

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
TOWNSHIP BOARD VIRTUAL REGULAR MEETING **-APPROVED-**
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198
517-34--1232, Virtual Meeting via Zoom
TUESDAY, JULY 7, 2020 **6:00 pm.**

PRESENT: Clerk Dreyfus, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Jackson, Opsommer, Sundland,
Wisinski

ABSENT: Supervisor Styka

STAFF: Township Manager Walsh, Director of Public Works Perry, Fire Chief Hamel,
Police Chief Plaga, Information Technology Director Gebes, Economic Development
Director Lane, Finance Director Mattison, Human Resources Director Marx, Parks
and Recreation Director Maisner, Acting Community Planning Director Menser,
Communications Manager Yates

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Clerk Dreyfus called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Clerk Dreyfus announced Supervisor Styka will be absent for the Board meeting tonight, motion
needed for temporary Supervisor for the meeting (Supervisor Pro Tem).

**Treasurer Deschaine moved to appoint Trustee Opsommer to act as Supervisor Pro-Tem.
Support by Trustee Jackson.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Jackson, Opsommer, Wisinski, Clerk
Dreyfus, Trustee Sundland

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6-0

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS

Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Clerk Dreyfus called the roll of the Board.

4. PRESENTATIONS - NONE

5. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Supervisor Pro-Tem opened public remarks at 6:04 pm.

Supervisor Pro-Tem closed public remarks at 6:06 pm.

6. TOWNSHIP MANAGER REPORT

Township Manager reported Leadership Team will be meeting with MSU President Stanley next
week, Marketplace on the Green project is expected to be open in 6-7 weeks, received 33
applications for HR Director position, decision on Fire, Police and Land Preservation millage

renewals will need to be made at August 6th meeting, Outdoor Service Center has been operational for 6+ weeks; approximately 90% of visitors are being served outside the building and the Town Hall is serving for ballot processing and voting, findings from Fire Dept investigation into offensive comments released today. Thanked employees for working in Municipal Building with extreme heat issues and no air conditioning.

Director of Public Works reported on road construction progress.

Acting Planning and Development Director reported on Walnut Hills site, Building Board of Appeals met on June 29 to discuss with owner dangerous condition of the buildings on site with the owner. Agreement that four (4) buildings would be demolished, leaving the Club House. Concern with owner non-compliance, options being reviewed by staff with legal counsel and options need to be brought to Township Board within 30 days of the order.

7. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Treasurer Deschaine:

- June 17 Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce met
- June 18 Communications Commission met
- July 1 Human Resources Commission met
- Met with the Tree Team reviewing the expenditures of the \$10,000 grant provided to the Environmental Commission for environmental programing and tree planting; received additional program contribution, potential to work with schools
- Tax bills mailed out June 30; if a resident has not received their bill, call the office and a duplicate one will be mailed out

Clerk Dreyfus

- The August Primary election is 4 weeks away, largest Absentee Voter ballot requests in Meridian Township history; approximately 29,000 applications for an absentee ballot sent out, 11,000 applications returned to date
- Clerk's Office has mailed out approximately 11,000 ballots and received back about 1,800 ballots to date
- Estimate there will be very low turn-out at precincts, social distancing measures will be observed, and other sanitary/safety procedures at voting stations
- Anticipate an extremely high amount of absentee ballots for Absentee Voting Counting Board to tabulate
- Can obtain an absentee ballot through to Monday, August 3; call for an application to get an AV ballot mailed to residents; residents can also visit the Town Hall to obtain and/or vote their absentee ballot for early voting all the way up to August 3.

Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer

- Land Presentation Advisory Board Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, July 8, at 6 pm in Central Park Pavilion and will be observing all the safety guidelines
- Residents have asked about return postage on ballots and he has replied two stamps or 70 cents; Clerk Dreyfus replied if there is not enough postage, the Post Office will still deliver all ballots regardless of postage and will contact Township with postage discrepancy after election; reminder to mail ballots in early, Post Office has reported its sometimes taking up to 7-9 days to deliver ballots.

Trustee Wisinski:

- Asked about polling precinct precautions including social distancing, wearing masks, hand sanitizers, sanitizing stations between voters.

Clerk Dreyfus:

- Responded that Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies are being provided by State of Michigan to all municipalities; he contacted the County Clerk and confirmed PPE distribution; there will be hand sanitizer at entrance and exit into the polling site. Signs will be posted requesting masks be worn but if a voter doesn't wear one, protocol will be in place for the Chairperson to allow the voter to vote without being near anyone else; election workers will be six feet apart, there will be a reduced work force at the precincts due to Covid-19, the need for social distancing and anticipated low voter turnout; all voting areas will be wiped down with disinfectant after each voter, including pens and ballot surfaces, and six feet marking on floors provided by facilities to address social distancing requirements.

8. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Trustee Wisinski moved to approve the Agenda. Seconded by Clerk Dreyfus.

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried: 6 – 0

9. CONSENT AGENDA

Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer reviewed the consent agenda.

Clerk Dreyfus moved to adopt the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded by Treasurer Deschaine.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Jackson, Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer, Trustees Sundland, Wisinski, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6 – 0

A. Communications

Clerk Dreyfus 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 Treasurer Deschaine.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Jackson, Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer, Trustees Sundland, Wisinski, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6 – 0

B. Approval of Minutes – June 16, 2020 Regular Meeting

Clerk Dreyfus moved to approve and ratify the minutes of the Regular Meeting of June 16, 2020 as submitted. Seconded by Treasurer Deschaine.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Jackson, Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer, Trustees Sundland, Wisinski, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6 – 0

C. Bills

Clerk Dreyfus moved to approve that the Township Board approve the Manager’s Bills as follows: Seconded by Treasurer Deschaine.

Common Cash	\$1,530,157.68
Public Works	\$ 55,353.14
Trust & Agency	<u>\$ 2,090.23</u>
Total Checks	\$1,587,601.05
Credit Card Transactions	\$ 15,212.32
Aug 2 to Aug 28	
Total Purchases	<u>\$ 1,602,813.37</u>
ACH Payments	<u>\$ 857,456.11</u>

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Jackson, Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer, Trustees Sundland, Wisinski, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6 – 0

D. Disposal of Surplus Chair

Clerk Dreyfus moved to authorize the disposal by the recycling of 29 office chairs. Seconded by Treasurer Deschaine:

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Jackson, Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer, Trustees Sundland, Wisinski, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6 – 0

E. Ratification of New Police Officer Appointment

Clerk Dreyfus moved to ratify the appointment of Travis Quimby to the position of Police Officer contingent upon successful completion of those items stipulated in the conditionals offer of employment. Seconded by Treasurer Deschaine.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Jackson, Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer, Trustees Sundland, Wisinski, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6 – 0

10. QUESTIONS FOR THE ATTORNEY – NONE

11. HEARINGS - NONE

12. ACTION ITEMS

A. Haslett Marathon Brownfield Plan

Trustee Sundland Move to adopt the resolution approving the Haslett Marathon Brownfield Plan in the amount not to exceed \$304,483 over an estimated 27-year period. Seconded by Trustee Wisinski.

Board discussion:

Brownfield is for the redevelopment on the corner of Haslett & Marsh, conflicting positions regarding the proximity of the building to Haslett Road and the size of the convenience store, concern about blocking view of corner, 27 year pay back is a good investment, belief tax increment financing is an interest-free loan, plan financing will assist with contaminant removal. Redevelopment specifics already decided in previous meetings – this vote is on Brownfield Tax Increment Financing Plan.

Economic Director Lane reported the Brownfield Plan provides several public purposes: million dollar investment by the gas station owner, create five new jobs, and increase property taxes.

Discussion on amount of clean-up, some pollutants in plume will remain, regulated by EGLE Part 210 Cleanup Criteria Requirements for Response Activity based on proposed land use, it's a feasible option for improvement in healthy environment, majority of containments will remain under road with the site monitored, gas station remediation scope

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer, Trustees Sundland, Wisinski, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Jackson

NAYS: Clerk Dreyfus

Motion carried: 5 – 1

B. Amendment to Chapter 82 Vegetation – **Final Adoption**

Treasurer Deschaine moved to approve the resolution for the final adoption of Ordinance No. 2020-07 to amend Chapter 82 Vegetation to prevent weeds, grasses, brush or other vegetation from growing to a height greater than eight (8) inches within 75 feet of a sidewalk. Seconded by Trustee Wisinski.

Board discussion:

Ordinance is specific to sidewalks and does not apply to every parcel in Township, proposed ordinance has exemptions for certain vegetation, ornamentals, flowers, land preservation property and other exceptions, Board member belief that this issue better suited within existing vacant parcel ordinance, pros and cons of proposed requirement to mow 75 feet from any sidewalk, 10 foot mowing requirement would satisfy safety concerns, 75 feet needed for certain parcels where the structure is far back from the sidewalk, ordinances addressing structures on a property vs. ordinances addressing vacant parcels, discussion on properties with and without sidewalks/pathways throughout Township, proposed ordinance may negatively affect property owners along future pathway expansions, Environmental Commission stated they are “less than enthusiastic” about proposal and recommended less than 75 foot requirement, bioswales / rain gardens / strengthen exemption language, Wetland Protection Ordinance prohibits mowing within 25 foot buffer, timeliness of issue and need to move quickly, recommendation that Environmental Commission meet with Planning Dept to discuss environmental protection, proposed ordinance would affect vacant parcels on Okemos Rd by Briarwood, Township needs to respond to neighbor complaints, absentee owners can leave properties unmaintained and create unsafe conditions, support for 10 foot mowing requirement and allow the rest of vacant property to grow, start with smaller mowing requirement such as 10 feet and then change – if necessary – with incremental increases, situations in which 75 feet from sidewalk combined with existing 75 foot mowing ordinance from structures would allow for complete mowing of most parcels.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustee Wisinski, Treasurer Deschaine, Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer, Trustee Sundland

NAYS: Clerk Dreyfus, Trustee Jackson

Motion carried: 4 – 2

C. Climate Emergency Resolution

Clerk Dreyfus moved to adopt the following Climate Emergency Resolution:

WHEREAS, on October 8, 2018, the United Nations released a special report that projected that limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius this century will require an unprecedented transformation of every sector of the global economy over the next 12 years; and

WHEREAS, on November 23, 2018, the U.S. Fourth National Climate Assessment was issued, which detailed the massive threat that climate change poses to the American economy and underscored the need for emergency climate action at all levels of government; and

WHEREAS, the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification include increasingly devastating wildfires, communities overwhelmed by smoke, drinking water compromised by algal blooms, a rise in sea levels resulting in flooding and the displacement of thousands of coastal

businesses and residences, damage to marine ecosystems and food sources, extreme weather events, severe harm to this state's agriculture, forestry and tourism industries, and introduction of new vectors for infectious disease, increased asthma and other human health-related problems; and

WHEREAS, climate change has a disproportionate effect on fish and wildlife populations, many of which require specific habitat conditions and are therefore particularly vulnerable to warmer temperatures, modified precipitation patterns, diminished snowpack, ocean acidification and other effects of climate change; and

WHEREAS, climate change and the global economy's overshoot of ecological limits are driving the sixth mass extinction of species, causing a 60 percent decline in global wildlife populations since 1970, could devastate much of life on Earth for the next 10 million years and pose as great a risk to humanity as climate change, according to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; and

WHEREAS, one million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction according to [a sweeping new United Nations report](#) (May 6 2019); and

WHEREAS, the death and destruction already wrought by global warming of approximately 1.1 degrees Celsius above late 19th century levels demonstrates that Earth is already too hot for safety and justice; and

WHEREAS, climate change has a disproportionate effect on impacted communities, such as indigenous tribes, rural communities, coastal communities, workers, low-income households and people of color, who typically have fewer resources for adapting to climate change and are therefore the most vulnerable to displacement, adverse health effects, job loss, property damage and other effects of climate change; and

WHEREAS, the world's leading climate scientists, including those in the Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessments Center, predict that these serious impacts of climate change will worsen if prompt action is not taken to curb emissions; and

WHEREAS, Our Children's Trust May 9, 2019 press release, "Groundbreaking Report Shows the United States Can Lead the Way Toward Climate Recovery Without Economic Hardship – The Report Details the Technically and Economically Feasible Pathways for a U.S. Transition Off of Fossil Fuels" is the first analysis completed in the United States to provide a detailed roadmap for placing all sectors of the U.S. energy system on an emissions path consistent with returning global atmospheric CO₂ to 350 ppm by 2100, which means global heating of 1 degree Celsius, not 2;" and

WHEREAS, restoring a safe and stable climate requires a "climate mobilization" at all levels of government on a scale not seen since World War II to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS, in the absence of effective federal engagement, it is the responsibility of the individual states, counties and cities deemed to be the laboratories of progress, to take immediate leadership actions to address climate change;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, we as members of the Meridian Township Board of Trustees, having adopted our own climate goals and policies to combat this climate emergency, will make it a priority to implement the township operations and community initiatives outlined in our

Climate Sustainability Plan. Elected and appointed officials, boards and commissions, and staff shall consider Climate Change impacts and issues as they plan and implement various projects and activities.

Seconded by Trustee Jackson.

Board discussion:

Resolution supports the Township’s commitment in addressing climate change and the serious/dangerous situations it presents in the present and the future, first step was to adopt the Sustainability Plan into Master Plan, addresses health and safety especially for older community members, thanked the Environmental Commission for the Climate Sustainability Plan, addressing renewable energy, discussion suggested with Granger on Township’s recycling issues.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Clerk Dreyfus, Trustee Jackson, Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer, Trustees Sundland, Wisinski, Treasurer Deschaine

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6 – 0

D. MNRTF Grant Application Submission - Acquisition

Trustee Jackson moved to support the submission of a grant request to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRFT) for acquisition of the 1.85-acre parcel (Parcel #33-02-02-16-200-011) located at 5280 Okemos Road, Haslett, in the amount of \$170,000 requesting 75% of the costs (\$127,500) be funded by the MNRFT Grant and committing \$42,500 or 25% of costs from the Township’s Park Millage Fund. This site, when acquired, will host a dedicated entrance to Nancy Moore Park and serve as a trailhead area for users of the Pedestrian/Bicycle Pathway System. Seconded by Trustee Wisinski.

Parks and Recreation Director stated grant is appealing because of parcel’s proximity to the boardwalk on Okemos Road, the Inter-Urban Pathway connection to the north, and future trail hub connection to the proposed MSU to Lake Lansing Regional Trail. Dedicated entrance into Nancy Moore Park, make it easier to find for visitors. The Park Commission held the public hearing on June 30 and unanimously supported the recommendation to submit this acquisition grant.

Board discussion:

Commend the Park Commission’s consideration of this grant and how it will connect various pieces of the park system, acquisition will give Nancy Moore Park the visibility it deserves, the Central Park Development Plan outlines the pathways connecting north to south/east to west and this was one of its features, funding will not displace future projects, Park Millage can fund acquisition cost and can ask for funding for development of parcel in the future.

When using Google Maps, Nancy Moore Park shows up as an East Lansing address – not Haslett. Post Office changed the address to Haslett, will inform DNR about this discrepancy.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Treasurer Deschaine, Clerk Dreyfus, Trustee Jackson, Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer, Trustees Sundland, Wisinski

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 6 – 0

13. BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Meridian Township Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Plan

Board goal of strengthening work place diversity, scholarship program for minorities in the Police Department, Township adopted resolutions supported diversity, equity and inclusion and declaring racism a health crisis, belief that although the Township has a diverse population, it does not mean it is equitable or inclusive, equity acknowledges structural inequalities which advantage and disadvantage some based on experience and circumstance, DEI Plan happens over time, suggested developing task force of community members to identify gaps in the Township's policies and procedures and develop solutions.

Board discussion:

Study materials provided, suggest including HR Director and Police Chief on the task force, HR Director agreed with the proposal and sees two different approaches, one for workplace and one for community, strategic approach and external/internal equity and inclusion, beliefs people hold in their minds about diversity – Township has a large Indian and Asian population, outreach to these groups, example – for Boards & Commissions, self-reflection needed for organizations, HR Director suggested several Trustees meet with her to explore this further, universities are good resources to work with, need to study our population demographics, small workgroup can shape the Township's commitment to address DEI, maybe with a resolution and plan on how to move forward, bringing in speakers to assist Board, new HR Director will have skill set to assist, need to research how diverse our community is; need information from census and encourage community members to complete the Census will help with future funding from state and federal governments.

Board consensus to place this item up for discussion at the next meeting.

B. Non-Discrimination and Fair Employment Practices Policy

Board discussion:

Need for long term strategies to address this policy, proposed policy is called "Ban the Box," there is no requirement for employers to ask if a person has been convicted of a crime, this creates a disadvantage for individuals with such a "blemish" on their background, need to look at an individual's skills, education and experience, a background check should be conducted for top candidates chosen for the position, this removes implicit bias and will increase diversity and skilled labor within our workforce.

Proposal is based on national best practices, suggestion on separating felonies from misdemeanors, separating violent crime and sex registry crimes from other offenses, banning the box only on misdemeanors.

Michigan criminal justice system has narrowest laws for expunging a person's record for both misdemeanors and felonies, allow individuals to apply; if chosen, then background check if performed; if record is discovered, allow the applicant the opportunity to explain because applicant may be worth taking a risk on, current applications were redrafted regarding arrests, application form asks criminal background question with a line for an explanation and a statement that

answering yes does not automatically constitute a bar to employment. HR Director is in favor of removing question as a pre-employment inquiry but if selected then a background check is performed which would then allow an applicant an opportunity to explain, need to perform due diligence or the Township could be held liable.

Concern that the proposed resolution would limit background checks on various positions of employment, remove the box for pre-employment interviews but have the ability to do background investigation on any employee for any position.

Review specific position and specific person with respect to background investigations, remove barriers for people with criminal past to rejoin society, banning the box creates equity as the individual can tell their own story, HR Director should have ability to conduct background checks as needed.

Concerns about whether the resolution needs review by Township law firm. Supervisor Pro-Tem stated that a motion needs to be made to change the resolution, Clerk responded that resolution is Discussion Item versus an Action Item and revisions can be made by Board discussion and consensus without legal review and without a motion.

Supervisor Pro-Tem stated that the resolution will be given to the Township law firm for review, and then back for discussion at the next Board meeting.

14. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer Opened Public Remarks at 8:31 pm.

Bill McConnell, 4376 Manitou Drive, Okemos; commended board on difficult items such as diversity, equity, inclusion, and the climate emergency resolution. Supported discussion on vegetation ordinance. Commended work by LeRoy Harvey on green infrastructure dealing with rain gardens and bio-swales; Emma Campbell on environmental equity issues.

Phyllis Vaughan, 6100 Balog Court, Haslett; stated she feels included in Meridian Township, Grange Acres is like United Nations and suggested a Town Hall meeting in their area; everyone in area helps each other. Reported tall grass/dead trees along Marsh Road. Haslett area needs cleaning up.

Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer Closed Public Remarks at 8:37 pm.

15. OTHER MATTERS AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Township Manager Walsh apologized to Black Lives Matter and the community. He thanked the investigation team, reviewed the investigation process and action taken by the Township on terminating the firefighter who made offensive comments on Facebook.

16. ADJOURNMENT

Clerk Dreyfus moved to adjourn. Seconded by Trustee Jackson

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried: 6-0

Supervisor Pro-Tem Opsommer adjourned the meeting at 8:43pm.

DANIEL OPSOMMER
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR PRO-TEM

BRETT DREYFUS,
TOWNSHIP CLERK