

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
REGULAR MEETING TOWNSHIP BOARD -**APPROVED**-
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198
517.853.4000, Township Hall Room
Tuesday, September 3, 2024, 6:00 pm

PRESENT: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis,
Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson

ABSENT: Trustee Sundland

STAFF: Interim Manager Schmitt, Chief Hamel, Director Gebes, Manager Diehl, Deputy
Manager Opsommer, Chief Grillo,, Director Wisinski, Director Ianni

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor Hendrickson called the September 3, 2024, Regular Township Board meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS

Supervisor Hendrickson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Deputy Clerk Gordon called the roll of the Board. Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Trezise, and Trustee Wilson present at 6:01 pm.

Trustee Sundland Absent.

4. PRESENTATION

A. 2025 Township Budget

Interim Manager Schmitt thanked staff for their assistance in putting together the proposed budget. He gave an overview of how the budget has been used during 2024, upcoming projects for 2024, then detailed budget items proposed for 2025. He presented the budget challenges for 2025 and how the budget helps to resolve those challenges. He noted specific appropriations across each fund that appear in the budget proposal. He also mentioned long-term needs that will not be met within this budget and recommended those items be considered in future years.

5. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Supervisor Hendrickson opened comments from the public at 6:27 pm.

Kris Kloc, Township resident, spoke in opposition to Ordinance 2024-06.

Debra Major, Township resident, spoke in opposition to Ordinance 2024-06.

Peggy Anderson, Township resident, spoke in opposition to Ordinance 2025-06.

Jean McDonald, Township resident and Senior Center Advisory Committee representative, complained about lack of agendas in the room, the size of the budget document, and the availability of the budget document. She wanted more information about additional taxes that might be assessed to complete road projects.

David Bueche, Township resident, spoke in opposition to Ordinance 2025-06.

Supervisor Hendrickson closed comments from the public at 6:40 pm.

6. INTERIM TOWNSHIP MANAGER REPORT

Interim Manager Schmitt gave updates about the following:

- Fire Department open house is upcoming, October 26th.
- Final paving on local roads will happen soon.
- Police contract with Williamstown Township is up at the end of the year and the new contract will be up for Board discussion in near future.
- Deer cull is projected to be 300 for this year.
- Pancake Breakfast is September 7th.
- Consumers Credit Union grand opening scheduled for September 24th.

7. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS OF ACTIVITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Treasurer Deschaine announced that the Rotary Luncheon is upcoming on September 10th.

Clerk Guthrie announced that it is National Voter Registration month and encouraged residents to contact the Township Clerks office or check the State of Michigan website if they have any questions regarding their voter registration status.

Supervisor Hendrickson thanked “Coach Mike” Devlin, Recreation Specialist, for conducting the Sporties for Shorties program. He spoke with Township Manager search firm and hope to open application window in October.

8. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Trustee Wilson moved to approve the Agenda. Supported by Trustee Trezise.

VOICE VOTE: YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 6-0

9. CONSENT AGENDA

Supervisor Hendrickson listed the items on the agenda.

Treasure Deschaine asked that the typo on page 14, erroneously giving Trustee Wilson the title “Treasurer,” be corrected.

Trustee Trezise asked that his comments regarding the firm Clovity reflect that his concern was that they provided only an hourly rate.

Trustee Wilson moved to approve the Consent Agenda with the appropriate amendments. Supported by Treasurer Deschaine.

ROLL CALL VOTE YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 6-0

10. QUESTIONS FOR THE ATTORNEY

NONE

11. HEARINGS

A. 2025 Township Budget

Supervisor Hendrickson opened the public hearing at 6:47 pm.

Supervisor Hendrickson closed the public hearing at 6:47 pm.

12. ACTION ITEMS

A. Special Use Permit #24-17 – Haslett Gallery Inc – 2119 A Haslett Road – Recreational Marijuana Retailer

Interim Manager Schmitt gave an overview of discussions that have occurred to date.

Trustee Trezise moved to adopt the resolution approving Special Use Permit 24-17, a request from Haslett Gallery Inc. to establish a recreational marijuana retailer at 2119 Haslett Road, Suite A (Parcel ID No 33-02-02-09-427-027). The subject property is zoned C-1, Commercial, and the property is located within the Marijuana Business Overlay District. Supported by Trustee McCurtis.

ROLL CALL VOTE YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 6-0

B. Assistance to Firefighters Grant Approval

Supervisor Hendrickson asked Board Members to consider suspending rules to bring this item for action during this meeting.

Trustee Trezise moved to suspend the rules put this on for action this evening. Supported by Trustee Wilson.

VOICE VOTE YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 6-0

Chief Hamel reviewed the work that has been done to receive this grant, explained the need for the grant funds, and explained the price increase.

Clerk Guthrie asked if the other participating municipalities would share some of the cost of the equipment. Chief Hamel explained that the partnership was necessary for the grant, that the equipment will be used mainly by Meridian Township, and that it will be made available to the partnering municipalities, but that they will not be sharing cost because it is not expected that they will use the equipment frequently.

Trustee McCurtis moved to authorize the Fire Department to accept the Assistance to Firefighters Grant for \$60,440.80 and use Cost Recovery Funds for the required matching amount of \$5,494.62 and the price increase of \$938.79. Supported by Treasurer Deschaine.

ROLL CALL VOTE YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 6-0

13. BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. 2025 Township Budget

Trustee McCurtis asked about the cost for and need of a Fire Inspector and for details about correcting the pension funds. Interim Manager Schmitt stated that the work is currently done by the Fire Marshall, that the additional position would be to support the Fire Marshall, and that a rough cost would be \$100,000. He explained how the process has been working and will work to correct the pension funds, provided the additional funding continues, and that when fully funded, the contribution amount will decrease dramatically.

Treasurer Deschaine asked if the requests for staffing were valid, Interim Manager Schmitt noted that the fire inspector, IT tech, UB supervisor are all valid needs and that the department Directors submitted no extra items, recognizing that the budget would be tight.

Treasurer Deschaine expressed his concern that the pension funding plan is not further along at this time and asked the Board to authorize adding a greater contribution than recommended in the budget. Clerk Guthrie concurred.

Clerk Guthrie expressed her concern that the difference between the goal and actual PASER ratings appears to be increasing. Deputy Manager Opsommer explained that some of the

accumulating gap is related to the rate of inflation, only the 2019 and 2020 amounts cost what was projected – as the cost of asphalt goes up, the amount of roads being paved is going down. Clerk Guthrie stated that, like the pension, putting this off is only increasing the cost and that it would be prudent to pay more now to reduce the future cost.

Supervisor Hendrickson suggested using the \$224,000 interest that has accumulated in the pension stabilization fund as additional payment to pension contributions. He also recognized that the Board has authorized contribution of funding from outside of the road millage into the road funds and stated that he does not think using further money from either general fund or using pension stabilization fund to put towards roads is appropriate given those additional investments. Clerk Guthrie concurred.

Trustee Wilson asked Interim Manager Schmitt for details on how he has analyzed the remaining ARPA funds. Interim Manager Schmitt replied that there is over \$200,000 in funds that will not be used, and staff will make recommendations based on timing constraints, however the Board can allocate those funds how they like, if they want changes. The discussion will be brought back to the Board after the budget has been completed. Trustee Wilson suggested postponing restroom renovations to 2026, provided there are no mechanical problems that must be addressed, and contribute those funds to the road fund. Clerk Guthrie concurred.

Supervisor Hendrickson summarized the discussion so far. There were suggestions to take either \$850,000 or \$224,000 out of the pension stabilization fund, and a suggestion to redesignate \$280,000 of funds proposed for bathroom renovation to contribute to the local road program. Trustee Trezise concurred; Trustee McCurtis concurred. Treasurer Deschaine disagreed with regards to the pension funds. He supported using \$850,000 from the pension stabilizations funds because the interest that will accumulate on the investment justifies using a higher amount than \$224,000 and that the fund was set aside to cover shortfalls, and he thinks this is a shortfall. Trustee Wilson preferred taking a lower amount from the pension stabilization fund because it will be needed in case of an economic downturn and recognized that there is room for discussion between \$224,000 and \$850,000. Interim Manager Schmitt calculated \$537,000 as the middle between those numbers. Treasurer Deschaine agreed with \$537,000 and expressed no disagreement about postponing bathroom reno.

Trustee Wilson expressed concern that the water/sewer ready to serve fee went from zero to \$12 in the previous year and is proposed to go up to \$24 in 2025. She recognized the need with regards to deferred maintenance but would like to see the fee come up more gradually. Deputy Manager Opsommer clarified that there has been a ready to serve fee for many years and that the 2023 budget increased it from \$5 to \$12. He noted that doubling the fee from \$12 to \$24 still keeps it significantly below all other services in the region and that because there will be additional employee hours spent explaining the fee increases, the thought is to have one larger increase versus smaller increases to alleviate that work. Deputy Manager Opsommer went on to explain that this topic should have been addressed when the Township began experiencing greater growth in 1990s and the issues that the fee will help address. Trustee Wilson suggested the Township promote the fee increase as a benefit to the entire system in an effort to help residents understand its need. Treasurer Deschaine supported the fee increase because its low amount shows that the Township is being responsible with funds. Clerk Guthrie expressed her disappointment that this has been an ongoing issue considering how low the fee is in relation to other water/sewer systems in this region. Interim Manager Schmitt indicated that staff is looking at different policies to address the issue, one of which is tying fee increases to inflation. Supervisor

Hendrickson acknowledged that the aging infrastructure must be addressed, then asked staff to consider a 3rd party analysis to help plan future fee and rate increases.

Trustee Wilson asked what the miscellaneous line, under the Economic Development Corporation Revenue Summary, for \$10,000 covered. Director Ianni explained that it is for reimbursement for Bond issuance costs and he will change the description to be more specific.

Trustee Wilson expressed her concern about \$100,000 proposed, under the Parks and Recreation Summary, to conduct a study to add cricket, that cost seems excessive compared to the \$70,000 for the Senior and Community Center study. Director Wisinski explained that the need for a cricket pitch and associated amenities has been identified in the community and it will require a large space that isn't likely to be available within existing parks, and that an engineering company will need to be hired to determine if it is feasible to build that space. Interim Manager Schmitt recommended putting out an RFP now that staff knows more about the level of spending the Board is willing to accept and recommended leaving the amount in the budget although it won't be spent until after the proposal has been selected. Supervisor Hendrickson asked if the cricket pitch is planned to go into a new spot or transform existing facilities. Director Wisinski indicated that it would be ideal to use existing space, but that the existing fields are currently over-used, and the study will determine where the pitch could be placed. However, the Parks Commission will probably decide on a temporary pitch in existing space while a long-term facility is created. Trustee McCurtis asked if cricket in the Township will be a league sport or for leisure and if people outside of the community will be using the space as well as residents. Director Wisinski stated that the pitch would be used mostly by residents practicing the sport, the closest place to practice is in Delta Township or require travel to Grand Rapids or Detroit areas, She stated that there are leagues across the State and that the Parks and Recreation Department would work with the community just like they do with other sports; the Township wants to be supportive of the sport. Treasurer Deschaine suggested that the fields at Nancy Moore Park might be suitable. Director Wisinski indicated that the spaces are currently used by a variety of sports and the assessment can include Nancy Moore Park.

Trustee Wilson asked about the need for the inclusive play structure at Towner Road Park within the context of a similar structure recently built at Marshall Park. Director Wisinski stated that the inclusive structure at Marshall Park was originally going to be part of the 2026 budget, but the Parks and Recreation Department was able to complete it in 2024 because additional funding was available. Prior to building the structure, the Department conducted a community survey, and respondents asked for an inclusive structure among other amenities. Regarding the proposed structure for Towner Road Park, it was included in the CIP and though Towner Road Park may not be within walkable distance for many residents, the need arises for families to have a space for their children to play while other family members are utilizing the sports fields. Trustee Wilson responded that she thinks the need should be evaluated.

Supervisor Hendrickson commented that he'd like the Township to explore transition to EVs throughout motorpool fleet as a long term goal and look into beginning the transition with 2026 budget.

Supervisor Hendrickson wanted to know why the consulting budget for assessing is increasing. Interim Manager Schmitt stated that it is to make sure funding is available if needed, that it will cover the cost of one additional lengthy appeal greater than was needed in 2024.

Supervisor Hendrickson noted that the Clerk's election budget is zero, expressing his concern that there is almost never a year with zero elections – schools and the County can put on elections every year. Clerk Guthrie indicated that the schools stated that there will be no 2025 elections and suggested using 2023 personnel and operating costs as a basis for the 2025 budget.

Supervisor Hendrickson asked why additional capital is being spent on the pathway fund given that phase III of the MSU to Lake Lansing project is fully grant funded. Deputy Manager Opsommer clarified that the grant is a reimbursement grant, meaning that the money must be spent first, and the grant will reimburse the cost minus 10% match from pathway millage, plus there are expenses to maintain the whole system.

Supervisor Hendrickson asked why the police restricted fund reflects a 2024 expense for ipads used in the field, but no such expense for 2025. Interim Manager Schmitt clarified that drug forfeiture funds were used as one-time expense in 2024 and that staff will strike the line item from the 2025 budget.

Supervisor Hendrickson expressed concerns about the increasing deficit in the community needs fund and wanted to know if it is sustainable. Interim Manager Schmitt stated that there are more needs than there are funds coming in. He agreed it is unsustainable but doesn't know that making major cuts in 2025 will be beneficial and seeking outside funding is the better option. Clerk Guthrie asked for details about the fundraising expense line for special events in the community needs fund. Director Ianni will add details. Trustee Wilson suggested it might be related to the Holiday Basket grant.

Supervisor Hendrickson asked if thought has been given to replenishing the capital projects fund and wanted to know more about the mechanism to replenish those funds. Interim Manager Schmitt explained that it is an unusual fund for a community to have and that replenishment would need to come from the general fund, that the way to do that would be to set an amount to divert from the general fund each year. Supervisor Hendrickson noted that an amount was supposed to go to the capital projects fund in 2024 but it did not. Interim Manager Schmitt noted that the budget message said that it would be, that it wasn't budgeted for, and staff will follow up.

Supervisor Hendrickson asked what the community promotion expense of \$25,000 in the Economic Development Corporation summary covers. Interim Manager Schmitt said he will follow up.

Trustee Trezise noted that the Environmental Commission has not spent all the 2024 climate sustainability budget and asked if there can be carryover from 2024 to 2025. Deputy Manager Opsommer stated that staff can look into carrying over funds from 2024.

Clerk Guthrie asked for more details about cemetery expenditures, noting that rates do not cover expenditures. Deputy Manager Opsommer stated that it is not unusual for municipal cemeteries to operate at a cost. Clerk Guthrie asked if some of the rates could be increased a bit more and suggested rounding them up to the nearest hundred. Deputy Manager Opsommer noted that the cemetery rates, like other areas, were not raised consistently to meet costs.

Clerk Guthrie asked if the electronic door control systems and safety enhancements could be made in 2027, in anticipation of the greater influx of foot traffic likely to occur during the 2028 Presidential election season. Deputy Manager Opsommer explained that the 2028 budget for this project would be based on State recommendations. Interim Manager

Schmitt detailed that the CIP is not necessarily based on priority but is intended to show what projects are coming so expenditures can be planned.

Clerk Guthrie asked what will be done with the operating surplus shown in the land preservation estimated available fund balance. Director Wisinski stated that those funds are restricted and are for acquisition, that the current strategy has been to focus on stewardship based on the ability for staff to maintain acquisitions. Clerk Guthrie if any of the millage is used for maintenance and if that amount could be increased. Director Wisinski confirmed that there is a percentage of the millage used for maintenance but that it cannot be increased. Supervisor Hendrickson added that past Board discussions have indicated that the Township is at capacity for acquiring lands and it may be that this money remains untouched for a while; he questioned the need to collect the millage at its full rate and proposed looking at how much will be levied at the next renewal.

At 8:47 Supervisor Hendrickson called a 5-minute recess. At 8:53 the board reconvened.

B. Ordinance 2024-06 Rezone 4.28 Acres of Vacant Land on Dobie Road from RAA, Single Family Low Density Residential to RC, Multiple Family

Interim Manager Schmitt briefed the Board on the discussion that has occurred to date. At the time when this topic reached the Board in June, the Board requested that the developer hold a meeting with the nearby neighborhood. Interim Manager Schmitt stated that there was no breakthrough at the requested meeting. He indicated that a portion of the property is consistent with the Master Plan, and that one of the questions for the board is to determine whether the portion requested for rezoning is also consistent with the Master Plan. Specific site-related items will not be addressed until a site plan review occurs.

Trustee McCurtis asked for clarity about the separate portions of the property in question. Interim Manager Schmitt clarified that the Master Plan was drawn along parcel lines and when the property in question was split, a portion of it was not included as RC, Multiple Family in the Master Plan. Trustee McCurtis recognized the traffic issue expressed by residents and asked how many residents might occupy the parcel and the criteria for density with respect to traffic. Interim Manager Schmitt gave a fair estimate that a 2-bedroom unit would have 3 people and directed Trustee McCurtis to page 294 of the packet, section B, numbers 4 and 6, where the criteria is listed in this application. Supervisor Hendrickson interjected that there could be up to 60 units on the site.

Treasurer Deschaine commented that it seems like the only people advocating for the change are people from the neighboring church property. Interim Manager Schmitt indicated that the church did advocate heavily for the property to be changed as a part of the Master Planning process.

Treasurer Deschaine asked for clarity about the Planning Commissions denials. Interim Manager Schmitt clarified that the zoning requests have been turned down twice by the Planning Commission. Treasurer Deschaine stated that he would not support the plan to rezone the parcel.

Trustee Trezise gave some history about the decision from his tenure on the Planning Commission, that the Commission decided this request didn't make sense from a zoning standpoint or from a utilization standpoint and it was turned down. He stated that the church's interest in changing the Master Plan was based in their desire to find a buyer for the property and the current zoning made that difficult because of the uniqueness of the property. He stated that he would not support the plan because it does not meet entirely

with the Master Plan and has become more involved than originally discussed, though he could see allowing multi-family at a lower density than 14 per acre on this site.

Trustee Wilson asked about the Planning Commission's denial. Interim Manager Schmitt stated that the Planning Commission denied this rezoning proposal in July based on concerns about density and traffic. Trustee Wilson recognized the issues with split zoning on a parcel and asked about considering lower density zoning on this parcel. Supervisor Hendrickson concurred. She then asked if traffic is usually considered at this stage of the process. Interim Manager Schmitt indicated that it can be considered at this stage.

Clerk Guthrie asked for more details about rezoning and split parcels. Interim Manager Schmitt stated that, for this parcel, the conundrum is that the Master Plan boundary does not align with the parcel boundaries. He stated that the entire parcel can be rezoned to whatever is deemed appropriate so long as there is justification under the zoning standards and support under the Master Plan, but changing the split designation under the Master Plan is a more challenging process that will not be undertaken until the next Master Plan review. The current rezoning process can be done at this time even though it would not be in compliance with the Master Plan.

Treasurer Deschaine asked that this item be brought forward for Action at the next meeting stating that the applicant has had ample opportunity to speak with the board and that if they wanted to bring a different proposal, they would be welcome to do so. Supervisor Hendrickson concurred, noting that the current plan is likely to be denied based on the evening's discussion. Trustee McCurtis also concurred.

C. Donation of Fire Equipment

Chief Hamel gave an overview of the proposal to donate Township fire equipment to a community in need. This is equipment that the Township has replaced with new equipment and the donation would be in lieu of selling it.

Treasurer Deschaine indicated that he would deny the request because the fiduciary responsibility to residents is to sell the equipment. He asked for a fair market appraisal to know the vehicle's value. Chief Hamel stated that because of the age of the equipment, the value would be determined by whatever is recouped through salvage.

Clerk Guthrie respectfully disagreed and stated that the Township has donated equipment in the past to communities in need. She asked that the Finance Department determine the value of the equipment and, if it has been depreciated she supports donating it. She then stated that this type of donation shows cooperation with other municipalities and gave an example of how Meridian Township recently accepted a donation of voting equipment from East Lansing. She asked if there is a finance policy on donations.

Trustee Trezise asked if there is the State program for disposing of surplus and asked if there is a way to utilize the program to determine what communities may be in need and if there is a cost that can be recovered for the equipment.

Trustee Wilson stated that she would like to know the value of the equipment before deciding. Supervisor Hendrickson concurred.

14. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Supervisor Hendrickson opened comments from the public at 9:31 pm

Kris Kloc, Township resident, spoke in opposition to Ordinance 2024-09, providing additional information about how she has spoken in opposition in the past.

Debra Major, Township resident, spoke in opposition to Ordinance 2024-09, adding that she appreciates the board's discussion tonight.

Supervisor Hendrickson closed comments from the public at 9:37 pm

15. OTHER MATTERS AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Clerk Guthrie thanked Chief Grillo for a card.

Supervisor Hendrickson asked Board Members if they would attend a Board retreat in November to welcome new Board Members. He noted that he responded to a resident in an email with regards to his plan for the Senior and Community Center plan which will be included in the next meeting packet and that he hopes to get meetings started after the budget work is complete.

Trustee Trezise updated the Board on the work of the Policy Review Committee and asked that Members review the updated Board Policy Manual and bring back comments to the Committee.

16. ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Wilson moved to adjourn. Seconded by Trustee McCurtis.

VOICE VOTE

YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson

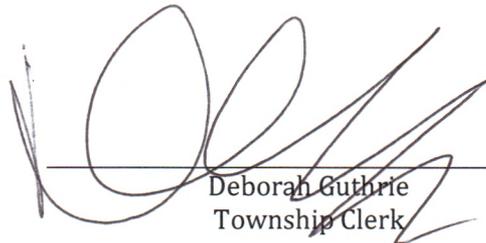
NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 6-0

The meeting adjourned at 9:42 pm.



Scott Hendrickson
Township Supervisor



Deborah Guthrie
Township Clerk