

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
REGULAR MEETING ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION –DRAFT-
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198
517.853.4000, Township Hall Room
WEDNESDAY, June 3rd , 2026, 6:30PM

PRESENT: Chair Lee, Vice Chair McConnell
Commissioners Miksicek, Frazier, Iyioke, Mortimer, Aluru, Batten, and Trustee Lentz
ABSENT: Commissioner Belisle
STAFF: Project Engineer Hughes

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Lee called the June 3rd, 2026, Township Environmental Commission meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

2. ROLL CALL

Staff Engineer Hughes called the roll of the Commission.

Before moving into the evening's business, the commission paused to acknowledge the recent passing of former Environmental Coordinator and commission liaison Leroy Harvey. Members reflected briefly on his significant contributions to the Township's environmental initiatives and honored his legacy with a moment of respect.

3. PRESENTATION

Private Well Abandonment – Groundwater Management Board

The presentation was delivered by Lauren Schnoebelen, Environmental Planner with the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission and coordinator of the Groundwater Management Board. Her presentation focused on abandoned private wells and the risks they pose to groundwater quality and public drinking water systems.

Schnoebelen explained that Meridian Township and the greater Lansing region rely heavily on groundwater drawn from the Saginaw Aquifer, a highly productive and well-protected groundwater source. While the East Lansing-Meridian Water and Sewer Authority operates deep municipal wells, approximately 1,468 private wells are still estimated to exist throughout Meridian Township. Because private wells are not regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act in the same manner as municipal systems, responsibility for maintenance and safety falls entirely on property owners. The presentation emphasized that improperly abandoned wells create direct pathways for contaminants to enter groundwater supplies. Many older wells were drilled decades ago, and records are often incomplete. As properties change ownership over time, wells can be forgotten or left unsealed. These unused wells may allow pollutants from the surface to bypass natural protective soil layers and reach groundwater sources. Schnoebelen noted that contamination

entering one abandoned well can eventually impact neighboring wells or even municipal water sources.

Staff Engineer Hughes joined the end of the presentation to connect well abandonment efforts to Meridian Township's Climate Sustainability Plan and the East Lansing-Meridian Water and Sewer Authority's Wellhead Protection Plan. Existing Township goals already call for identifying abandoned wells, minimizing contamination risks, and incorporating groundwater protection into ongoing planning efforts. Potential uses of the township's Climate Sustainability funding were discussed, including direct well-plugging assistance programs, reimbursement incentives, or studies to identify high-risk abandoned wells that should receive priority attention.

Commissioners asked questions about the effectiveness of existing programs, possible grant opportunities, methods for identifying abandoned wells, and how well risk levels are determined. Schnoebelen explained that state funding for abandoned well programs is currently very limited, making local initiatives increasingly important. She also noted that Ingham County is in the process of digitizing historic well records, which should eventually provide a clearer picture of the scope of abandoned wells within Meridian Township.

4. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None at this time.

5. COMMUNICATIONS

The commission received communication from the Parks Commission regarding the ongoing update of the township's five-year Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Environmental Commission members were invited to participate in upcoming stakeholder meetings and provide input on future park improvements, preservation efforts, and recreational priorities. Commissioners were encouraged to review the current master plan and attend one of several scheduled public engagement sessions.

6. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Miksicek moved to approve the Agenda of the June 3rd, 2026 Environmental Commission Regular meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Frazier moved to approve the Minutes of the April 1st, 2026 Environmental Commission Regular Meeting. Motion passed unanimously with some minor amendments provided by Commissioner Frazier.

8. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

None at this time.

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Environmental Commission Roster Update

Staff presented an updated Environmental Commission roster reflecting the appointment of the commission's newest members. Members formally recognized Bruce Mortimer, Ike Iyoike, and Shanmuka Aluru as additions to the commission. The update also included discussion of student commissioner Harrison Batten's term, which was set to expire. Batten expressed interest in continuing his service during his senior year of high school, and commissioners voiced appreciation for his ongoing involvement and leadership on environmental initiatives.

With these appointments and renewals, the commission reported that all positions on the board are currently filled, providing full representation for upcoming environmental initiatives and planning efforts.

B. Climate Sustainability Funding Overview

Staff provided an overview of the fund's history, noting that it was established in 2024 to support implementation of goals identified in the township's Climate Sustainability Plan. Since its creation, funding has supported projects such as farmers market sustainability initiatives, educational wetland signage, and planning for a stormwater management and watershed improvement project. The commission currently has approximately \$25,000 in accessible funding for future projects. Commissioners briefly reviewed several possible uses for the remaining funds, including support for private well abandonment efforts, tree planting projects, composting initiatives, recycling improvements, and additional educational programming.

Commissioner Tom Frazier revisited two previously approved projects that have not yet been implemented: a compost collection initiative at the Meridian Farmers Market and improved recycling signage at the township recycling center. He emphasized that both projects had already received approval and funding recommendations and advocated for renewed efforts to move them forward. Staff agreed to reconnect with relevant township personnel and provide updates at future meetings. Commissioners also discussed developing a more structured process for evaluating future funding proposals. Several commissioners expressed support for dedicating at least a portion of available funding toward groundwater protection and abandoned well mitigation efforts while preserving funding for smaller environmental initiatives throughout the community.

Discussion also touched on long-term budgeting and the possibility of securing future Climate Sustainability and Green Grant funding through the township budget process. Trustee Lentz explained the township's budgeting timeline and encouraged commissioners to develop and communicate project priorities early enough to be considered during future budget discussions.

10. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None at this time.

11. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Staff

a. Green Grant Program 2026

Staff reported that the 2026 Green Grant Program received strong interest from the community despite a reduced funding allocation. Six projects were funded, and township staff plan to continue expanding outreach to attract additional applicants in future years.

b. Michigan Green Communities Challenge 2025

Staff announced that Meridian Township has reapplied for the Michigan Green Communities Challenge and expects to maintain its Gold-level recognition, with hopes of achieving Platinum status.

B. Liaisons

Trustee Lentz reported on recent Meridian Township Board discussions.

He highlighted recent progress on parking ordinance revisions intended to reduce excessive impervious surfaces, support green infrastructure, encourage bicycle facilities, and modernize development standards. He also promoted several upcoming township events, including Meridian Pride, Juneteenth celebrations, and Celebrate Meridian.

Vice Chair McConnell reported on recent Planning Commission developments.

The Planning Commission discussed the ongoing challenge of balancing parking requirements with modern development trends, noting that existing ordinances were largely created to ensure adequate parking within shared commercial areas, though developers today generally build parking according to their corporate standards rather than seeking additional capacity. Members observed that concerns about stormwater impacts from parking lots are typically addressed through county drainage regulations, particularly during new construction or redevelopment projects.

The commission also considered feedback on a potential land acquisition along Hamilton Road to expand an existing nature preserve and support deer management and invasive species control efforts. They ended by discussing ordinance updates that would encourage sustainable development practices by adding incentives for mass timber construction alongside existing incentives for environmentally friendly features such as green roofs and solar panels.

Chair Lee stated the Land Preservation Advisory Board did not meet recently.

Commissioner Frazier reported on the recent Brownfield Redevelopment Authority meeting. The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority's primary focus was the Haslett Village Square project, specifically an amendment to the project's Brownfield Plan. Brownfield financing allows certain local and school operating tax revenues to be captured and used to reimburse developers for eligible costs associated with environmental cleanup and site preparation. The amendment was requested by the project's financing institution as part of the development process and was

approved by the Authority at its May meeting. With the amended plan in place, the project has moved forward, and construction is now underway at the corner of Marsh Road and Haslett Road.

Commissioner Miksicek reported on recent Parks and Recreation Commission activity. The Parks Commission reviewed a range of park stewardship, recreation, and facility initiatives during its May 12 meeting. Much of the discussion focused on invasive species management, particularly efforts by the Meridian Conservation Corps to control the spread of lesser celandine through herbicide treatment and additional removal measures. The commission also finalized a community survey and scheduled public listening sessions as part of the update to the Township's Parks and Recreation Five-Year Plan. Other updates included the planned installation of a weather shelter at the small dog park, the successful Red Cedar Regatta and dedication of the Red Cedar Water Trail, and growing demand for vendor space at the Meridian Farmers Market, which is creating pressure on available infrastructure. Additionally, the commission discussed restoration efforts following county drain maintenance work in Hillbrook Park, where debris removal, reseeding, and habitat improvements are being implemented to address resident concerns while supporting the long-term function of the drainage system.

C. Teams

Commissioner Miksicek provided a report from the Energy Team. The Energy Team reported progress on several community sustainability initiatives during its May 18 meeting. Planning is underway for the annual Energy Fair at the Meridian Farmers Market on June 20, where Energy Team volunteers and exhibitors, including Absolute Solar and Michigan Interfaith Power & Light, will provide information on renewable energy, electric vehicles, and energy efficiency, with efforts also being made to include a geothermal energy installer. The team also announced plans for a Solarize workshop for Ingham County residents and community organizations, tentatively scheduled for August 20, to provide education and resources related to residential and community solar energy opportunities.

Commissioner Frazier provided a report from the Green Team. The Green Team reported that its late-April community recycling event was the most successful in recent years, drawing approximately 625 to 650 vehicles and generating strong participation from residents and recycling partners. The event collected significant quantities of recyclable materials, including roughly 5,000 pounds of documents and paper, 10,000 pounds of metal, multiple trailers of bicycles, latex paint, Styrofoam, egg cartons, and old dehumidifiers through a Consumers Energy exchange program. Organizers noted overwhelmingly positive feedback from vendors and recyclers and credited volunteers for helping make the event a success. Usable bicycles were donated to MSU Bikes for refurbishment and resale, while damaged bicycles were recycled for parts and materials. Looking ahead, the Green Team highlighted the upcoming Energy Fair at the Meridian Farmers Market as its next major community sustainability event.

D. Haslett/Okemos High School

Commissioner Harrison provided a report from the High Schools.

A productive end to the school year was marked by significant sustainability achievements and environmental engagement. Haslett Public Schools successfully earned Green School certification for every building in the district, making it one of only two districts in Michigan to achieve that distinction. Students also participated in statewide environmental initiatives, including the Michigan Healthy Climate Conference and the Student Sustainability Summit, where they shared sustainability efforts and celebrated Green School recognitions. District sustainability teams presented their accomplishments to school leadership, while Earth Clubs concluded the year with educational and community-building activities. Looking ahead, students are focused on expanding district-wide recycling consistency, exploring school composting programs, and strengthening sustainability practices across all grade levels. Okemos High School participated in the Green Team's sustainability fashion show, Earth Day litter cleanup efforts, and plans to pursue Green School certification with support from district leadership in the coming year. Overall, the reports reflected strong student leadership, growing environmental awareness, and continued momentum for sustainability initiatives throughout local schools.

E. Other

No reports.

12. OTHER MATTERS AND COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioners reflected on the loss of former Environmental Coordinator Leroy Harvey. Members shared personal memories of Harvey and noted the substantial impact he had on environmental programming in Meridian Township and beyond. Staff indicated that information regarding a future memorial service would be shared with commission members once available.

13. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:46 PM.