



ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
WEDNESDAY, September 2, 2020 7:00 PM

PRESENT: Tom Frazier, Ned Jackson, Jim Kielbaso, Susan Masten, Bill McConnell, John Sarver (Chair), Rose Vadnais (Vice Chair), Courtney Wisinski (Trustee Liaison), Luca Wisinski (Student Member)

STAFF: LeRoy Harvey, Stephen Gebes, Samantha Diehl, Phil Deschaine (Treasurer)

GUESTS: Michelle Beloskur, Ingham Conservation District;
Cliff Walls, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission

Approval of Agenda: Approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes: Kielbaso should be listed as voting in favor of the Rules of Procedure. Minutes approved unanimously.

Public Remarks: Call in #: 517.349.1232

New Business: None

Old Business:

Tree Project: Harvey provided an update of the last couple Tree Team meetings, additional suggestions from Deschaine to scale back on the Market distribution and explore planting on Central Park Drive. Ingham Road Commission policy requires a 14' setback from the curb. McConnell voiced support for the current proposal. Deschaine voiced a desire for larger trees along Central Park if permissions and locations can be identified (presumably with CBL/Mall, etc.). Beloskur clarified that the latest plan includes larger trees as well as a budget for trees at Chippewa and/or Central Park Drive.

McConnell offered a motion to “**Adopt the latest plan that was circulated to include larger trees along Central Park as possible with help from Parks staff.**” Motion was approved unanimously. Latest plan and budget is uploaded in “Extra Documents - 2020” on the E.C. page at www.meridian.mi.us

Green Infrastructure Audit: Harvey mentioned receiving help from staff (Kieselbach and Ishraidi) and Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (Walls) in the latest review. Walls provided a summary of a worksheet he shared with the E.C. He screened out items that are not within Township jurisdiction (such as Drain Commission projects). He also focused on “low-hanging” fruit which could be as simple as encouraging green infrastructure, providing definitions, and removing obstacles. For example, making it easier to integrate well-designed green stormwater infrastructure. Walls focused on opportunities to remove red tape, not add it. The extent of changes will depend upon the will of the Township.

McConnell mentions that we should review the two dozen recommendations before we send them along to the Planning Department. Walls also mentioned an Ordinance Subcommittee with the Greater Lansing Regional Committee (for Stormwater Management) could potentially come up with boiler plate language. Deschaine described that the current Board will be very receptive to positive changes to our Code of Ordinances. Walls also mentions that there is interest from Lansing and examples of language from East Lansing's code. Beloskur also mentions an ordinance template that relates to adopting native species that she will share with the group. LeRoy will distribute a draft prior to the next meeting.

Rules and Procedures: The Township attorney advises that student members be registered voters in order for them vote on the Commission. The latest revision includes this change and defines a quorum as a majority of EC members. In discussion E.C. membership, Harvey mentioned that Courtney Boersema has officially resigned (due to MSU on-line class changes and a heavy class load). Krishnamurthi has also expressed an interest in staying involved, possibly carrying out her term. Harvey was encouraged to approach Haslett teachers to recruit potential students. Masten will mention to her students at MSU. Luca encourages reaching out to Haslett and Okemos.

Staff Report:

Recycling Event needs help with volunteers. Visit www.meridian.mi.us/recycle to sign up and get more information about the event. Harvey mentions a need for volunteers and encourages all to sign up and help. He mentions strong support from sponsors including the State of Michigan.

Harvey also pointed out a list of citizen groups (Green Team, Green Dialogue, Energy Team, Tree Team, etc.) and encourages people to join in if they are interested.

Masten mentioned that a Google Search took her to an old flyer (2018).

Workgroup Reports

Environmental Justice: Vadnais reports that she has had conversations with Mariah Schaeffer with the Refugee Development Center (She mentions a need for lead/water/paint testing information in multiple languages, safe walking routes/destinations, Covid education for multifamily residents, community education (about the resettlement process), the importance of community gardens to bring people together. She is also willing to come talk to us. Vadnais also talked with Thasin Sardar at the Islamic Community Center who mentions a need for information about energy audits for renters, incentives for alternative energy, and solar education. He offered to share information about their accomplishments in the Green Gazette. Vadnais also talked with the Michigan Environmental Council. She's yet to connect with Sandra Turner-Handy, the Community Engagement Director in Detroit, who's offered to share action items. McConnell also mentioned possibility of outreach to community gardens.

Commission, Committee, and Trustee Reports

Township Board: Coal Tar/PAH ordinance was passed unanimously. C. Wisinski extends appreciation from the Board for bringing environmental goals, issues and policy revisions to them. Wisinski echoed an appreciation for the impact and use of larger trees in our tree initiative. There's a meeting a week from Friday to meet with department directors. The Board has a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force. She appreciates Vadnais' contacts and the

work of the EC study group which may help inform and complement future Township efforts.

Brownfield Development: Jackson shared a recent project under consideration at the corner of Marsh and Haslett Rd. called Pine Village (Western portion of the commercial area in pink). There was a dry cleaner there in prior years. There are plans for a senior housing/mixed use development. Jackson would like to see the entire site redeveloped. The Township Manager helping move the project forward with lower interest rates.



Energy Team: The 40 KW solar project is moving forward at the Market and the South Fire Station. Additional solar ideas (solar flower, solar charging stations, etc.) are also being discussed among Township Staff (Parks and others.). The Virtual Solar Home Tour is planned for Oct 3. There are other Solar Stories that are continuing on Thurs. nights.

Green Team: In addition to the large recycling event, Harvey invited people to participate in the Wednesday morning “Green Dialogues” at 9am.

Land Preservation Advisory Board: LPAB recently met at the North Meridian Rd. Park Pavillion. They visited the Krauss They will meet again next Wednesday at the Service Center off Okemos Rd and tour the Central Meridian Uplands. This may also be the location of a potential wetland mitigation along Grand River near Hamilton.

Michigan Township Association: Frazier reports that the main effort is working on the State budget. Frazier also provided an update on the Green Communities Network which will gear up in 2021. There are some updates which will include environmental justice/equity. Sarver encourages the Township to go for Gold level certification.

Planning Commission: McConnell mentioned approval of the Silver Leaf development. The Planning Commission is also revising the multi-use planned unit development ordinance.

Transportation Commission: The Commission recently held a joint meeting with the Corridor Improvement Authority. This led to recommendations to MDOT mainly related to non-motorized improvements including mid block crossings, bike lanes, speed limits, streetlighting, traffic signals, etc. Sarver asked about the crossing at Okemos Rd. which is still under consideration.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:37 PM

