

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
TOWNSHIP BOARD STUDY SESSION MEETING **-APPROVED-**
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198
853-4000, Town Hall Room
TUESDAY, March 27, 2018, **6:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Supervisor Styka, Clerk Dreyfus, Treasurer Brixie, Trustees Deschaine, Jackson, Opsommer, Sundland

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Township Manager Frank Walsh, Director of Public Works Derek Perry, Human Resources Director Joyce Marx, Finance Director Mariam Mattison, Director of Community Planning and Development Mark Kieselbach, Economic Development Director Chris Buck, Parks and Recreation Director LuAnn Maisner, Fire Chief Lori Schafer, Director of Information Technology Stephen Gebes, Communications Director Deborah Guthrie, Facilities Superintendent Dennis Antone, Principal Planner Peter Menser.

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor Styka called the meeting to order at 6:18 P.M.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS

Supervisor Styka led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

The Secretary called the roll of the Board.

4. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Supervisor Styka opened public remarks at 6:20 P.M.

Neil Bowlby 6020 Beechwood Drive, Okemos; challenged quote about “numerous fatalities” by Board member at previous meeting regarding Saginaw Hwy and Park Lake Rd. Bowlby stated there have been only 4 fatalities since 2004. On repairs to Township Municipal Building, he had questions about the enumeration of expenses, cited expenses for labor, the costs do not make sense, and numbers literally do not add up correctly in the document. Stated that the Township has extra money because the police millage passed and encouraged the board to not just spend money.

Leonard Provencher, 5824 Beuna Parkway, Haslett; stated that this meeting was not posted on the calendar in the lobby. Having meeting only on the homepage is not sufficient and it is not being televised, unfair to the public since the Board is discussing a \$2.5 million dollar renovation project (including a 20% contingency fee). The consultant on this facilities report (Abonmarche) has within done a number many consulting jobs for the Township, questioned if approved by the Board and what the relationship is since consultant is based out of Benton Harbor. Mr. Provencher likes to support the local economy and can do that by hiring local consultants. Concerned if consultant is also a potential bidder for the renovation work.

5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Treasurer Brixie moved to approve the agenda. Seconded by Trustee Jackson.

VOICE VOTE: YEAS: Trustees Deschaine, Jackson, Opsommer, Sundland, Supervisor Styka,
Treasurer Brixie, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously 7-0.

6. BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Facilities Report

Manager Frank Walsh:

- This discussion is to get an update on the anticipated costs, consider if the Township government stays on the site, or does the Township move to another location?
- Moving to Meridian Mall is an option for the Board to consider
- No preconceived notions

Director of Public Works Derek Perry & Dennis Antone, Facilities Superintendent:

- Costs for replacing the HVAC system in the Municipal building
- Pro-Tech Mechanical Services are on-call for problems and repairs
- Discussed Johnson HVAC controls, monitor and change temperatures
- 19,288 sq. ft. in the complex was built in 1971, addition in 1992, the building has some original equipment, won't know exact costs until it is designed and bid out

Annual Costs Municipal Building:

- Electric and gas costs \$54,000 a year – electric portion is \$45,000
- Maintenance contract Johnson Controls \$3500
- Preventative maintenance from Pro-Tech \$17,000
- 2011 Software and Control upgrades
- \$38,700 a year in repairs in the last 3 years totaling around \$113,000

Problems:

- Temperature/Balance issues
- Zone control lacking
- Loud diffusers
- Frequent repairs
- Coolant scarcity

Options

- Consultants did walkthroughs with Facilities Superintendent
- The Township can do nothing, or replace system as recommended
- VRF Technology (variable refrigerant flow)
- Relocation as an option
- Municipal building has “good bone;” attractive, layout optimizing options
- Other building needs; electrical, loading struggles, lighting is insufficient, office furniture
- Relocating departments during renovation phases

- Increasingly difficult to find parts, such as compressors
- Refrigerant becoming a big issue, manufacturers are not warranting condensing parts
- Cost of refrigerant is extremely expensive, and a big issue for the environment
- Compressor burnout costs \$8,000-\$10,000

Manager Frank Walsh:

- \$200,000 claim from local engineering firm for repairs to Central Lift Station Force Main
- Project supposedly “completed” in 2012, Township has spent money every year on repairs
- Not paying for claim until problems with Central Lift Station resolved

Board Discussion:

- 100 year expected building life, are cost estimates realistic, is the consultant overestimating repairs, high efficiency with new system can help repay costs, budget and phasing, using one contractor for all phases saves money, 20-year technology lifespans, rooftop limitations
- Costs of moving, not excited about moving due to campus-like atmosphere of Township buildings, Municipal Hall is focal point of community, Meridian would appear to be “failed” community if move to a rental facility that was not built for Township government
- Innovating thinking needed, long-term health of the community includes Meridian Mall as anchor of the regional shopping industry, retail is being threatened by online shopping
- Blighted mall would be a huge problem, Township has struggled with redevelopment in Downtown Okemos, Haslett and the Carriage Hills Shopping Center
- Great idea moving to Meridian Mall, private-public partnership, availability via public transit
- Cost to Central Park and the Historical Village if the Township moves, moving Township office configurations is a complex undertaking, gauging the public’s attitude, citizens input survey could include questions about the project, renewable energy, solar garden, etc.
- Utility costs with new system, current maintenance costs, length of payback for new system, HVAC efficiencies, compressor costs/replacement/VRF issues, lighting costs could be slashed with new technology
- Rent expense for 20,000 sq. ft. at Meridian Mall, leasing as long-term financial obligation,
- Concern that Township appears “small” with 20,000 sq. ft. in the mall, optically making the Township look less important, time spent on branding campaign, mall adaptations over time, possibility of big-box retail stores adding senior housing or residential component
- Township decisions cannot be based on financial “realities” of mall, future of campus, Central Park and the Historical Village if we moved
- Cost-benefits analysis would be helpful, maybe from a similar community that updated its HVAC, questions about ductwork retrofitting, issues in retrofitting in other areas
- Keeping the mall financially viable as valid or invalid reason for move, another round of store closings could put Meridian Mall at tipping point, can a private developer purchase property and make it work? Traffic at current location and at mall, potential problems, what is Township property and building worth. Mall should keep diversifying, become a destination for more than retail, mall not good for a municipality.
- Rare to be encouraged to lease than to own property, State offices often moved and try to get away from leasing, past experience with State of Michigan shows staff can pack boxes and move within buildings without cost to State
- During time at the State Of Michigan, Board member packed boxes and moved around within buildings during renovations, didn’t cost the State anything to move offices

- Other municipalities built new or moved to preserve historically significant buildings and functions, Meridian Township has no 'central' properties to preserve except the municipal building, Township employees working in close proximity is of value to the community, we should retain the Municipal Building as long as possible, use of Mall as temporary office space during renovation phases
- Township should work hard at achieving sustainability goals and objectives in the process of retrofitting and upgrading the Township's current building, question about need for Public Safety building upgrades
- Placemaking concepts, municipal building is a central asset in the minds of citizens, the clock tower, police building, municipal building and the Farmers Market, this is the symbol for Meridian Government
- Innovative thinking could be applied to the Municipal building and could also be applied to Meridian Mall, solar roof and other infrastructure improvements at Municipal Building, get input from stakeholder group for innovations, we are reinvesting in ourselves
- Phased in approach could be longer than 5 years, which would lower costs, some of the numbers in the report by Abonmarche don't add up
- Make sure the Township has a number of qualified bidders for renovation contract, problems with past firms, DLZ (contracting firm) and their bad reputation with the State, opportunity for new firm to bring a fresh look to Town Hall room, building sustainability
- Fund balance is well maintained, mainly used for major circumstances, this may be a time to use when Phase 1 renovation is started, make up the fund balance over time
- Lack of investment in core institutions at the State level, doesn't want the Township to make the same mistake, Township is investing in Parks and in new Central Fire Station, take long view for the municipal building to meet its potential, not do project "cheap"
- Manager Walsh stated that based on Board comments, administration will not look at relocation and will focus on Municipal Building upgrades, check space at mall for temporary housing during renovation

B. Project Update

Project updates from each Department Director to update the Board on department activities.

7. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Leonard Provencher, 5824 Beuna Parkway, Haslett; facilities phasing at appropriate times, ensure updates meet ADA compliance, vision for what is needed in the future. Benefit to citizens to have access to handouts from department directors.

8. OTHER MATTERS AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

None

9. ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Deschaine moved to adjourn. Seconded by Trustee Jackson.

VOICE VOTE: YEAS: Trustees Deschaine, Jackson, Opsommer, Sundland, Supervisor Styka,
Treasurer Brixie, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously 7-0.

Supervisor Styka adjourned the meeting at 9:21 P.M.

RONALD J. STYKA
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

BRETT DREYFUS,
TOWNSHIP CLERK

Maggie Rodgers-Sanders, Secretary