

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES
Meridian Municipal Building – Town Hall Room
April 6, 2016 - APPROVED**

REGULAR MEETING

PRESENT: Vice-Chair Schools, Commissioners Dickmann, Sarver and Jackson

ABSENT: Chair McConnell and Commissioner Kielbaso

STAFF: Harmony Gmazel, AICP, Associate Planner

OTHERS: None

1. CALL REGULAR MEETING TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Schools called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF THE REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

Approved by consent without objection.

3. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MARCH 2, 2016 WORK SESSION and REGULAR MEETING MINUTES and MARCH 24, 2016 SPECIAL MEETING.

Moved by Sarver, seconded by Dickmann; **APPROVED** 4-0.

4. PUBLIC REMARKS

L. Provencher invited the Commission to upcoming Friends of Meridian Pathways meeting, Spring Recycling Event and Love-A-Park event.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT

Vice-Chair Schools announced that Susan Masten was recently appointed to the Environmental Commission.

6. STAFF REPORT

H. Gmazel introduced Wetland Use Permit #16-02 (Okemos Pointe) and called for a special meeting in April to review the project and provide comments to the Township Board before their May 3 meeting.

H. Gmazel introduced a tentative wetland use permit related to Towner Road Park improvements, that we expect to receive for review in June or July.

7. COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Land Preservation: None

Energy Team: J. Sarver reported that there will be a Zero Energy Home session in late April.

Student Engagement: None

Parks: None, Last meeting minutes were shared with the Commission by email.

8. ANNOUNCEMENT OF 2016 ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AWARD WINNERS

Vice-Chair Schools, Commissioners Sarver and Jackson announced the following:

The field of nominees for the Environmental Stewardship Awards was very competitive this year. Thank you to all persons who nominated an individual or group who made a difference in Meridian Township this past year. The Commission recognizes those residents who prioritize environmental stewardship in their daily routine. Tonight, we proudly announce the winners of this year's Awards. Remember, we invite all awardees to our regular meeting on Wednesday, May 4th at 7pm to receive their award and to showcase their stewardship efforts. We look forward to meeting you then.

NON-PROFIT:

East Lansing Food Co-op

Reasons: Supporting local farmers, supporting Northwind Community Garden, installing an innovative solar PV array, maintaining an extensive composting and recycling program, supporting community environmental initiatives (Meridian Recycling Event, and Community Supported Agriculture)

SERVICE CLUB:

Haslett Beautification Association

Reasons: They are building community pride in Haslett by planting and maintaining attractive flowerbeds throughout the area. These beautiful plantings aid in improved aesthetics, increased greenhouse gas absorption along our roadways, increased flora biodiversity for insect populations and an increase in native plantings.

PUBLIC SERVICE:

Assistant Chief Ken Plaga, Meridian Township Police

Reasons: He is the coordinator and manager of the Township Chronic Wasting Disease efforts in conjunction with the DNR. His time and expertise has helped the township and the state better understand CWD and the impacts it has on the deer population.

BUSINESS:

Ody and Rachel Norkin, Skybird Okemos Travel, and Michigan Flyer LLC

Reasons: In 2006, Skybird Okemos Travel-owned and operated by Meridian Township residents Ody and Rachel Norkin-joined Indian Trails, Inc., to create Michigan Flyer, LLC- a motorcoach service that makes roundtrips between East Lansing, Ann Arbor, and Detroit Metro Airport. From the very beginning, a primary purpose of Michigan Flyer-whose slogan is "Why Drive?"-has been to give mid-Michigan residents an environmentally friendly alternative to the passenger car. Indeed, Michigan Flyer invested in an entire fleet of buses equipped with technology that reduces exhaust emissions to near zero. Since its launch nearly 10 years ago, Michigan Flyer has served almost 1 million passengers-including thousands of Meridian Township residents. In the process, it has enabled each of them to make a significant difference in energy conservation, decreasing pollution and easing highway congestion. Each of Michigan Flyer's motorcoaches exceeds EPA standards on air pollutants (85% fewer CO2 emissions per passenger mile for each person who rides instead of driving alone); Achieves 184 passenger miles per gallon, and has the capacity to remove 50 cars from the highway, further reducing air pollution, traffic congestion.

INDIVIDUALS:

Michael Thomas

Reasons: From 1997 to 2004, and from 2011 to 2013, he served on the ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION, where he: 1) was vice chair for seven years, 2) developed the open space inventory and use criteria which became the basis of the Land Preservation Program Ordinance and the subsequent rules of procedure, and official property screening criteria, 3) represented the Environmental Commission on the Fire Station design and sighting committee, 4) provided environmental oversight of force main construction in the Central Meridian Uplands Preserve and the Red Cedar Glen restoration project, 5) reviewed and conducted numerous site visits for wetland use permits, 6) co-authored the 2011 Wetlands Brochure, 7) worked with Township planning staff and the Michigan Natural Features Inventory under a EPA grant to develop procedures and data for integrating protected species and sensitive plant communities in our permit review process, 8) chaired the Tree Conservation Ordinance Committee, and 9) developed the draft guidelines for special use permits and site plan reviews and recommendations for Community and Environmental Impact Statements. He also served on the LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD from 2000 to 2010, where he: 1) co-authored the township Land Preservation Ordinance, 2) authored the Land Preservation Ordinance Rules of Procedure, 3) Authored the Land Preservation Program brochure and presentation materials, 4) authored a peer-reviewed article on "The use of Ecologically Based Screening Criteria in a Community-Sponsored Open Space Preservation Program, published in the Journal of Environmental Planning and Management, 5) conducted training of the screening process for LPAB members and Environmental Commissioners, 6) Led all site screening trips from 2003 to 2010, and prepared screening reports for all properties reviewed, 7) participated in screening, , analysis, and recommendation of 17 preserves consisting of more than 700 acres of ecologically valuable lands and waters, 8) was principal author of position description for Parks and Land Coordinator, 9) co-authored consultant specifications for stewardship and land management of LPAB preserves, 10) authored Red Cedar Glen site restoration plan and agreement and supervised transplanting of at-risk vegetation, and much more. MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT: under recent grants from HUD's Sustainable Communities program and the Robert Wood Johnson foundation/Pew Charitable Trusts, he integrated Meridian's permit review/health impact assessment checklist into a free, user-friendly online HIA Toolkit and mapping/impact assessment tool, which is being used by Community Planning and Development staff in site plan reviews.

Dave Reicosky

Reasons: Dave received an undergraduate degree from Kent State University, a PhD from Michigan State University and was awarded a Rockefeller Post-Doctoral Fellow to work on improving dry bean germplasm in plant breeding programs. Dave also started and operated a tree farm near East Sparta, Ohio. Dave learned about Monarch Butterflies by working with his 2 daughters during their school years and collected Monarch caterpillars from the milkweed plants on his farm for the family to raise and release. He was shocked when he learned in 2014 that the Monarch Butterfly was in trouble and close to being on the endangered species list. He has since become a passionate advocate for "Bringing Back the Monarchs" and has been raising awareness about the plight of the Monarch in Meridian Township. He's a dedicated volunteer that not only comes out for organized events, but proposes and leads new ones as well. One of the most notable volunteer projects Dave led was the *Monarch Habitat Improvement Planting* in Hartrick Park. He acquired a grant from Monarch Watch for free flats of milkweed, a plant needed for Monarch caterpillar survival. This project involved the participation of 100 Bennett Woods Elementary third-grade students, teachers, and parent volunteers. Dave's dedication to pollinator habitat improvement, passion for educating the younger generation, and accomplishments in Meridian Township made him an excellent candidate for the Environmental Stewardship Award.

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We congratulate these outstanding residents and groups who are making a difference to the environment in Meridian Township. We invite you all to attend a special award ceremony at our Wed. May 4 meeting at 7pm in this room.

9. COMMISSION COMMENTS RE: TOWNSHIP PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLE PATHWAY PLAN

Commissioners discussed the following issues related to the upcoming plan update. A memo listing these items will be provided to the Director of Public Works for incorporation into their plan update process:

Future pathway project planning should include a careful assessment of environmental impacts before construction activities commence. This includes a review of rare or endangered species at the project site and an understanding of the natural communities that surround the area of impact.

The needs of wildlife corridors, water bodies and preserved areas should be prioritized if impacted by a pathway project.

Sidewalk gaps and increased local street connectors in the vicinity of Mt. Hope Road, Hagadorn Rd, and Okemos Rd should be addressed.

An increase in local connections from the Interurban to nearby collector streets and sidewalks should be addressed.

The Commission recommends signage improvements throughout the Township related to the pathway system. Both an increase in signage and improvements to existing signage will aid in wayfinding, and will improve the safety of drivers, pedestrians and cyclists using the various multi-use pathways or bike lanes.

10. PUBLIC REMARKS

L. Provencher provided a historic overview of the pike/ped millage in the Township.

11. ADJOURNMENT

- **MOTION** by Commissioner Jackson to adjourn. **SUPPORTED** by Commissioner Dickmann. Approved 4-0. The Regular Meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.