

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES
Town Hall Room – Municipal Building
SEPTEMBER 6, 2017 - APPROVED**

REGULAR MEETING

PRESENT: Chair Bill McConnell, Commissioners Ned Jackson, Susan Masten, John Sarver, Jim Kielbaso, Kirk Lapham, Marina Ionescu, and Ben Holland

ABSENT: NONE

STAFF: Assistant Planner Jennifer Quinlivan

OTHERS: Kelsey Dillon

1. CALL REGULAR MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Bill McConnell called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

2. GREEN THEMES PRESENTATION – Kelsey Dillon – “Stewardship in Meridian Township”

Kelsey Dillon from the Township Department of Parks and Recreation presented on the management and public engagement of the Township’s parks, natural areas, and land preservation sites. The Township has over 1,400 acres of parks and land preservation sites. Ms. Dillon reported they utilize public involvement and support to help manage and protect these areas. The goal of the department for the land preservation sites and natural areas is to restore the ecological function and health of the site through active management, creating biodiversity, and removal of noxious plant material.

The Department partnered with Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) to map and identify over 100 vernal pools within the Township and to establish long term monitoring efforts. Vernal pools are seasonal bodies of water with no fish and are vital breeding grounds for a vast variety of species including the fairy shrimp. The monitoring efforts are done both by the department on public lands and by volunteer citizens on their own properties. The volunteers are given a kit to record data and report back the data to MNFI. Once the department has recorded the vernal pool information it will be linked to the Township website.

Ms. Dillon reported on the Townships largest land preservation site, Towar Woods, which is over 100 acres in size. She reported the Township was actively managing the area and had removed approximately six acres of invasive plants from the site. The department worked with volunteers including 90 students from Murphy Elementary to stake and tube newly planted trees within the Township.

Additional community outreach and land management projects include a prescribed burn at the David Foster Land Preserve (which is on a 10 year grassland management plan), “Love-a-Park” day (involving the cleanup and management of five Township parks and 50 volunteers), and the recent educational “seed ball” event, which involved students creating balls of seed and then launching them into designated areas of a natural area for plant regeneration.

3. APPROVAL OF THE REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER KIELBASO TO APPROVE THE AGENDA. SUPPORTED BY COMMISSIONER MASTEN. MOTION APPROVED 8-0.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM AUGUST 2, 2017 MEETING

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER MASTEN TO APPROVE THE MINUTES. SUPPORTED BY COMMISSIONER JACKSON. MOTION APPROVED 8-0.

5. PUBLIC REMARKS

NONE

6. NEW BUSINESS

NONE

7. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Climate Sustainability Plan. Chair McConnell reported on the status of the plan, noting the plan would be on a future Township Board Agenda for review and acceptance.
- B. Citizen's Climate Lobby request for a resolution of endorsement of Congressional measures to address climate action. Chair McConnell asked for the Commission to take action on the request. Commissioner Masten expressed concern regarding the type of motion requested as well as the limits of the Commission's role in an action. Commissioner Kielbaso questioned what was involved in the request and Commissioner Sarver clarified the request from the Citizen's Climate Lobby was for a letter of resolution by the Township Board to support measures at the Congressional level addressing climate action. Commissioner Lapham questioned role the Commission should take on this request. Commissioner Jackson questioned the redundancy of the request given the fact the Commission was already supporting the Climate Sustainability plan offered by the Energy Team. The Commission determined to take no action on the request. Chair McConnell suggested the Citizen's Climate Lobby put the request directly to the Township Board for future consideration and support.

CHAIR'S REPORT

NONE

8. STAFF REPORT

Staff noted the Commission's Strategic Plan for 2017 was up for review and encouraged the Commission to review the 2017 plan, noting areas in the plan which could be partnered with the proposed Climate Sustainability Plan. Staff included the importance of identifying measureable outcomes and benchmarks for the 2018 Strategic Plan, goals and objectives.

Staff reported on the upcoming list of Green Themes Presenters to the Commission.

9. COMMISSIONER SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning: NONE

Land Preservation: Commissioner Kielbaso reported the Land Preservation Advisory Board was in the process of reviewing a possible property for land preservation.

Energy Team: NONE

Parks: NONE

Transportation: Commissioner Ionescu reported on Railroad Quiet Zones and Complete Streets.

Student Report: Student Commissioner Holland reported on the solar panel project at the Okemos High School.

10. PUBLIC REMARKS

NONE

11. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m. without objection.