

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
TOWNSHIP BOARD POLICY GOVERNANCE REVIEW MEETING - **APPROVED** -  
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864-1198  
853-4000, Town Hall Room  
SATURDAY, JANUARY 12, 2013 **10:00 A.M.**

PRESENT: Supervisor LeGoff, Clerk Dreyfus, Treasurer Brixie, Trustees Scales, Styka, Veenstra  
(10:15 AM), Wilson  
ABSENT: None  
STAFF: Township Manager Gerald Richards

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor LeGoff called the meeting to order at 10:03 A.M.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS

Supervisor LeGoff led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

The Supervisor called the roll of the Board.

4. PUBLIC REMARKS

Supervisor LeGoff opened Public Remarks.

Leonard Provencher, 5824 Buena Parkway, Haslett, spoke to agendas and packets for various Boards and Commissions being made available online for the public.

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Haslett, addressed Policy Governance, stating that, if practiced properly, it is not undemocratic as previously stated by one Board member. He spoke to Policy 3.1.1, 3.1.3, 3.1.6, 3.10.2, 4.1, 4.4.1 and 4.4.4.

Supervisor LeGoff closed Public Remarks.

5. BOARD GOAL SETTING AND POLICY GOVERNANCE

Manager Richards requested Board members fill out and return forms he had provided listing each Board member's three (3) highest priorities for Board or staff emphasis and a suggestion for one (1) positive action, when practiced by all Board members, which would improve the Meridian Township Board governance process.

Manager Richards provided a brief overview on Policy Governance. He indicated previous Boards have historically walked through the Policy Manual, opening up the discussion for changes to wording, if desired and agreed upon.

Board members and staff discussed the following:

- Suggestion to make prosperity as the first priority
- Preference for keeping the priorities in the same order
- Prioritization of global ends has not mattered previously in Board deliberations
- No end has "suffered" because of another which had a higher ranking
- Suggestion and agreement that each Board member will submit the priority order of the global ends to the Township Manager for tabulation
- Request for information from staff relative to Policy 1.1.2h: Manager deer population reveals 95-97 deer were harvested in 2012 and staff will continue to broaden the program
- Consensus to suggestion by staff to amend 1.2.5f to read: "Strive for additional ADA universal access opportunities in parks and public spaces."
- Board member suggestion to broaden 1.2.5e to read: "Designate paths on Land Preservation properties"
- Discussion by the previous Board to use the term "primitive footpaths" to allow for only minimal development
- Request for a definition of "primitive"

- Definition of primitive footpath as a pathway that is mowed to designate location
- Definition is in direct conflict with other established documentation (e.g, Rysberg property), as it had a previous designation prior to purchase on the Township's Pathway Master Plan which indicates a fully paved path
- Township has multiple processes in place, through the Land Preservation Advisory Board, the Township Board and the Planning Commission for construction of all pathways in its Pathway Master Plan
- Board member belief the language in 1.2.5.e is an "anti-pathway" policy
- Pathways were not mentioned when the millage language was passed for Land Preservation
- Initial purpose of the Land Preservation millage was designed to protect ecologically sensitive land and did not take healthy physical activity into account
- Board member belief that Board action relative to the pathway on the "Rysberg" property takes precedence over the general statement contained in 1.2.5.e
- Belief it is appropriate for the Board to have the ability to modify the purposes of Land Preservation after twelve (12) years
- Consensus to have the language in 1.2.5.e remain as written
- Suggestion to amend 1.2.5.g to read: "Added benches and exercise stations along park trails and off-road pathways"
- Off-road pathways are a separate category from benches and exercise stations along park trails
- Examples of off-road pathways: Between Okemos Road and Hulett running along the power line and one which runs from Burcham to Marsh Road

[Trustee Veenstra left the room at 10:45 A.M.]

- Suggestion to add 1.3.1.b: "Minimize negative impact of new development on existing residential neighborhoods"
- Preference for this addition to be included as 1.3.2c and reletter the remaining subsections
- Property values could decrease if an inappropriate development occurs near a neighborhood
- Consensus to place this language as 1.3.1.b.
- Suggestion to add 1.3.1.c to read: "Encourage reinvestment in the Haslett Corridor"
- Clarification that the area would be the Haslett zip code only (east of Okemos Road to the Township border)
- Preference to narrow the language to the Haslett/Marsh Road vicinity
- Reminder that all the changes will be voted upon at another Board meeting
- Suggestion to add 1.3.6: "Proactive marketing and branding of the Township"
- Preference to have marketing and branding language be 1.3.3.j instead of its own bullet as 1.3.6
- Consensus to add 1.3.3.j: "Proactive marketing and branding of the Township"
- Suggestion to add 1.3.3.k: "Improved customer relations"
- Consensus to modify 1.3.3.g to read: "Business friendly, improve customer relations"
- Consensus to add 1.3.4.b to read: "Promote partnerships with the school districts"
- Inquiry as to how staff measures the ability to effect change in the Township's diversity
- Census data is one indicator and staff has tracking mechanisms through accumulation of information
- Suggestion and consensus to add 1.5.2 to read: "Diverse staff" and reletter the remaining subsections
- Future addition of having the Township promote itself through a targeting process to attract a specified diverse outcome
- Consensus to add 2.2.5 to read: "Fail to develop and implement a procedure for annual employee feedback to the Manager"
- Consensus to amend 3.1.4 after "improvement" by adding ", at a minimum of twice per year"
- Staff suggestion for Board members to submit language to staff to incorporate as 3.3.9 relative to Board member conduct towards one another
- Consensus to add 3.3.9 relative to Board member interaction at Board meetings with other Board members
- Consensus to add 3.3.10 to read: "Board members will conduct all deliberations and decision making consistent with the spirit of the Open Meetings Act"
- Suggestion to add 3.5.4 to read: "The Board will annually appoint a Supervisor Pro Tem in the absence of the Supervisor"

- Some cities (e.g., East Lansing) follow an annual procedure of electing a Mayor Pro Tem when electing the Mayor
- Cities which follow the annual procedure of electing a Mayor Pro Tem when electing their Mayor have officers elected from the Board
- Suggestion for staff to contact the Michigan Townships Association regarding this procedure
- Procedure could be done on an annual basis without placing it in the Board Policy Manual
- Suggestion to have periodic board discussion of process improvement on a quarterly basis
- Preference for having periodic board discussion of process improvement as part of the regular meetings on a semi-annual basis
- Mission statement is Policy 1.0: “Meridian Township exists to create a sustainable community through the most effective use of available resources that achieve the highest quality of life”
- Mission statement should be promoted as part of the branding process
- Audit serves as the primary external review (see Policy 2.4 and 2.45)
- Prior to a Board vote on the changes to policy governance language, all members should have the same expectation of these assignments in order to effectively evaluate
- Most challenging portion of Policy Governance is placing the monitoring reporting in a measurable format as many of the goals are difficult to measure
- Board priorities over the next one to two years as submitted by Board members:
  - Protecting the rural character of the Township
  - Placemaking – defining and promoting unique Meridian assets and qualities
  - Sustainable economic development
  - Economic development, especially in the Haslett corridor with focus on creating economically sustainable community
  - Smooth transition to new Township Manager
  - Continued smart fiscal management
  - Community interaction
  - Economic development
  - Regulation review to determine appropriateness
  - Business economic development
  - Environment
  - Road improvements upkeep
  - Rebranding the Township, Board conduct and Board leadership
  - Reassess priorities....move prosperity ends to 1.B
  - Meet in at least quarterly work sessions to continually assess where the Board is in meeting its goals
  - Proactively seek development of areas within the Township where there are empty business locations (i.e., redevelopment)
  - Work to make Meridian more friendly to development consistent with the Township’s character without compromising environmental concerns
  - Improve maintenance of Township streets
  - Protection of the environment (bring about recycling in business and multi-family residences, use of LED streetlights, adoption of an urban service boundary and place energy efficiency in the new Master Plan)
  - Fill gaps in the Township’s pathway system
  - Revise the Township’s business unfriendly reputation by a changing of attitude and removing unnecessary regulations
- Suggestion for the Manager to place Board priorities in order according to which statements were mentioned the most and then place the remainder in priority order thereafter, providing the Board with the results on a single sheet
- Positive action which would improve the Meridian Township Board governance process as submitted by Board members:
  - Full compliance with the Open Meetings Act in all aspects of deliberation and decision making, attending Board meetings without predetermined outcomes
  - Board members shall conduct themselves in a professional manner during Board meetings
  - Development and adherence to a set of Board behavioral protocols
  - Respect votes, decisions, opinions, questions, etc. of fellow Board members and the public
  - Civility

- Board members sticking to the topic under discussion, bringing up new items, as such, at the appropriate place on the agenda
- Have more long range policy initiatives instead of only reacting to what comes before the Board
- Staff to compile these positive actions and provide to the Board
- Value of the Board spending time to do Board “norming”, instead of jumping into “performing”
- Preference for the Board to get to know each other as individuals and look for commonalities in order to have the end result be presenting a professional face to the community
- Usefulness of holding a retreat to focus on interpersonal skill development and getting to know one another
- A Board is supposed to debate, have dialogue and disagree
- A Board speaks through its motions and the result of those motions is that the Board speaks with one voice
- Personal attacks have no place in professional conduct at Board meetings when issues are deliberated
- Board members should be cautious of their non-verbal behaviors and unconscious body language during meetings

6. PUBLIC REMARKS

Supervisor LeGoff opened Public Remarks.

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood Drive, Haslett, addressed diversity among staff, questioning whether staff was defined as all employees of the Township or only those who work in the office environment. He noted that motions made which direct the Manager can be easily assessed as to whether or not they have been fulfilled. Mr. Bowlby indicated that Policy 4.4.2 is the vehicle to assess whether the Manager is complying with Board directives.

Marsha Madle, 1373 Sebewaing, Okemos, believed the policy governance meeting was time well spent and was encouraged by the discussion of several topics. She suggested that the mission statement be read at the beginning of every Board meeting.

Leonard Provencher, 5824 Buena Parkway, Haslett, requested he be apprised of each Board member’s position if there is a change in the priority of the Global Ends Statement. He asked that the Board not take a vote on changes to the Board Policy Manual until the proposed changes have had an opportunity to be reviewed by the public. Mr. Provencher requested that when a Board member makes a motion and there is a second, discussion ensues and each Board member makes a position statement to the public.

Supervisor LeGoff closed Public Remarks.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Supervisor LeGoff adjourned the meeting at 11:59 A.M.

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ELIZABETH LEGOFF  
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

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BRETT DREYFUS  
TOWNSHIP CLERK

Sandra K. Otto, Secretary