

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
TOWNSHIP BOARD REGULAR MEETING **-APPROVED-**  
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198  
853-4000, Town Hall Room  
THURSDAY, AUGUST 9, 2018 **6:00 pm.**

PRESENT: Supervisor Styka, Clerk Dreyfus, Treasurer Brixie, Trustees Deschaine, Jackson, Opsommer, Sundland

ABSENT:

STAFF: Township Manager Frank Walsh, Director of Public Works/Assistant Township Manager Derek Perry, Economic Development Director Chris Buck, Finance Director Miriam Mattison, Fire Chief Mike Hamel, Police Chief Ken Plaga, Information Technology Director Stephen Gebes, Community Planning & Development Director Mark Kieselbach

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor Styka called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS

Supervisor Styka led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

The Recording Secretary called the roll of the Board.

4. PRESENTATIONS

A. Update on DDA Activities Regarding Downtown Okemos Development

Sue Faulk, volunteer Board Chair of the Meridian Downtown Development Authority (DDA) presented on the current status of the DDA. Provided history, purpose, and impact on the Downtown Okemos area. Proposed possible amended Tax Increment Financing (TIF) plan to increase funding for the DDA into the future and provide additional funding for development projects.

Board discussion:

- BOARD MEMBER concerns that Advanced Redevelopment Solutions is being hired by the DDA to modify their tax increment financing, which is the same consulting company hired by the developer proposing a ~~very large~~ mixed use project in the DDA
- STAFF RESPONSE THE FIRM IS LARGE AND HAS SPECIALTY IN MANY AREAS, INCLUDING TIF PLANS BUT THE WORK THEY ARE DOING FOR THE DEVELOPER IS OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL NATURE
- ~~Possible conflict of interest, as economic interests of Meridian taxpayers could be compromised by the consultant working on behalf of the developer in the DDA~~

- ~~Suggestion that DDA should use not use a consulting firm that is working on behalf of a developer in the DDA region, they should use another impartial and objective firm~~
- DDA can consider the option to levy their own taxes when the TIF is modified AND REMOVE THE CURRENT PROHIBITION FROM TAX LEVY THAT EXISTS IN THE DDA

5. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Supervisor Styka opened public remarks at 6:13 pm.

Neil Bowlby, 6020 Beechwood, Haslett; voiced concern about the timing of the Police Chief announcement, the Township Manager press release and appointment celebration should not have occurred before the Board vote, proper protocol should be followed. Makes it appear the Board just “rubberstamps” decisions made by the Township Manager. Separate comments on the size and density of the redevelopment choices that are being proposed in the downtown Okemos area. On Agenda Item 13E, thinks that the current Citizen Survey firm has collected a helpful pool of legacy data and that longevity is helpful, only in favor of changing firms if it is cheaper.

Bruce Kuffer, 16675 Austin Way, East Lansing; addressed Agenda Item 13A, ~~supports~~ WITH REGARDS TO Medical Marijuana in Township ~~but~~ wants all parameters carefully considered: growth facilities and possible property value impact, distribution and retail, and potential future complications.

Lanita Campbell, 6049 Skyline Dr., East Lansing; addressed Agenda Item 13A, concern with growth facilities and the odor that may accompany them, believes they belong exclusively in agricultural zones.

Leonard Provencher, 5824 Buena Pky., Haslett; addressed non-agenda items. Concerned with 1.3 million dollars being spent on boardwalk project in Okemos; lumber doesn't age well, can be slippery for walkers and cyclers, materials need to be carefully considered. Emergency signal on Okemos Road, driveway of Fire Station, did not operate as intended as a firetruck exited, needs to be reviewed.

Sally Conley, 2307 Taos Trail, Okemos; addressed item 13A, concerned with medical marijuana and its impact on the community. ~~Understands the benefits that can be provided but~~ Hopes that the Board carefully reviews this before a decision is made. Does not believe that it is what this community needs.

Benjamin Geoff, 106 N. Fourth Ave., Ste. 302, Ann Arbor; addressed item 13A, comments on the proposed ordinances for the medical marijuana. Proposing to limit growers and distribution only in industrial zoning and ½ mile buffer from residential zones makes the locations inaccessible to patients. Mr. Geoff stated that patient access needs to be the forefront of consideration, some commercial zones on Grand River Avenue would be appropriate and provide needed access.

Bob Baldori, 7119 Mt. Hope Rd., Okemos; addressed item 13A, stated that marijuana is less harmful than tobacco or alcohol, cited *People v. Sinclair* (1973) and how Michigan Supreme Court has historically decided that this is the case. Has drafted a Medical Marijuana ordinance which he would like to Board to review, modeled after other municipalities; he recommends simplification of the proposed ordinance which his draft provides.

Ryan Basore, 6228 Brookeline Ct., East Lansing; addressed item 13A, concerned with discriminatory nature of placing medical marijuana retail fronts in industrial zoning, should be kept in well lit, safe areas. He should not have to go to Lansing to access medicine.

Supervisor Styka closed public remarks at 6:34 pm.

6. TOWNSHIP MANAGER REPORT

Township Manager Frank Walsh reported:

- Moving closer to proposed settlement on Walnut Hills subdivision
- Georgetown Sewer Payback District discussions to come in September
- Will be meeting with Williamstown to extended police service contract
- Upcoming meeting with police unions to continue discussion on pensions
- Commented that the timing of the announcement and celebration of the recommendation of the new Police Chief by the Township Manager – before the Board actually voted on the selection of the Police Chief – was inappropriate and he promised he will handle things differently in the future

7. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee Sundland

- Attended public meeting with CATA, enjoyed the open forum aspect of the meeting

Trustee Deschaine

- CATA could expand the geographic reach of Redi-Ride
- Redi-Ride cards could be provided to address concerns with increased fares; cards would allow for 60 cent fares

Supervisor Styka

- Corridor Improvement Authority will provide recommendations on Grand River Avenue
- Study session on Downtown Okemos redevelopment on September 11

8. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**Trustee Opsommer moved to approve the Agenda. Seconded by Trustee Deschaine.**

VOICE VOTE: Motion carried 7-0

9. CONSENT AGENDA

Supervisor Styka reviewed the consent agenda.

**Trustee Deschaine moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Seconded by Treasurer Brixie.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustees Jacksons, Deschaine, Sundland, Opsommer, Supervisor Styka, Treasurer Brixie, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS:  
Motion carried 7-0

A. Communications

**Trustee Deschaine moved that the communications be received and placed on file and any communications not already assigned for disposition be referred to the Township Manager or Supervisor for follow-up. Seconded by Treasurer Brixie.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustees Jacksons, Deschaine, Sundland, Opsommer, Supervisor Styka, Treasurer Brixie, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS:  
Motion carried 7-0

B. Minutes – July 24, 2018 Regular Meeting

**Trustee Deschaine moved to approve and ratify the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of July 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018 as submitted. Seconded by Treasurer Brixie.**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustees Jacksons, Deschaine, Sundland, Opsommer, Supervisor Styka, Treasurer Brixie, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS:  
Motion carried 7-0

C. Bills

**Trustee Deschaine moved to approve that the Township Board approve the Manager’s Bills as follows, seconded by Treasurer Brixie:**

|   |                        |    |                            |
|---|------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| <b>Common Cash</b>                              |                        | \$ | <b>762,493.13</b>          |
| <b>Public Works</b>                             |                        | \$ | <b>66,054.65</b>           |
| <b>Trust &amp; Agency</b>                       |                        | \$ | <b>1,753,745.20</b>        |
|   | <b>Total Checks</b>    | \$ | <b>2,582,292.98</b>        |
| <b>Credit Card Transactions</b>                 |                        | \$ | <b>7,645.63</b>            |
| July 20 <sup>th</sup> to August 1 <sup>st</sup> |                        |    |                            |
|   | <b>Total Purchases</b> | \$ | <b><u>2,589,938.61</u></b> |
| <b>ACH Payments</b>                             |                        | \$ | <b><u>668,171.94</u></b>   |

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustees Jacksons, Deschaine, Sundland, Opsommer, Supervisor Styka, Treasurer Brixie, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS:  
Motion carried 7-0

10. QUESTIONS FOR THE ATTORNEY (NONE)

11. HEARINGS

12. ACTION ITEMS

## A. Land Transfer for Farmers' Market Relocation Plan

**Trustee Jackson moved to approve staff to move forward with details to facilitate a land trade with Milmar Mall, LLC. (Meridian Mall) consisting of 4-acres of Township-owned land on parcel # 21-226-011 for 2.5-acres of land owned by Milmar mall, LLC. on parcel # 15-300-026 as depicted on the attached map, for the purpose of creating a community gathering space and Farmers' Market Pavilion. Seconded by Trustee Deschaine.**

Board Discussion:

- The 4 acres of land being offered by the Township is unlikely to be developed
- Meridian Mall is not in compliance with impervious requirement, land swap helps
- Relocation will help it become a prime Farmers Market in Michigan
- This transfer could help support the vitality of the Mall

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustees Deschaine, Sundland, Opsommer, Jackson, Supervisor Styka, Treasurer Brixie, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS:

Motion carried 7-0

13. BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

## A. Medical Marijuana Ordinance

Director Kieselbach discussed the Michigan Medical Marijuana Facilities Licensing Act. A sample resolution based on input from Supervisor Styka was included for the Board to review, along with a general ordinance. The Township Board must first decide whether it wants to authorize these types of facilities ("Opt-in"), and then determine the appropriate location and number of facilities to be permitted in the Township.

Board discussion:

- 65% of Meridian voters supported Medical Marijuana in 2008
- Marijuana trend is moving from prohibition to being used for a multitude of uses
- Citizens need it for medical purposes, and business/entrepreneurs would benefit
- Smartest approach with this issue is to be proactive, careful and discerning in deliberations
- 5 types of marijuana facilities, analysis of each and zoning considerations
- Growing, Processing, Provisioning, Safety & Compliance, and Transportation
- Plans can be crafted to fit the Township, and are not set in stone, can modify later
- Discussed available locations in industrial zoned parcels and how they relate to proposed set-backs within draft ordinances
- Limiting facilities to Industrial zoned areas is a form of exclusionary zoning which effectively eliminates access to medical marijuana in Meridian Township
- Limited zoning prevents cannabis businesses from successful operation
- Board would limit size and scope of facilities through Special Use Permit review process
- Limiting to industrial zoning would slow progress, commercial zones are necessary
- Conversation needs to avoid demonizing the topic and stop promoting exclusionary zoning
- Overarching Township law and ordinances, as well as State enforced laws, will make the noticeability of this industry very minimal

- Difficult and costly process, applicants and developers will likely work with the community to avoid negative impacts
- Belief that growth facilities in industrial zoning makes the most sense
- Provisioning Centers will be used by a cross-section of society, therefore they belong with any other commercial entity
- Nationwide data suggests that impact on safety isn't statistically different than typical liquor stores; real-time security monitoring goes directly to the State in most facilities
- Chief Plaga stated that the Secure Transport facility will be heavily regulated by the State
- Township Attorney commented on how Secure Transports are not allowed to be directly armed, a belief that some may be followed by armed escorts, a belief that transporters will be carrying a lot of money due to perceived lack of access to banks
- Belief that odor would be an issue, this needs to be considered
- Board member preference for only Class A growers
- Residential grow operations may produce an odor, regulated large-scale growers would not
- Processing, Transport, Safety & Compliance facilities could fit well in Commercial and Industrial zones
- Establishing overlay districts could help to manage development better
- Belief that odor and crime have been common complaints by members of Township
- MOST RECENT PUBLIC OPINION ON MARIJUANA IN MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP BY VOTERS WAS DEFEAT OF CLINIC REZONING ON OKEMOS RD. NEAR CHIPPEWA MIDDLE SCHOOL
- Belief that there have been very few complaints since 2008 regarding medical marijuana
- Restricting to Class A Growers licensing would limit possible development, scales of economy might make 1 Class C Grower more efficient, take up less space than 3 Class A's

B. Section 61 Application – Land Preservation

Director Kieselbach discussed the purpose of Section 61 Applications and the request to forward the desired project to the Township Planning Commission for approval.

Board discussion:

- Land Preservation Board is looking to include the proposed parcel within the existing Ponderosa Preserve to allow for site access from future area developments.

**Consensus of the Board to bring this item back at future meeting for action.**

C. Update to Property Maintenance Code

Director Kieselbach discussed the proposition for the Township to adopt the 2015 version of the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC), with Township amendments, to replace the 2006 version that is currently being enforced.

**Consensus of the Board to bring this item back at the next meeting for action.**

D. Meridian Redevelopment Fund

Director Buck reported on the status of the Meridian Redevelopment Fund (MRF).

Board discussion:

- Current capital in the fund is approximately \$570,000 and came from the sale of the Township-owned MARC building
- Concerns about the wording of “Eligible Uses” and the vague language of Act 338 (1974) in the application form
- Belief that support for MRF comes from developers and property owners who can benefit the most from “free taxpayer cash” – no support heard from small entrepreneurs
- Belief that this is a great incentive to help push desirable development in blighted areas
- Proposed Resolution is intended as a part of the processes to actually establish the MRF
- Belief that giving grants to certain businesses, and loans to others, isn’t a fair process
- BELIEF THAT small grants would enhance growth by promoting community buy-in and volunteer energy
- BELIEF THAT heavy-handed approach prioritizes large projects that would likely happen anyways
- Belief that this redevelopment fund is for entire community, not just two Township areas
- Meridian EDC supports MRF, comprised of local business people
- BELIEF THAT loans would avoid a slippery slope of favoritism – better than grants
- Concern that funding program is vague, unspecified and can lead to cronyism and favoritism
- Current language is mostly original, BELIEF THAT this funding program don’t exist in other municipalities
- REQUESTING THAT language on interest rates should be defined from the start of the MRF, not as we go
- These funds should be used to leverage investment, not to cover total development
- Could be used as incentive for retail space, rather than for largescale development
- Belief that specifying loan rates would be too constricting, AS FINANCIAL CONDITIONS CHANGE
- This fund is specific for blight in the two specific downtown areas (Haslett and Okemos)
- BELIEF THAT other municipalities aren’t using these types of funds because they are ineffective
- ~~Large scale loans to developers don’t always work~~
- Belief that MRF is potentially a big benefit to property owners and developers, not to citizens
- ~~Belief~~ REQUEST that if grants are provided they should be small and leveraged, and anything above a set amount should be a loan
- STATEMENT THAT THE REDEVELOPMENT FUND IS MEANT TO ASSIST WITH INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED TO ENABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Consensus of the Board to bring this item back at the next meeting for action.**

E. 2018 Citizen Survey

Director Perry discussed the current survey and its short-comings as well as possible directions that can be explored to implement new survey options. Possibilities are to continue with the current survey or to look into different options.

Board discussion:

- Could bids be used to find the best fit for our needs
- Specific questions are more helpful than those provided on general trend surveys
- Questions on strength of current system have been raised before, switching to providers like MSU would help craft personalized surveys

- Using outside firms is helpful to reduce politicizing and was the cheaper option in the past
- Customizing current survey could be a compromise and preserve legacy data available
- Questions on the possibility of need for phone-based surveys
- Maintain old survey system this year, allow for in-depth analysis before next survey
- Directors of departments should be considered in the goals and questions for the survey

**Consensus of the Board to bring this item back at the next meeting for action.**

F. 2019 Budget Process

Director Perry commented on the proposed calendar for the budget process and the focus on maintaining \$5.25 million for the General Fund reserves.

Board Discussion:

- Roads: attempting to keep the road millage and funds provided from general fund at promised levels, along with slight increase of Ingham County contributions
- Belief that getting the road rating up should be a priority

**Consensus of the Board to follow proposed calendar for budget process.**

**Clerk Dreyfus provided an Election Report for the 2018 August Primary**

Board discussion:

- The Clerk provided a review of the unofficial election results
- Board member belief he did not receive instructions on proper ballot casting at Precinct 4
- Clerk Dreyfus commented on training practices that directed election workers to remind people of proper voting procedures
- Question about the delay in the ELECTION results ~~from the absentee voter board~~ on election night; MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP WAS LAST TO HAND IN THE ELECTION RESULTS AGAIN, WITH RESULTS NOT BEING AVAILABLE UNTIL JUST BEFORE 7 AM
- The Clerk discussed equipment problems that occurred with the Ingham County Clerk's approved high-speed scanner used to process absentee voter ballots, resulting in delays
- Board member ~~belief some poll workers were confused where some voters were supposed to be voting,~~ CONCERN REGARDING A REPORT THAT A VOTER WAS TURNED AWAY FROM VOTING IN PRECINCT 20 BECAUSE THEY HAD RECENTLY MOVED INTO THE TOWNSHIP AND WERE NOT LISTED AS BEING REGISTERED. WHEN THE VOTER WENT BACK TO EAST LANSING, THEY WERE TOLD THEY HAD BEEN RECORDED AS HAVING MOVED. Clerk responded that no complaints by voters were submitted to the Township
- Concern with requests for ELECTION RESULTS tape review BEING denied at three different polling locations IN MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP ~~after polling locations closed~~
- Clerk ~~clarified there~~ BELIEF OF ~~was~~ one reported instance of tape results not being furnished, will be addressed at the next training session for election workers who close the polls
- Question IF THE RECENT ~~about~~ address changes OF REGISTERED VOTERS not being accurate in election workers databases WAS A SYSTEM WIDE PROBLEM IN MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP
- Clerk explained new State of Michigan database rarely lists previous and current addresses of voters, but when it does it causes confusion FOR POLL WORKERS

- BOARD MEMBER COMMENT THAT HE WAS TURNED AWAY FROM RECEIVING A RESULTS TAPE AT A PRECIENT
- Board member ~~comment~~ CONCERN that his polling location appeared chaotic TWO HOURS after election was over AND WONDERED WHAT TYPE OF TRAINING THE ELECTION WORKERS RECIEVED
- Clerk noted that precincts in large municipalities may not appear as orderly as the Board member might prefer, and the Board member should visit precincts in Lansing at 10pm at future elections to see other precincts in operation
- BOARD MEMBER DESIRE FOR TOWNSHIP ELECTIONS TO BE IN KEEPING WITH MERIDIAN PRIME COMMUNITY

14. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Supervisor Styka Opened Public Remarks at 9:30 pm.

Bruce Kuffer, 16675 Austin Way, East Lansing; comments on medical marijuana Growing and Processing facilities and possible issues with odor, light pollution, water usage and sewer strain. Belief that a violation fee for odor issues should be large enough to dissuade infractions.

Bob Baldori, 7119 Mt. Hope Rd., Okemos; stated that opting in to medical marijuana would solve the odor issue as odors may come from residential growers. Opt-in would give the Township complete control over the issue and provide for far more regulatory reach. Believes that marijuana should be treated no differently than tobacco and alcohol, and overlay districts are the best choice. No rational basis for regulating marijuana any differently than tobacco.

Kip Harrison, 6060 Columbia St., Haslett; stated that he lives close to a private grower, believes that the smell and the power usage is unacceptable and dangerous. Has requested assistance from Township Police on previous occasions, questions why they can't enforce laws.

Supervisor Styka Closed Public Remarks at 9:40 pm.

15. OTHER MATTERS AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

16. ADJOURNMENT

**Treasurer Brixie moved to adjourn. Seconded by Trustee Jackson.**

Supervisor Styka adjourned the meeting at 9:41 pm

17. POSTSCRIPT - DAN OPSOMMER

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RONALD J. STYKA,  
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

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BRETT DREYFUS,  
TOWNSHIP CLERK