

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
REGULAR MEETING TOWNSHIP BOARD -**APPROVED**-  
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198 517.853.4000,  
Township Hall Room  
Thursday, May 9, 2024, 6:00 pm

PRESENT: Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson

ABSENT: NONE

STAFF: Chief Grillo, Interim Manager Schmitt, Director Gebes, Director Tithof, Officer LaFlair, Officer Olgine, Officer Burroughs

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson called the May 9, 2024, Regular Township Board meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS

Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. MOMENT OF SILENCE – Alycia Boik

Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson requested a Moment of Silence for Police Records Technician II Alycia Boik

4. ROLL CALL

Clerk Guthrie called the roll of the Board. Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, and Trustee Wilson present at 6:01 pm.

5. PRESENTATION

A. New Police Officer Introduction

Chief Grillo introduced Officers Kendall LaFlair, Elisha Olgine, and Gabriel Burroughs.

B. New Mass Notification Platform (RAVE) – Ingham County 911 Director Barb Davidson

Ingham County 911 Director Davidson gave an overview of the new notification platform, RAVE, and the reasoning behind switching from the current platform.

C. Community/Senior Center

Trustee Wilson detailed the need for a Community & Senior Center and the work that has been accomplished towards this effort. Trustee Wilson introduced Brendon Ouzoonian from Progressive AE who detailed the concept plan.

D. Tribute to Supervisor Patricia Herring Jackson

Treasurer Deschaine made a presentation highlighting Supervisor Jackson's contributions to Meridian Township and read the Resolution in Tribute to Supervisor Patricia Herring Jackson. State Representative Julie Brixie spoke about Supervisor Jackson's service to Meridian Township and presented a framed tribute.

6. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson opened comments from the public at 6:38 pm.

Barbara O'Kelly, Township resident, thanked Mr. Ouzoonian from Progressive AE and expressed her concern that current users of the Senior Center have not had an opportunity to interact with Progressive AE to present their concerns and wishes.

David Ledebuhr, Township resident, spoke in support for Amsterdam, candidate for Zone 3 marijuana license. Thanked trustees for moving forward with the marijuana ordinance.

Molly Wingrove, Township resident, expressed her concern about the contract given to former Manager Walsh and gave her written comments to the Board to be placed on record.

Tricia Boerma, Mt Pleasant resident, spoke in support of Amsterdam, candidate for Zone 3 marijuana license, indicating that they are good community stewards in her community.

Suzanne Leaholia, Township resident, expressed her concern that no one has come to the Senior Center to speak with the current user. Asked the Board to come speak with users while they are at the current center. Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson stated that on Tuesday, May 14 the task force will be meeting at the Senior Center.

Neil Bowlby, Township resident and president of LINC, spoke in opposition to Village of Okemos plans. Expressed concern about the amount of money the Township has put into the project and that the developer keeps making changes.

Rachael Stohlin, Township resident and Township employee, expressed her disappointment with how former Manager Walsh influenced communications and that it put her position as Marketing & Public Relations Specialist for the Township into conflict. She remains concerned that she has had to react to other media outlets instead of being the primary source of information and that the process has not been and is not being made transparent. She asked that the Board proactively provide updates about the process of hiring a new manager hiring and designate a public info officer who is someone other than interim manager or future manager.

Savinder Singh, Township resident and owner of Amsterdam, applicant for Zone 3 marijuana license applicant Amsterdam, spoke in support for Amsterdam marijuana application.

Jean McDonald, Township resident and Senior Center board member, expressed her concern that board members of the Senior Center were not notified or included in the plans for the new Community & Senior Center.

Dominic Bacall, representative of DNVK, marijuana applicant for Zone 3, spoke in support for DNVK marijuana application.

Chuck Maniaci, Township resident, spoke in opposition to Village of Okemos development. Suggested creating a community gathering space in that area.

Lucy Maillette, Township resident, spoke in opposition to Village of Okemos development.

Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson closed comments from the public at 7:09 pm.

7. INTERIM TOWNSHIP MANAGER REPORT

Interim Township Manager Schmitt gave updates about the following:

- Marshall Park play structure has been put in place, but the turf is on backorder
- Emergency warning siren software issue has been corrected
- Blood drive will be held on May 29<sup>th</sup>
- Thanked Board for supporting him in his new role.

8. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS OF ACTIVITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee Wilson addressed the members of the community who expressed their upset about communication in regard to the Senior Center, that the head of the Senior Center has been at most of the meetings, and expressed her disappointment that the head of the Senior Center has not relayed information.

Clerk Guthrie announced the Memorial Day event at Glendale Cemetery. She thanked directors and staff for stepping forward to speak and submit comments regarding former Manager Walsh and related her experiences as a former staff member.

Trustee Trezise stated that the Policy Review Working group is currently progressing through the employee policy manual and intend to ask for input from employees when updating employee policies. The Environmental Commission went through applications for Climate Sustainability Grants and have tentatively approved three.

Trustee Sundland attended the EDC meeting. The EDC is going through policy review.

Treasurer Deschaine thanked community members for speaking at the board meeting, informed residents about upcoming listening sessions.

9. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson added item 10.K to the agenda.

**Trustee Wilson moved to approve the agenda with the addition of item 10K. Supported by Trustee Sundland.**

**VOICE VOTE: YEAS: Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson**

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

10. CONSENT AGENDA

Clerk Guthrie added communication items to the agenda. Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson listed the items to be added to the consent agenda.

**Treasurer Deschaine moved to approve the agenda as amended. Supported by Trustee Wilson**

**ROLL CALL VOTE      YEAS: Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie,  
Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Sundland, Trustee  
Trezise, Trustee Wilson**

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

11. QUESTIONS FOR THE ATTORNEY

NONE

12. HEARINGS

A. Recreational Marijuana License Application in Zone 3

Public hearing open 7:27

Interim Manager Schmitt reviewed the process and notified the Board that the review committee has recommended DNVK application over Amsterdam application. All information has been provided to the Board.

Chris Patel, representative of Amsterdam, clarified the resubmission of the security plan and use of the space the dispensary will rent.

Dave Ledebuhr, Township resident, asked for clarity about footage calculation of site and distance to school site on Powell Rd.

Brandon Beathea, representative of Amsterdam, spoke in support of Amsterdam's community involvement in other areas where they operate

Ammar Alkhafaji, representative of Okemos Gateway LLC, developer for property at 1614 Grand River (DNVK), spoke in support of security plan for DNVK.

Public hearing closed at 7:35 pm

13. ACTION ITEMS

A. Recreational Marijuana License Application in Zone 4

Interim Manager Schmitt outlined the discussion that has occurred to this date regarding this applicant. Staff recommends conditional approval of the license.

Trustee Trezise asked if the applicant would have to reapply for medical marijuana. Interim Manager Schmitt confirmed that they would have to reapply for medical if they wanted to offer that service.

**Trustee Trezise moved to adopt the Resolution granting CONDITIONAL APPROVAL of the recreational marijuana license application to Okemos Local Investments LLC for the proposed marijuana retailer location at 4360 Hagadorn Road. The property is zoned RP, Research Park, and is located within the Marijuana Facilities Overlay District. Supported by Trustee Wilson.**

**ROLL CALL VOTE      YEAS: Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson**

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

B. Appointment to the Ingham County Materials Management Planning Committee

Interim Manager Schmitt gave an overview of Ingham County's request and the Township's need for the appointment to this position.

Clerk Guthrie asked when the Materials Management Planning Committee meets. Interim Manager Schmitt answered that it is a new committee and meeting times have not been determined.

Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson asked if this committee will include one person from each Township or if this is a recommendation for the person Meridian Township would like to have involved

**Trustee Sundland moved to recommend that Treasurer Deschaine apply for appointment to the Ingham County Materials Management Planning Committee as an elected official of the Township. Supported by Trustee Wilson.**

**ROLL CALL VOTE      YEAS: Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson**

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson called for a 5-minute recess at 7:47 pm

Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson resumed the meeting at 7:52

## 14. BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

### A. Recreational Marijuana License Applications in Zone 3

Interim Manager Schmitt gave an overview of each application in the district, comparing elements of each to the other.

Township attorney Kuschel explained the review criteria and the methodology behind the way the review committee came to their conclusions, then explained the Board's role in the process.

Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson asked for clarification about the distance from the Amsterdam location to the school property as follow up to the question posed in the hearing. Interim Manager Schmitt confirmed that it is greater than 1,000 feet. Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson asked about the timeline for approving the applications. Attorney Kuschel responded that May 25 is 120 days from complete application, however the board can ask for an extension if they need more time to deliberate.

Trustee Wilson asked if the supplemental materials made the two applications equal. She clarified that she was asking about timing. Interim Manager Schmitt clarified that the minimum application standards were met by both applicants, and both had supplemental materials to submit, that both applications were viewed as complete when submitted. Three of the five applicants across all zones very clearly laid out their information, two did not provide that clarity and Amsterdam was one of those applicants who was asked to submit more. Attorney Kuschel clarified that the applications should be reviewed qualitatively, not in terms of when they submitted the information.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke in support of Amsterdam because the developer is local, and the Township has experience with them and because the site plan reuses an existing building.

Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson asked Dominic Bacall, representative for DNVK if they intended to open and operate a medical marijuana facility at the location. Mr. Bacall stated that he would have to consider the economic value, that they did not move forward with the medical marijuana facility because the customer base has grown smaller.

Trustee Trezise asked Chris Patel, representative for Amsterdam, for their response. They offer a discount to people who show a medical card instead of taxing them differently.

Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson asked about an extension for deliberation and if the review committee would be able to meet regarding these two applicants. Attorney Kuschel responded that he would go through the review standards and determine how to extend the review period for 30 days and determine the legality of reconvening the review committee.

### B. Community/Senior Center Site Selection

Trustee Wilson updated the board on the status of the plan. Asked the board for approval to move forward with better drawings and the option to purchase old Younker's suite in the Meridian Mall.

Treasurer Deschaine asked Brendon Ouzoonian about private sources of funding. Mr. Ouzoonian responded that private sources of funding are a possibility.

### C. Village of Okemos Concept Plan

Interim Manager Schmitt explained the MUPD concept plan review in general, then plans for the board.

Eric Helzer, representing the Village of Okemos development, reviewed the gave an overview of the project to date.

Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson reiterated that the concept plan review is for clear, candid feedback.

Treasurer Deschaine expressed his displeasure at the lack of progress. He added that the DDA voted against both proposals at their most recent meeting. He stated that the township does not have a large enough redevelopment fund to support all the infrastructure the plans request. He stated that the current concept plans are not true to the original concept nor to the vision of a village that the community expects.

Clerk Guthrie asked why the Korey property is intended to be parking. The developer responded that the buildings will require additional parking than the two parcels where the buildings will be located. She asked Interim Manager Schmitt to refresh the Board's memory as to if there was a reduction of parking in the new master plan and how it may relate to these plans. Interim Manager Schmitt explained that the parking for this plan is what they would expect, regardless of the changes that may occur as the master plan is updated. Clerk Guthrie stated that she sees plenty of empty spaces in the downtown Okemos area and would like to see something other than an additional parking lot. She asked the developers if they have spoken to the owners of the adjacent properties to get their opinions about bordering a parking lot. He asked the developer what their interest is in spending a large sum of money in this area. The developer responded that they have not contacted the adjacent property owners that the expenditure is part of development and they own all the land.

Trustee Wilson expressed her disappointment in the project as it has changed from a downtown vision with traffic calming structures into apartment buildings and parking lots. She explained that the cost the Township would bear to support the infrastructure expense is more than the Township set aside when the developers first asked for Township support and the cost over that would be borne by the taxpayers.

Trustee Trezise reminded the developers that this plan appears that they are brining residential to a commercial area. Although plan A appears to be preferred by the community, it is because the only alternative given is plan C, but that the plans overall do not deliver what residents want for the area or deliver the needs of the community.

Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson stated that the two plans have been presented as a false choice. The plans are A, C, or something that has not been presented yet; not just plan A or plan C. He stated that this appears to be a misuse of the MUPD ordinance and that neither plan appears to meet the requirements of the ordinance. He stated that the amount of taxpayer money the developers are asking for is unreasonable.

Trustee Sundland expressed her disappointment that the plans presented do not represent the vision that was proposed at the beginning of the process. Asked that the developer focus on what residents want the Village of Okemos to be.

### D. Supervisor Appointment Process

Interim Manager Schmitt outlined the process for selecting a Supervisor, noting that if they appoint a current Trustee, that they will then need to follow the process for selecting and appointing a new Trustee and that the timeline would extend by one meeting

Treasurer Deschaine asked that appointing a Supervisor be discussed during the current meeting and be an action item for the next meeting and expressed his concern that this appointment is late in the meeting for making decisions.

Clerk Guthrie stated that she would prefer to take action this meeting, particularly because it seems that Board members are interested in appointing Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson to the position.

Trustee Trezise concurred with Clerk Guthrie and added that Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson is running for the position of Supervisor in the next election, and anyone appointed at this time would likely only be serving for a short period of time.

**Clerk Guthrie moved to suspend the rules to take action on this item this evening. Seconded by Treasurer Deschaine.**

**VOICE VOTE                    YEAS: Supervisor Pro Tem Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson**

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

**Clerk Guthrie moved to appoint Supervisor Pro Tem Scott Hendrickson as Meridian Township Supervisor effective immediately and proceed with the Trustee vacancy application process. Seconded by Trustee Wilson.**

**ROLL CALL VOTE            YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson**

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

Supervisor Hendrickson clarified that a person appointed to the vacancy would serve the remainder of his term but, unless they are already a candidate, they cannot run for election because the filing date has passed.

15. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Supervisor Hendrickson opened comments from the public at 10:00 pm

Angela Demas, Democratic candidate for Meridian Township Clerk, introduced herself to the community.

Barbara O'Kelly, Township resident, returned to the podium to clarify that the Senior Center Coordinator has done an excellent job of sharing what she was allowed to share, but was not allowed to share what was called confidential. Does not feel that it is fair to have a paid

employee whose job is at stake in the Senior Center to represent the views of the users of the Senior Center. She respectfully requested that the presentation be provided to the users of the Senior Center before the meeting on Tuesday, May 14.

Ammar Alkhafaji, representative of Okemos Gateway LLC, developer for property at 1614 Grand River (DNVK), returned to the podium to clarify the differences between medical marijuana and recreational marijuana and spoke in support of the DNVK application.

Supervisor Hendrickson closed comments from the public at 10:06 pm

16. OTHER MATTERS AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

NONE

17. CLOSED SESSION

At 10:06 pm the board moved to enter Closed Session

**Treasurer Deschaine moved the Township Board enter closed session pursuant to MCL 15.268(1)(h) to consult with the Township attorney about a confidential written legal opinion regarding a development project. Seconded by Trustee Wilson.**

**ROLL CALL VOTE      YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson**

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

At 10:36 pm Open Session resumed.

18. ADJOURNMENT

**Treasurer Deschaine moved to adjourn. Seconded by Trustee Wilson.**

**VOICE VOTE              YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson**

**NAYS: NONE**

**Motion carried: 6-0**

**The meeting adjourned at 10:37 pm.**



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Scott Hendrickson  
Township Supervisor



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Deborah Guthrie  
Township Clerk