



AGENDA
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
April 6, 2022 7 pm

Town Hall Meeting Room, 5151 Marsh Rd, Okemos

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER
2. PUBLIC REMARKS
3. APPROVAL AGENDA
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - A. March 2, 2022 Minutes
5. NEW BUSINESS
 - A. Climate Sustainability Plan Update
 - Current plan available at <https://bit.ly/climatesustainabilityplan>
 - See Outline in Packet
6. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS
7. PUBLIC REMARKS
8. ADJOURNMENT

Environmental Commission Meeting: March 2, 2022 (draft)

SUMMARY

The Environmental Commission (EC) reviewed its goals for 2022, the wetland education campaign, green grants, and more. The EC also discussed how to update climate sustainability plan and conducted elections for 2022.

AGENDA & MINUTES

Agenda and Minutes were approved.

2022 GOALS

A copy of the Goals was distributed in the packet. The Food to Compost Goals need to be updated. Vice Chair Colby suggested adding "Increase the amount of food that is gleaned in the Township." Commissioner Frazier suggested adding "Participate in the Green Communities initiative" under general goals. Goals will be shared at a general meeting of all commissions in April. The EC unanimously approved the 2022 Goals with these additions. There may be minor amendments at the next meeting. (Note: Staff merged a newer version from Google Drive, with the simplified older version that was in the packet, incorporating comments above).

WETLAND EDUCATION CAMPAIGN

Commissioner Grasseschi reviewed the history of the wetland education campaign, sharing the wetland brochure and letter distributed earlier last year. Trustee Wisinski described her efforts to garner Township support (funding). The Wetland Education Team (WET) is now assembling resources to help people "build back the buffer" and make eco-friendly landscaping choices. These include native plant sales, wetland walks, classes, garden designs, a plant guide, another letter, etc. There are approximately 10 people involved with WET. Grasseschi asked about how we might get the word out about phosphorous restrictions. Commissioner Luca Wisinski offered to share at Okemos High School. Colby mentioned that the wetland "blurb" in tax notices might be reviewed to be more helpful. Grasseschi also confirmed that the wetland letter went to households adjacent or on wetlands.

GREEN GRANTS

Okemos Radmoor, Okemos Library, Okemos Public Montessori, and Haslett Community Church submitted proposals. There is also interest from Haslett High School. Projects included a barnyard classroom, pollinator gardens, signage, etc. All aligned with our wetland education goals. Trustee Wisinski is excited about the expansion of the number of projects and suggests that we might ask for additional funds in the future (it will be helpful to have specifics and expressions of interest). A special report to the Board may be helpful as well. Sarver suggested that we'd like to get started early this year. Colby also mentioned an interest in working with schools on food and food waste in future years. Jackson also reminded us that past projects are viewable on HOMTV. Colby offered a motion to accept all the proposals pending successful negotiation. Seconded by Frazier. Unanimously approved.

CLIMATE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

EC members are invited to check in with their study groups/team (Wetlands, Energy, Food to Compost, Green Team, etc.) to determine a timeline for changes to sections related to their area of focus. The Food to Compost Committee will share a rough draft in April. Our intent is to have a draft document in August. Teams can use Google Drive or other tools to share and develop working documents amongst themselves. Teams are also invited to gather input from experts and others who may have insights.

SILVERLEAF

Harvey mentioned Planner Shorkey's memo in the packet and shared update on the Silverleaf Development. The Planning staff is open to forwarding comments to the developer though the permit (SUP) was approved earlier in the week. A large amount of environmental consideration, design, and amenities have already gone in to this development and that the wetlands have been determined to be minimally impacted. Harvey distributed a 1-page review (attached).

Grasseschi asked about why we don't see Wetland Use Permits more frequently. McConnell described that when a WUP may be required (and the \$3000-7000 permit cost + \$1500-4500 for the delineation), applicants seek ways to work around the wetlands. If a buffer is infringed upon, they are more likely to seek a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals. (this cost likely is why we typically only see WUPs for larger development projects). Grasseschi mentioned a need for greater communication between commissions (for example – ZBA and EC). McConnell also mentioned that the site approval is conditional upon the Drain Commission's office. McConnell suggests that we might have a deeper conversation about ways the EC might facilitate eco-friendlier "developments" or protections earlier in the process.

NOMINATIONS & ELECTIONS

Sarver nominated Grasseschi for Chair. Grasseschi declined and nominated McConnell. McConnell expressed willingness unless someone else was interested. McConnell also described the role of the Chair. Beyond chairing meetings this includes setting agendas formal communication with other commissions and Twp manager or supervisor, creating and appointing study groups, and cancelling meetings. McConnell was unanimously elected Chair. Grasseschi offered to serve as Vice Chair and was unanimously elected. Grasseschi also agreed to serve as a representative/liaison to the Land Preservation Advisory Board. Luca Wisinski agreed to serve as a Student Commissioner. Commissioners approved with C. Wisinski abstaining. Sarver also invited both Audrey and Luca to recruit other students. Graham Diedrich's application was also discussed. Harvey will contact Diedrich.

COMMISSIONER & STAFF NEWS

Colby mentioned that the Food Group has talked about procurement and ways to incentive larger groups (such as schools) to purchase "good food" (environmental sustainability, valued workforce, local economy, animal welfare, nutrition, etc.). Jackson mentioned a recent Brownfield Redevelopment Authority meeting which included the Okemos Redevelopment Project. Jackson also just had solar panels installed on his house. McConnell reported that the Transportation Commission and Corridor Redevelopment Authority have recommend pedestrian facilities/refuge islands at Campus Hill, Washington Heights, and Meijer/McDonalds. There also was an update on easements for the [MSU to Lake Lansing Pathway](#). C. Wisinski thanked Saver and Colby and congratulated McConnell and Grasseschi. She is also serving as a liaison to the Land Pres. Board. Pat Jackson has been appointed as Supervisor. Trustees are accepting applicants for the Board of Trustees. She heard from Planning Director Schmitt about willingness to discuss coordination between the Climate Sustainability Plan and the Master Planning Processes. Harvey reported on the Saturday Recycling/Composting event. It was a chance for the Earth Club, Hammond Farms, the Green Team, the Market Manager, and others to connect. He reported a walk through with solar contractors of the carports at the Public Safety Building. Hirschert-Walton reported on the Sustainable Fashion Committee (Earth Club) "upcycled clothing" booth at the Market. This committee is also discussing what to do with the old "Chiefs" gear including "cat mats" for a local animal shelter. She reports that the Earth Club is also doing a tree sale. Sarver reported the Solarize meridian kick-off earlier in the day. A recording is available. Several workshops are planned in the next month.

Watch the video recording at <https://meridianmi.new.swagit.com/videos/155560>

2022 Goals (see latest here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/10aCdbqQA3c7qk8_STKGAryzb4Qe5xL7J6J3FbQgERkl/edit?usp=sharing)

Topic	Committee	Description
Green Grants	Green Grant Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assist with Green Grants Program Select projects that will highlight green infrastructure opportunities
Wetland Education/Outreach	Wetland Education Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and Conduct a comprehensive Wetland Outreach Educational Campaign Collaborate with township, state, and community partners
Food, Food Waste, and Organics Recycling	Food-to-Compost Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease food waste & increase food recovery Include food/food recovery/waste reduction in Climate Action Plan and local ordinances Network with area nonprofits (addressing hunger) to increase gleaning Start a pilot food scrap collection Engage in education outreach with our local schools, residents, businesses, and institutions
Climate Action	Energy Team and Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review, Revise, and Pursue Climate Action Plans (add green infrastructure, food topics, etc.)
Recycling Events	Green Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct large events in the spring and fall Conduct events at the Farmers Market Consider other recycling opportunities and improvements.
Green Neighbors Network	GNN Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to expand Green Neighbor Network Use GNN for wetland education, Solarize Meridian 2.0, and other initiatives
Student Action	Student Commissioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate collaboration between schools & Environmental Commission
Ordinance Changes (Green Infrastructure)	Environmental Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement green infrastructure audit recommendations
Environmental Justice/Equity	EJ Study Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create/Implement consistency in policy, protocol, and procedures
Other?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold Environmental Stewardship event to recognize volunteers and staff Identify a point person for each topic Discuss staff assignments/roles Discuss Commission roles Improve communication/collaboration

Ongoing

- Participate in the Green Communities Network and Challenge
- Participate in regional collaboration
- Continue Study Groups on Environmental Justice and other topics
- Host Green Theme Presentations
- Review Wetland Permits
- Communicate with other Commissions, Boards, Trustees, and the Public
- Adapt and revise goals as needed
- Strive for consistency in policies and procedures

Additional Comments on the Silverleaf Condominium Development

–from L. Harvey

The Meridian Environmental Commission (E.C.) and staff appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Silverleaf Condominium development project. It is clear that Silverleaf has benefited from hundreds of hours of professional review (including a 100+ page [natural features inventory](#)) and design consideration by the developer, architects, engineers, wetland consultants, EGLE, and others. Final approval by the Planning Commission will also be subject to approval by the Drain Commissioner.

The project has many positive environmental qualities:

- Stormwater is managed on-site with minimal impact on wetlands.
- A 22 acre natural area will be donated to Meridian’s Land Preservation Program.
- As a planned unit development, this has allowed more open space preservation, much of which will be used for stormwater management/natural catch basins
- Not mentioned in the plans, but significant, is that Mayberry has committed to [Energy Star certification in 100% of its new housing developments](#)

We may wish to encourage some additional environmental suggestions and resources:

- native plant suppliers, native seed suppliers, raingarden and native landscape designs, contractors who do ecological design (being developed as part of our Wetland outreach)
- information on green building strategies, green infrastructure, renewable energy, etc.
- traffic calming suggestions (76 homes will add traffic to Bennet Rd.)
- examples of signage and outreach to protect the built in features such as wetland buffers, rain gardens, historic trees, connective pathways, etc.
- examples of eco-friendly plantings in catch basins

On another note, we may wish to use this experience to inspire a “conservation conversation” about how we might influence future development – in timely ways. A consistent theme that has emerged on the E.C. is that we often review plans after they are made. We could invite Mayberry’s staff recommendations to us about how might work more proactively to encourage and reward “green building”, low-impact development, and make positive environmental impacts.

Other ideas:

- Explore incentives for green development practices.
- Review the list of amenities allowed for Planned Unit Developments and provide guidance and resources for developers seeking to go above and beyond.
- Work with other municipalities to collaborate on Green Building Guidelines and Green Infrastructure Policy/Code improvements
- Review recommendations in the [Green Infrastructure Audit/Code Review](#) that might be applicable in Silverleaf.
- Explore new [Redevelopment-Ready Community Guidelines](#). See example here including Green Infrastructure, flexible parking, density, housing diversity, concentrated development, alignment with Master Plan, etc.

CERTIFIED EXPECTATIONS

The ordinance includes regulations for **THREE** or more of the following:

- Low impact development techniques (rain gardens, bioswales, etc.)
- Rain water collection (blue roofs, cisterns, water harvesting, stormwater vaults, etc.)
- Green roofs
- Permeable pavement
- Steep-slope protections
- Street-tree planting standards
- Tree preservation or replacement standards
- Parking lot internal landscaping standards
- Open space preservation development (i.e., cluster housing)
- Required native or low-maintenance plantings
- Renewable energy
- Buffering standards around water bodies or other natural resources
- Off-site stormwater regulations allowing site developers to participate in district-scale stormwater management plans

Introduction

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Energy

Efficiency & Renewables
Energy Team
Transportation?

John Sarver
Roger Eberhardt
David Arnosti
Heidi Porter
Val Lafferty

Dan Opsommer
Rob MacKenzie
LeRoy Harvey

Rob Kaercher

Water

Stormwater Management
Wetlands Education Team
Green Infrastructure
Green Grants

Kendra Grasseschi
Courtney Wisinski
John Sarver
Susan Masten

Emma Campbell
LeRoy Harvey

Elise Tripp
Paige Felice

Solid Waste

Green Team
Inorganic Recycling

Tom Fraizer
Ellen Dillman
Dave Batten
Elaine Putvin
Audrey Hirschert-Walton
Luca Wisinski
Bernadette Osborn

LeRoy Harvey

Organic Waste Management

Val Lafferty
Anna Colby
Gabi Mayer
Tom Frazier
David Batten
Elaine Putvin

Tom Cary

Team Lead

Team Member

Township Staff

External Expert