



2024

Township Board Summary of Listening Sessions



Meridian Township
5151 Marsh Road
Okemos, MI 48864
517.853.4000

meridian.mi.us



Summary of Township Board Listening Sessions

June 11, 25 & 27, 2024

In 2022, the Meridian Township Board established a goal for the following year to enhance the Township's communication and outreach to our 45,000 residents. To help meet this goal, the Board embarked on a series of six Listening Sessions throughout the community in the fall of 2023. These sessions brought out 30-60 residents per session to talk about issues including, but not limited to: the Township's Local Road Program, public safety, pedestrian safety, Ingham County Drain Commissioner's Office projects, and a wide variety of other topics. One of the Township Board's goals for 2024 was to further improve our citizen outreach and communication, leading to another round of Listening Sessions, which were held in June.

The 2024 Listening Sessions started with the Township Board mailing an invitation to every resident in the Township, inviting them to one of three evening sessions. All three sessions were held in the Town Hall Room at the Township Municipal Building. During those three nights, over 200 residents shared their thoughts, ideas and opinions on a variety of topics. Each session was opened with updates from staff and board members on four topics:

- Police and Public Safety related issues from Police Chief Grillo
- Construction updates from Deputy Township Manager Dan Opsommer
- Senior & Community Center Conceptual Design from Township Trustee and Senior & Community Center Task Force Chair Marna Wilson
- Economic Development update from Interim Township Manager and Director of Community Planning & Development Tim Schmitt

After those four brief updates, the Supervisor opened the floor to the general public to ask questions, which ranged from recreational marijuana to issues with the spread of invasive species. Additionally, the Township Board stayed beyond the nominal end time of 7:30 p.m. to continue to discuss and answer questions from constituents. A summary of the main topics follows, along with a brief discussion of each item.

POLICE UPDATE

Staffing Levels

Chief Grillo thanked the Township Board for their support in passing the Public Safety Recruitment and Retention Program. The Program has increased the number of Police Officers on staff this year from 30 to 39, which 3 more officers being sponsored by the Township at the upcoming Police Academy to bring Township back to full staffing levels of 42 sworn officers.

Traffic

Chief Grillo reported that more tickets are being written now that there are more officers serving the community. Once the Department is fully staffed again, there will be a traffic team put in place and they will be able to put more focus on neighborhoods. There was discussion that the Ingham County Road Department oversees both the traffic speeds and installation of speed bumps.

Change in our Region's Emergency Alert System

Chief Grillo updated the community that we are switching from the Everbridge Alert System to the RAVE Smart911 system. This system is superior to the current system in many ways, including the ability to send alerts to everyone in a specific, customizable geographic area. He encouraged residents to sign up for the new system. [Residents can sign up for RAVE Smart911 system by clicking here.](#)

LOCAL ROAD/ROAD CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Local Road Program

In order to establish a reliable revenue source for reconstructing and maintaining Meridian Township's 153 mile

network of local roads, the Township proposed a road millage bond on the August 2019 ballot.

The voters approved this 10-year millage bond at a rate of 1.9429 mills. Over the course of the 10 years (2020-2029), the millage bond will invest \$35.25 million in the Township's Local Road Program. The Township also invests \$280,000 annually from its General Fund and the Ingham County Road Department invests \$335,000 annually (increased from \$172,500 beginning in 2023).

[Click here to view the 2024 Local Road Program map.](#)

[Click here for more information.](#)

Water Main Projects

The intersection of Haslett/Okemos Road was reopened. Recent rain events canceled scheduled construction dates. Weather permitting, the contractors are currently scheduled to finish restoring Okemos Road between Haslett Road and the Kebs, Inc driveway by July 12. Barring any weather delays, Okemos Road, immediately north of the Haslett Road intersection, will be reopened on July 12.

The Timberlane St and Blue Haven Dr Water Main Replacement Projects are also under construction. There was discussion about storm drains and the fact that storm drains are mostly overseen by the Ingham County Drain Commissioner's Office, with some being under the jurisdiction of the Ingham County Road Department.

MSU to Lake Lansing Trail

Phase I of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail was officially opened to the public on Friday, December 8. Construction of Phase II began in August of 2023 and is expected to be completed in Fall of 2024. Once Phase II is complete, users will have an easy, safe, and enjoyable option for non-motorized travel between the MSU Campus and Lake Lansing Park South, along approximately five miles of connected pathways and trails.

Phase III is the final phase of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail. Phase III will provide a trail route from Marsh Road, just south of Haslett Road where the Inter Urban Trail ends, all the way to Lake Lansing Park North. The Township completed the surveying for Phase III design in May and June of 2024. The Township hopes to complete the design of Phase III in 2024, obtain all necessary permits in late 2024 and early 2025, which would allow for bidding and construction in 2025.

COMMUNITY/SENIOR CENTER PROJECT

Facility Concept Plan

Trustee Marna Wilson shared the timeline for the existing Senior Center, which is scheduled to be demolished. There is a demand for Parks and Recreation space, meeting room space for public use, and gathering spaces such as an auditorium. The proposed plan is a multigenerational Senior & Community Center. The Parks and Recreation Department would be housed in the facility. The facility would include space for a private Senior Center, meeting rooms of varying sizes, a larger multipurpose room with a stage, two regulation size basketball courts, badminton courts, pickleball courts, volleyball, two exercise rooms, warming kitchen, lockers, changing rooms, vending area, and youth activities. The Township secured a \$5 million grant in the state budget to help fund the project and is also anticipated to receive a federal grant in an unknown amount.

Facility Location

The current Meridian Township Senior Center is located in Chippewa Middle School. With the upcoming development of a new Chippewa Middle School, the existing building will be demolished. The Community/Senior Center Committee reviewed six possible locations. Due to the fact that some of the location options had wetland issues and substantial tree removals, the Committee decided to go with the former Younkers location. The Committee is planning to host two night meetings in mid-July, for the community to view enlarged prints of the Community/Senior Center for resident feedback.

Tri-Annual Community Survey

The Committee has held two sessions with the current Senior Center members on their needs, wants, and ideas for

the new facility. The Township will be conducting a statistically valid survey this fall to a random sample of residents. The survey will include questions regarding the Senior & Community Center.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/REVITALIZATION EFFORTS

Current Single Family Projects

Currently, the Township has four major residential projects under construction. These include the following:

- Silverleaf on Bennett Road-150 total homes, 25 in the first phase under construction
- Copper Creek on Haslett Road-3rd and 4th phases underway with 37 additional homes
- Grand Reserve on Central Park Drive-60 duplexes, 55 single-family homes
- Newton Pointe on Saginaw-239 units ranging from single-family homes to apartment buildings

Commercial Project Updates

The following updates were shared:

- ACE Hardware is going into the old Stillwater Grill site at the northwest corner of the Okemos Road/Jolly Road intersection.
- Chateau Coffee is coming to the building next to Playmakers on Grand River Ave.
- Crunch Fitness is expanding into the old State of Fitness space adjacent to their current location.
- I Heart Mac and Cheese is going in at Hannah Plaza off of Hagadorn Road.
- Becky Beauchine Kulka is moving into the former bank site on Okemos Road at Jolly Oak.
- Tantay, the first Peruvian restaurant in the region, is going in on Jolly Road, just west of Okemos Road.
- Trader Joe's is opening on June 27 on Grand River Ave across from Whole Foods.

Haslett Village Square

This Project is on track for fall construction. It will be mixed-use project with apartments, townhouses, and commercial space. They are working through an issue with the Ingham County Drain Commission before construction can begin.

Village of Okemos

The developers changed the concept and presented a new plan to the Township Board, which did not get support from the Board Members. There is no movement on the project for now and the developer is evaluating their options.

OTHER MAJOR ITEMS DISCUSSED

Order to Maintain Program

The Order to Maintain Program is a replacement program for sidewalks that is paid for through special assessments. The 2022 Program was just completed. The Township inspects neighborhoods and flags sidewalks for trip and fall hazards. If they reach a certain height, they are temporarily fixed with asphalt until that area is part of the Program. ADA ramps are upgraded and installed when missing as part of the Program.

Road Diets

Deputy Manager Opsommer explained that Road Diets are studied nationally, not locally and they work best on roads that have 15,000 trips or fewer. The Mt. Hope Road Diet will not happen until 2025. The Ingham County Road Department will be doing the project. By cutting down thru lanes on Mt. Hope, it improves safety due to less distracted driving. Residents should contact the Ingham County Road Department for studies or questions about the project and reach out to the Ingham County Commissioners with concerns.

Recreational Marijuana Dispensaries

There was robust discussion regarding the dispensary at Okemos and Jolly Roads. The dispensary was approved initially in 2019/2020 for medical marijuana and approved for a recreational marijuana license earlier this year. The Special Use Permit (SUP) will be in front of the Township Board at the July 23, 2024 meeting for discussion. There is a possibility of four recreational dispensaries in the Township. These were previously medical marijuana locations. The Township has discussed marijuana licensing for over six years and this is the first location that is close to opening.