

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
REGULAR MEETING ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION –DRAFT-
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198
517.853.4000, Township Hall Room
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1st , 2026, 6:30PM

PRESENT: Chair Lee, Vice Chair McConnell
Commissioners Miksicek, Belisle, Frazier, and Trustee Lentz

ABSENT: Commissioner Batten

STAFF: Project Engineer Hughes

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Lee called the April 1st, 2026, Township Environmental Commission meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

Staff Engineer Hughes called the roll of the Commission.

3. PRESENTATION

None at this time.

4. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None at this time.

5. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None at this time.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

None at this time.

7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner McConnell moved to approve the Agenda of the April 1st, 2026 Environmental Commission Regular meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Lee moved to approve the Minutes of the March 4th, 2026 Environmental Commission Regular Meeting. Motion passed unanimously with some amendments provided by Commissioner Fraizer.

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Green Grant Program 2026

The Environmental Commission staff reviewed six applications submitted for the annual Green Grant program, which has a total available budget of \$15,000 for 2026. Because total requests exceeded this amount, the commission noted that they would have to be judicious with the awarding, as full funding cannot be granted to every applicant. At the start of the session, two commissioners officially recused themselves from the discussion and voting due to conflicts of interest regarding specific homeowner associations (HOAs). The remaining three voting members evaluated each proposal based on its itemized budget, environmental value, adherence to the township's Climate Sustainability Plan, and the inclusion of volunteer "in-kind" contributions.

The commission began with a walkthrough of the applications, identifying the Wildwood Lakes HOA proposal as the strongest, most extensively researched, and best-documented submission. Seeking \$3,700 for habitat improvements and invasive species removal across a 50-acre natural area, the project was highly praised for its 100+ hours of documented volunteer labor. The commission also reviewed a small, \$800 continuation request from the Pine Creek II Condo Association to complete buckthorn removal behind its units. Both of these projects were deemed to be in perfect alignment with township sustainability goals and were viewed as good candidates for this year's Green Grant program.

The remaining four applications prompted requests for additional information due to vague documentation or logistical concerns. The Haslett Child Development Center requested \$4,500 for pollinator and food gardens, but the commission tabled the application to ask for a detailed budget breakdown and a long-term maintenance plan. A \$4,100 expansion request from the Parkwood YMCA for outdoor classrooms was also noted as a strong, successful repeat project; however, because each classroom was estimated to cost roughly \$818–\$900 per station, the commission decided to look at this request last and potentially offer partial funding using residual budget space.

The final two proposals also required clarification before final funds could be distributed. The Tacoma Hills HOA requested \$3,500 for tree plantings to stabilize a pond bank, but because the work is entirely outsourced to a contractor, commissioners sought an itemized cost breakdown and plan to ask if volunteers could plant smaller trees to introduce an "in-kind" element. Additionally, for all HOA applicants, the commission raised the criteria of public accessibility, questioning whether the broader community would be allowed to visit and learn from these spaces. Finally, the Shared Ground Community Gardens requested \$3,800 to build raised gardening beds for public use. While commissioners loved the concept, they tabled it to confirm critical structural details, including water access, plot sizes, deer fencing, and their formal relationship with the Greater Lansing Food Bank.

Ultimately, the three voting members moved to immediately approve full funding for two proposals: \$3,700 for Wildwood Lakes HOA and \$800 for Pine Creek II Condo Association. To distribute the remaining budget without delaying the applicants, the commission established a three-member subcommittee during the session. Staff will contact the four tabled applicants to gather additional logistical and financial information and answers to the commission's follow-up questions. The subcommittee will then review the data at virtual meeting. Once reviewed, staff will compile their final funding allocation into a recommendation to the Township and

submit it for execution.

Commissioner Fraizer moved to recommend funding be awarded for two Green Grant projects: \$3,700 for the Wildwood Lakes Homeowner's Association and \$800 for the Pine Creek II Condo Association. Seconded by Chair Lee. Motion passed unofficially since quorum was not available, however quorum was not necessary for this recommendation.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Two new Commissioners will be officially appointed to the Commission by the Township Board and will be invited to attend future meetings.

11. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Staff

None at this time.

B. Liaisons

Trustee Lentz reported on recent Meridian Township Board discussions. The board submitted a letter supporting the Tri-County Middle Grand Water Trail designation, reflecting growing interest in water trail activities, including the upcoming Red Cedar Regatta. The township also approved a rezoning settlement tied to the "Authentic Okemos" project, which will include the creation of a 15-acre conservation easement ensuring that portion of land remains undeveloped in perpetuity despite ongoing residential construction. Commissioners discussed upcoming environmental events, including a rescheduled vernal pond walk expected to take place at Nancy Moore Park and a stewardship event focused on invasive species removal.

Vice Chair McConnell reported on recent Planning Commission developments. A prior example of conservation efforts, such as the Sander Farm rolling easement, was mentioned to illustrate the variety of conservation models and their long-term outcomes, while noting the need to avoid jeopardizing current legal agreements. Much of the Planning Commission's recent focus has been on reevaluating parking ordinances, particularly questioning the rationale for minimum parking requirements, which may conflict with goals to reduce impervious surfaces, and exploring the potential for emphasizing maximum limits or more flexible, shared parking approaches. Additional topics included a rezoning effort for a non-conforming property on Jolly Road to enable improvements, as well as a presentation from the Corridor Improvement Authority, which is focused on redevelopment along the Grand River corridor. The authority raised interest in encouraging mass timber construction (an emerging, sustainable building method) possibly by incorporating it into incentive structures such as planned unit development benefits, where developers could receive zoning flexibility in exchange for incorporating community-enhancing features.

Chair Lee reported on the Land Preservation Advisory Board's recent meeting. The Land Preservation Advisory Board's March 11 meeting focused on the proposed Pike Crossing Preserve trail, part of a plan to connect MSU to Lake Lansing for pedestrian and bicycle use. After a site visit, the board recommended shifting the trail closer to an existing railroad corridor to reduce environmental impact and avoid fragmenting the preserve. They

also discussed a potential land swap with a nearby donated parcel to better accommodate trail development, though no decisions were made. More broadly, the discussion highlighted the need for better alignment between trail planning and land preservation, leading to interest in forming a subcommittee to develop a more coordinated, township-wide strategy.

Commissioner Frazier stated the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority did not meet recently.

Commissioner Miksicek reported on recent Parks and Recreation Commission activity. The March 10 meeting focused mainly on 2026 capital improvement plans and preparation for the upcoming parks millage renewal. Key projects include proposed river landings at Harris Nature Center and Ferguson Park (pending state review), repairs to the farmers market pavilion after storm damage, and addressing electrical capacity issues at the market due to increased vendor demand. Additional efforts include bidding for a \$150,000 pavilion and restroom renovation at Nancy Moore Park and planning a \$20,000 weather shelter at the small dog park. The commission is also developing a five-year parks and recreation master plan, including a community survey to gather resident input. Lastly, officials are preparing for the parks millage renewal vote in November, coordinating outreach efforts alongside other local millage proposals.

C. Teams

Commissioner Miksicek provided a report from the Energy Team. He highlighted progress on township solar initiatives, including advancement of a Congressionally Directed Spending application and ongoing plans to install solar panels at the north fire station. The team also discussed challenges in reaching the township's goal of 100% renewable energy by 2035, noting that while major facilities could be powered through planned projects, distributed energy uses like streetlights and park infrastructure remain difficult to address. Potential solutions under consideration include power purchase agreements (PPAs), which would allow the township to procure renewable energy without upfront costs while providing long-term price stability. Additionally, there was an update on proposed state legislation that would permit small residential plug-in solar systems without complex interconnection agreements, expanding access to partial household renewable energy generation. Overall, the township is projected to reach about 80% renewable energy with current plans, with ongoing exploration of strategies to close the remaining gap.

Commissioner Frazier provided a report from the Green Team. The Green Team had a successful Sustainable Fashion Show held on March 21, featuring around 20 outfits modeled primarily by Okemos High School students, with strong contributions from organizers including Jack Hughes, Bruce Pfeiffer, and Sarah Allen. Looking ahead, the team is preparing for the Spring Recycling Day on April 25 at the mall parking lot near the farmers market, where items such as metals, paint, paper for shredding, cardboard, egg cartons, and bicycles will be collected, though electronics will not be accepted until a separate fall event. Volunteer opportunities are available through the township calendar. Additionally, the Green Burial Team continues its public education efforts, primarily through outreach at the farmers market, and is currently pausing to reassess next steps following a prior presentation to the township board.

D. Haslett/Okemos High School

Commissioner Harrison was not present to report on the High Schools.

E. Other

No reports.

12. OTHER MATTERS AND COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

None at this time.

13. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:11 pm.