CATA Board; not a criticism of Ms. Lewis but she is not a new voice on the CATA Board; asked why Donna Rose being replaced; she is an individual with a disability, pays attention to how CATA works and supports the issue of inclusion and equity; questioned true diversity and outreach to various demographic groups in the community – such as citizens from India and Asian-Americans – to serve on Township boards and commissions; suggestion for tabling the appointment of Ms. Lewis
- Ms. Rose was reappointed for a two year term; there are individuals with disabilities serving on the CATA Board and the lack of diversity is from other member jurisdictions, not from the Township; Ms. Rose is being recommended for appointment to CATA's Local Advisory Council;
- Land Preservation Advisory Board (LPAB) unanimously recommends the appointment of Kris Parnell to the LPAB
- Clarification that Ms. Rose was not reappointed for two years, she continued to serve as a Board Representative until it could be filled and it was not an official reappointment; appointment to an advisory board versus serving as a representative on the board with decision-making powers are two different levels of participation.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustees Sundland, Wisinski, Supervisor Styka, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Opsommer

NAYS: Clerk Dreyfus

Motion carried: 5-1

#### B. 2021 Township Board Meeting Schedule Resolution

**Trustee Opsommer moved to adopt the 2021 Township Board Meeting Schedule Resolution. Seconded by Trustee Sundland.**

**Treasurer Deschaine moved to amend to add Saturday, February 20, as the date of the annual Board retreat, at a location to be determined, and as last year, the retreat will be an open to the public. Seconded by Trustee Opsommer.**

Board Discussion:

- Questioned to add the retreat as an official meeting; nice to give notice at this time to the public

ROLL CALL ON THE AMENDMENT

VOTE: YEAS: Trustee Wisinski, Supervisor Styka, Clerk Dreyfus, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Opsommer, Sundland

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6-0

Discussion:

- Question about Board meetings scheduled for April 13 and April 20 because of popularity of month, Board member stated she might schedule vacation time for the month of April, asked about cancelling both meetings.
- Constitutionally, meetings are required to be held on a regular basis, meeting three weeks apart is difficult
- Have already moved from the first week to the second week because of spring break for area schools; support for Board meeting at least two times a month

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Supervisor Styka, Clerk Dreyfus, Treasurer Deschaine,  
Trustees Opsommer, Sundland, Wisinski

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6-0

13. BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Meridian Township Redevelopment Fund Application

Board Discussion:

- Redevelopment of downtown Okemos; funding request lays the ground work, if the application is approved demolition can be completed in fall 2020, project scheduled to have area ready for construction in spring 2021
- The EDC reviewed application and recommended the Township approval the application, contingency plan if demo cannot be completed by Dec 15, final approval timeframe from EGLE, EGLE became involved after applicant added Block 1 buildings to also be demolished
- Question asked about additional excavation work required to address the soil contamination flume, applicant response there will be limited remediation to address environmental issues at the Bottom Up building and at the former Dry Cleaners site, soil removed and taken to landfill.
- No underground parking structure, ramp will be contained in the center of the building
- Removing concrete and adding greenspace, weed control on site, removal of for sale signs and signs informing community about project
- Board member question about possible need for approval of funding request tonight, due to Nov 6<sup>th</sup> applicant timeframe, applicant did not see a problem with taking vote tonight or at next Board meeting on November 5<sup>th</sup>

**Trustee Opsommer moved to suspend the Board's rules to take this matter under consideration this evening. Seconded by Treasurer Deschaine.**

Board Discussion:

- Board member concern about moving too quickly on funding request by applicant, Board protocol requires taking action on items at next Board meeting after it is first introduced for discussion, important for government transparency that citizens have opportunity between Board Meetings to comment and interact with public officials on Board discussion items, voting tonight on issues deemed important would apply to many actions the Board routinely takes – applicant stated himself that project funding is not threatened by waiting until next Board meeting to vote on funding request.

- Board member concern that waiting until next Board meeting may affect the funding schedule, applicant responded voting tonight would show support to EGLE but it appears EGLE is on board for the project regardless of voting tonight or not, property owner plans to move forward with certain components of the project regardless.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Opsommer, Sundland, Wisinski,  
Supervisor Styka

NAYS: Clerk Dreyfus

Motion carried: 5-1

**Trustee Opsommer move to approve the Village of Okemos application to the Meridian Township Redevelopment Fund as presented in the packet. Seconded by Commissioner Wisinski.**

Board Discussion:

- Application was originally for 50% of demolition costs and is now for 33% of the cost; Board member concern about not having another Walnut Hills in the area, want to show Township's support before State of Michigan (EGLE) takes action, concerns about moving too quickly on this issue, item has been discussed for over a year, respect the need for public input but have heard the need to move forward with this project in downtown Okemos.
- Question regarding changes in applicant's development proposal since original Board approval, Planning Director replied the applicant is going to file for a minor amendment to the Mixed Use Proposal with a reduction of commercial space and converting it to residential units, Board member concern that project will predominantly be an apartment complex instead of a real mixed use with viable commercial space on the ground floor.
- No public comment during the public hearing, Board member belief that the public has expressed their views in other ways; need for demolition and clean up of this area, if this proceeds both blocks can be demolished.
- Township Manager stated the commercial space was originally at 52,000 square feet and is being reduced to 26,000 feet. Douglas J will be using 10,000 square feet, concern that Covid is causing decrease in occupied commercial space, building footprint reported as being decreased.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Supervisor Styka, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Opsommer,  
Sundland, Wisinski

NAYS: Clerk Dreyfus

Motion carried: 5-1

## B. Walnut Hills Update

Township Manager reported staff was directed to place demolish order on hold to allow an interested party the option of purchasing Walnut Hills and preserving the clubhouse. Based on property inspections, it was determined the clubhouse cannot be saved but the pool and the pool

house were salvageable. Proposed buyer has until November 6 to close sale, staff recommends hold on demolition order until after November 6 to avoid interfering with the potential purchase of the property. If the two parties cannot reach a compromise, the Township is ready to move ahead with the demolish order.

Board Discussion:

- Recommending to share the demolish estimates for the site with the proposed purchaser, staff has shared information with the proposed purchaser and the information included the bid from Michigan Demolition.
- Police Chief stated there has been no police activities at location likely due to removal and securing of buildings along with change in weather.
- It was the consensus of the Board to place demolition order on hold until after November 6.

**Board consensus to place this item on the next Board meeting agenda.**

C. Social Districts

Economic & Neighborhood Director stated she has been working with Principal Planner on the social districts. Social Districts were established in July and regulated by the State Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) and Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC). Any qualified liquor license holder can apply for a Social Districts permit, which allows the business to serve alcohol outside their physical building. The governing body needs to designate areas for social districts with common areas of public land immediately adjacent to at least two contiguous liquor license holders and then submit these district areas for approval to the MLCC.

Board Discussion:

- Difference between outdoor services at a restaurant vs social district, purpose of social district is allowing multiple businesses to use a public common area encompassing a larger serving area while meeting COVID social distance precautions.
- The space adjacent to the business must be “public space,” a parking lot is not acceptable, Meridian lacks public space and adjoining businesses making social districts difficult to enact, use of patios and portions of parking areas for township businesses, currently working with the Fire Department to allow for those areas to remain open during the winter months.
- Suggestion to obtain feedback from business owners and Meridian Area Business Association on this issue; staff view that the Township should keep this on hold and continue using the outdoor seating permit option.

D. Grettenberger Dain and Meijer Drain Improvements

Deputy Township Manager Perry introduced Drain Commissioner Lindemann, Deputy Drain Commissioner Clos and Alan Boyer, LSG Engineering and stated the Township entered into a 434 Agreement with the Ingham County Drain Commissioner’s Office (ICDC) to study the frequent flooding on Grand River Avenue at Okemos Road and on Grand River Avenue in front of the Playmakers site over the last several years. With improvements planned for Grand River Avenue by Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Township wanted to complete a drainage study of the area. After the ICDC, report is given, then the Township will need to decide on a comprehensive plan for the repairs.

Board Discussion:

Timeframe from MDOT for repairs, summer of 2021 to go out to bid, project in 2022, elevation of roads/intersection impact on hydrology, floodplain and water retention issues, Township property to use for compensating cuts, impact on neighborhoods north of Grand River, 40 year & 100 year floods.

**Board consensus to place this item on the next Board meeting agenda.**

14. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Supervisor Styka Opened Public Remarks at 9:04 pm.

Robin Lewis, 2295 Barnsbury Rd; thanked Board for appointment as CATA Board Representative.

Supervisor Styka Closed Public Remarks at 9:05 pm.

15. OTHER MATTERS AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Supervisor Styka discussed meeting date for Board goal setting, likely to be on Nov 23. Statewide school rankings show Okemos Schools rated #4, East Lansing #21, Haslett #31 out of 575 districts.

Treasurer Deschaine reported that Helen Tanner received commemorative plaque, placed in award-winning gardens in front of Municipal Building, for her long service to Township.

16. CLOSED SESSION - NONE

17. ADJOURNMENT

**Trustee Opsommer moved to adjourn. Seconded by Trustee Wisinski.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 6-0.

**Supervisor Styka adjourned the meeting at 9:11 pm.**

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RONALD J. STYKA,  
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

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BRETT DREYFUS,  
TOWNSHIP CLERK