

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

June 6, 2018

5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864

Public Safety – Nelson Room, 7:00 P.M.

PRESENT: Commissioners Jim Kielbaso, Susan Masten, Ned Jackson, John Sarver, Kirk Lapham,
Chair Bill McConnell

ABSENT: Marina Ionescu

STAFF: Environmental Programs Coordinator LeRoy Harvey

OTHERS: Agnes Bao (HOMTV), Elizabeth Hossink, and Philip Stepnowski (interest in E.C.)

1. Call meeting to order

Chair McConnell called the meeting to order at 7 p.m.

2. Approval of Agenda

Chair McConnell suggests adding Ember Oaks to Old Business

3. Approval of Minutes

A. May 2, 2018 Regular Meeting Minutes: Change: Commissioner Commissioner Lapham moved to approve the minutes with minor modifications. Supported by Commissioner Masten.

4. Public Remarks – Ms. Bao described her interest in doing a story on grass mowing height and ecological landscaping.

5. New Business

A. Lawns & Ecological Landscaping

Commissioner Masten described an interest in exploring our current ordinance regulating lawn height (<https://ecode360.com/28778726>). Masten expressed a concern that the 2015 change in maximum lawn height from 12" – 8" (within 75' of buildings) might be overly restrictive – or even detrimental to Township Goals (for example, the Water Section in Meridian's Climate Sustainability Plan.

Masten described that views about lawns are changing. The environmental impact of lawns including:

- Chemicals applied
- Impacts on water supply and water quality
- Biodiversity, pollinators, habitat, etc.
- Energy use and related ozone pollution and greenhouse gas emissions (Commissioner Jackson mentioned the impact of older 2-stroke mowers on pollution)

There is interest in doing some education about ecological landscaping. Ideas include:

- Inserts in Water or Tax Bills.
- Review research and educational materials – (we did a lot on **phosphorous/fertilizer**)
- Hold a tour of "Ecological Landscapes" (like Solar Home Tour).
- Ozone alerts (staggered mowing days, etc.)
- Green Them Presentations
- Environmental Awards to eco-landscapers/examples

Other ideas: Harvey mentioned that from conversations with Code Enforcement, they do not generally give citations for intentional-looking gardens, raingardens, alternative landscapes, as long as the grass areas are not violating code. An example might be a well-defined border around a more bushy patch of perennials, garden, raingarden, prairie, etc.

There is interest in looking in to the history of the ordinance amendment to gain a better understanding of the issues that led to the change and how/if we might proceed.

Harvey provided a draft story on [low-maintenance and ecological landscaping](#) (see attachment)

6. Old Business

A. PAH Ordinance/Coal Tar-Based Sealants (for driveways, parking lots, etc.)

LeRoy shared an update. He has spoken with municipalities, contractors, and experts about potential next steps (see attachments). Rebecca Esselman (our Green Theme Speaker) mentioned a huge study will be coming out soon about the impact of PAHs in the Great Lakes. This may result in a statewide action (similar to Minnesota)

The E.C. recommends:

- Get a report from Younes Ishraidi, Chief Engineer with Meridian Public Works, who will discuss with the Greater Lansing Committee for Stormwater Management on Thursday. See [attachment](#) Harvey prepared for this meeting.
- Incorporate in to our bid specs (use of low PAH – less than 1% sealants)
- Suggest to our Board that we consider a ban
- Share the [brochure](#) with contractors to tell them we're thinking of distributing it and ask if there's inaccurate information in it
- Consider working with Lowes or Home Depot to advertise their eco-friendly options.

Commissioner Jackson mention the potential liability for other related chemicals... asbestos, tobacco, etc. that might motivate contractors and communities to get serious about the issue.

B. Wetland Ordinance

Commissioner Lapham will be talking to his contact at the DNR about a presentation on Wetland Banking

Chair McConnell spoke with John Mays from Land Preservation Board about creating wetlands on preserved Township Lands -- Commissioner Kielbaso mentioned that the Davis Foster farm was a good example where some drains were closed... and also the ecologically questionable decision of restoring to prairie vs. old growth forest. Developers purchasing wetland rights (from wetland bank) could help fund purchase and maintenance of land preservation properties.

Chair McConnell also mentioned that we could potentially have wetlands and related ecological landscaping included in a "form-based code."

C. Ember Oaks

Chair McConnell asked Harvey to request information about the prior Wetland Use Permit from Planner Menser.

D. Green Themes Ideas

LeRoy distributed a list of Green Theme topics suggested by/to the Commission so far:

- Salt: Suggested by Rebecca Essleman
- Radon (Susan)
- Wetland Banks (Susan/Kirk)
- Green Building and Development - Brent Forsburg (LeRoy)
- EL's Sustainable Building Ordinance (LeRoy)
- Pavement Preservation – Karim Chatti (Susan)
- Solar Projects on Haslett Community Church or Okemos High School– (John)
- 100% Renewable Goal of Traverse City – Kate Madigan (John)
- Ecological Landscaping
- Topics related to our 2018 goals?
 1. Collaborate with the Park Commission and Transportation Commission on **wayfinding**
 2. Review progress on the **Greenspace Plan**
 3. Actualize the **Climate Sustainability** Plan and review ordinances related to the Climate Sustainability Plan
 4. Work with the Economic Development Director to discuss how greening the Township might attract **green businesses**
 5. Collaborate with the **Land Preservation** Advisory Board

Other....

- Green chemistry conference had potential speakers and topics of interest.
- Hopcat? They have a landfill/waste diversion is 90%
- Buddies' composting food waste <https://livegreenlansing.org/scraps-to-soil/>
- Others? Possibly a "Green Panel" of businesspeople

There is interest in elevating awareness about "green businesses" through our Environmental Stewardship Awards or some other "Environmental Commission Seal of Approval" possibly like "Green Star"

E. Environmental Commission Rules of Procedure

Tabled

7. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair McConnell attended a Sheriff's office presentation on the County jail which is terrible repair. They are going to try to build a new jail. Tours are welcome. The new style of jail is designed to be modular.

8. STAFF REPORT

LeRoy handed out an update on projects he's been working on. Due to the length of the meeting, Harvey invited Commissioners to just ask questions about anything they're interested in (any time):

- Park Lake Roundabout Work Day: Saturday (6/9) 9am-11am
- Ecological Landscaping / Yard Waste Factsheet & Policy Research (see below)
- Green Gazette

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- PAH Research (see below)
- Green Team: Monday (6/11) 4:30pm
- Energy Team: Friday (6/15) 11:30am
 - Streetlighting Meetings & Research – Rate Case
 - Solar project
- MEO 40th Anniversary: Thursday (6/14) 4-8pm www.michiganenergyoptions.org
- Fall Recycling Event
- Green Community Challenge: <http://migreencommunities.com/>
- R2C2 – regional material processing facility.

9. COMMISSION/LIASON/WORKGROUP REPORTS

- A. Planning: Bill has been following up with Planning Commission a little more.
- B. Land Preservation: Commissioner Kielbaso visited 3 different sites to purchase or maintain. One might be a gift.
- C. Energy: Solarize Meridian Workshops- Approx. 200 residents have attended. Five workshops are scheduled for the summer and fall. We're looking to reach out to businesses. The 20 KW solar project is moving forward. The Burcham Park Solar project is having some hiccups with investor but Sarver expects issues to be resolved.
- D. Parks and Recreation: none
- E. Transportation: none
- F. Student Report: Ben emailed that his recruit is not available after all.
- G. Brownfield Redevelopment Authority Report: none
- H. Green Team: Next meeting on June 28 at 4:30 pm . This group is working on the next Recycling Event and Apartment Recycling. Marsh Point might be a potential Env. Stewardship Award Recipient.

10. Other:

Next meeting July 18 if Ember Oaks Permit is available to share/discuss.

Commissioner Jackson may have a conflict with meetings in the Fall (class ends at 7pm on Wednesday)

Media Presence: There is interest in having more of a social media presence for the Environmental Commission. Part of this relates to publicizing Green Themes – editing sound bytes from speakers, etc.

11. Public Remarks: Elizabeth Hossink is interested in getting involved with the Environmental Commission in the short term. She's also looking for a job so is not able to commit for a full term of office.

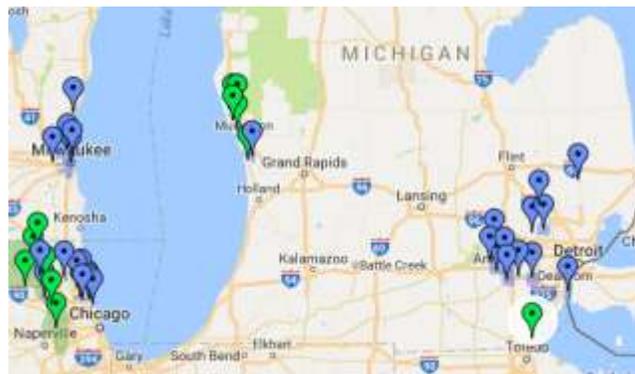
12. Adjournment: Moved by McConnell, 2nd by kielbaso, Unanimously supported.

Attachments (from Harvey's Packet)

PAH Discussion Points: Greater Lansing Regional Committee for Stormwater Management

What's the issue?

- 15 communities have placed a ban on Coal Tar-based Sealants (which contain cancer-causing polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons or PAHs)



- A major study of PAH impacts in the Great Lakes by DEQ and USGS is due out later this summer and is likely to cause alarm.
- See Brochure at <https://www.hrwc.org/wp-content/uploads/Coal-Tar-trifold.pdf>
Note: Huron River Watershed Council (HRWC) is willing to customize and print for us.
- More Resources:
 - <https://coaltarfreeusa.com/>
 - <https://www.hrwc.org/what-we-do/programs/advocacy-and-policy/coal-tar/>
- Meridian is considering a ban but would be more likely to succeed if there is a **regional effort**.

How might we collaborate on education, outreach, and policy?

- Legislation was introduced in 2016 and 2017 in the House and Senate, but hasn't moved. The study mentioned above will likely stimulate more action at the State level. HRWC suggests that more local/regional awareness and bans will help.
- HRWC has provided model ordinance language for communities to use
- Affordable and less toxic alternatives exist – Asphalt-based as opposed to Coal Tar-based sealants. You can now only buy asphalt-based in Home Depot, Lowes, etc.

Low-Maintenance & Natural Landscapes (draft story)

Lots of rain and sunshine has led to an abundance of growth in Meridian lawns and gardens. Fortunately we are right next door to the world's leading program on turfgrass management and experts that are more than willing to share their tips and tricks to save you time and money, reduce waste, and improve our environment. MSU Extension boasts a fine collection of videos and factsheets. For example, visit www.canr.msu.edu/home_lawns and read about low-maintenance lawns and mulching your leaves and grass clippings. This website also features information (including videos) about gardening, soil building, and composting here: www.canr.msu.edu/soils_composting. Also, explore these related topics:

- Rain Gardens: www.raingardennetwork.com
- Low Impact Development and Green Streets: <http://semcog.org/Green-Infrastructure>
- Green Streets: http://semcog.org/Reports/GLGI_Guidebook/index.html
- Community Gardens in Meridian: <http://bit.ly/gardencommunities>
- Stormwater Mgmt., Rain Gardens, & more: www.mywatersheds.org/for-homeowners
- Native Landscaping: www.wildones.org/learn/native-plants-natural-landscaping

Yard "Waste" Recycling

Meridian Recycling Center, 5976 E. Lake Dr. in Haslett, accepts yard waste for \$2/bag (30 gal. paper) or \$15/cu. yard. Visit www.reclaimedbydesign.com for details and hours. Spring and summer hours for the Recycling Center are M & W 2-6pm, T-Th 10am-6pm, and Sat 10am-5pm. Granger offers yard waste pick-up and drop off options. Call Granger at 517.372.2800.

Natural and Sustainable Landscaping Resources

- <https://www.mnn.com/your-home/at-home/blogs/lazy-lawn-mowers-bees>
- <https://www.ecolandscaping.org/07/lawn-care/lawns-killing-us-time-kick-habit/>
- <https://www.ecolandscaping.org/05/climate-change/climate-wise-landscaping/>
- <https://www.ecolandscaping.org/05/landscape-design/quest-for-resilience-adaptive-strategies-for-sustainable-planting-design/>
- <http://bangordailynews.com/2018/04/10/homestead/why-some-mainers-are-trading-the-traditional-lawn-for-mini-meadows/>
- <http://www.seattle.gov/util/EnvironmentConservation/MyLawnGarden/index.htm>
- http://www.seattle.gov/util/ForBusinesses/Landscapes/Integrated_Pest_Management/index.htm
- <https://www.mass.gov/guides/lawns-and-landscapes-in-your-watershed> (Susan)

For additional information, contact Meridian Recycling at 517.853.4466 or write recycle@meridian.mi.us.