



AGENDA
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
May 1, 2024 7 pm

Town Hall Meeting Room, 5151 Marsh Rd, Okemos

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

2. PUBLIC REMARKS

3. CHANGES TO/APPROVAL OF AGENDA

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

5. NEW BUSINESS

Review Proposals for Climate Sustainability-Related Funding

(from April Agenda)

Discuss Climate Sustainability Funding Decisionmaking \$30,000 Proposal:

- 1) Invite staff, Teams (Green Burial, Wetland Ed., Green Team, Energy Team, Food Team, etc.) and others for suggestions. Submit by April Earth Day (Apr 22) at noon (gives time to include in May EC Packet)
- 2) Discuss suggestions at our May 1 meeting and approve first round.
- 3) If there are additional funds/projects... approve at our June 5 meeting.
- 4) Remaining funds approved by.... (staff, Green Grant Review Team, Department Director(s), ?)

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

7. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Staff, Liaisons, Teams (Energy, Green, Food, etc.), Okemos High School, etc. invited to share updates.
Staff update can be found at <https://sites.google.com/view/staff-update/home>

8. PUBLIC REMARKS

9. ADJOURNMENT

Environmental Commission (EC) Meeting Minutes

April 3, 2024

Attending: Bill McConnell (Chair), Tom Frazier, Andrea Paul, Amelia Saffron, Peter Trezise, Graham Diedrich, Yu Man Lee and LeRoy Harvey (Staff). **Absent:** John Sarver and Anna Colby.

Public Remarks: None

Agenda: McConnell suggested adding a brief discussion about the meeting time.

Minutes: Approved with no additional changes. Harvey credited Frazier for an initial review.

New Business

Report on Joint Commission Meeting: McConnell reported that 16 Boards and Commissions met to share reports on March 26. He reported on the Climate Sustainability Plan and the green grant program. Dave Batten presented on the gleaning and food rescue projects. Trezise reported 19 presentations including Capital Area District Library (CADL) and Board of Water and Light. Trezise also reported strong appreciation for over 100 volunteers currently serving on commissions. Paul appreciated the Parks and the Library presentations.

Green Grant Recommendations: Paul provided an overview of each green grant proposal:

- from the Environmental Law Institute (publication and expanded distribution of the book Mud Lake)
- Montessori Radmoor (Native Plant diversity, signage, mycology garden)
- Pine Creek Condo Association (invasive species removal & disposal)
- Haslett Community Church (expansion of sun-tolerant garden and outdoor lending library)
- Mic-Michigan Environmental Action Council (rehabilitation of Hidden River Rain Garden)
- Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy (tree and shrub plantings)
- Haslett Child Development Center (playground improvements and native plantings)
- Haslett Beautification Association (pollinator garden)

Commissioners discussed ideas for the future including final inspections of projects, updates on Township shows/HOMTV, encouraging press events and press releases, clear deadlines, reviewing the criteria, and limiting the size of grants. Saffron asked about how we might cover the \$255 overage. Paul offered a motion proposing that the overage be covered by a reduction in the Radmoor proposal. Saffron seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

Additional Climate Sustainability Funding: Trustees approved \$30,000 for projects identified in the Climate Sustainability Plan for 2024. Harvey discussed the following process with Wisinski, who originally proposed the budget.

- 1) Invite staff, Teams (Green Burial, Wetland Ed., Green Team, Energy Team, Food Team, etc.) and others for suggestions. Submit by April Earth Day (Apr 22) at noon (gives time to include in May EC Packet)
- 2) Discuss suggestions at our May 1 meeting and approve first round of recommendations to the Board.
- 3) If there are additional funds/projects... approve at our June 5 meeting.
- 4) Remaining funds approved by.... (staff, Green Grant Review Team, Department Director(s), ?)

Frazier expressed concern that all Teams may not be meeting in April. McConnell mentioned that we already have a good "to do" list in the Climate Sustainability Plan and Master Plan. He also mentioned that we have consultants that can help with various items such as updating the Greenspace Plan, ordinance revisions, EV infrastructure, build out analysis, etc. and shared page 16 of the [Master Plan](#) as an example. Diedrich mentioned that we might also suggest alternative funding options such as next year's budget (2025). Trezise suggests that we explore low-hanging fruit that are the most important and then make a recommendation to the Township Board. McConnell suggested an email to various groups inviting ideas that relate to our Climate Sustainability Plan. Harvey suggested some review before the next meeting. Harvey agreed to draft an email and run it by McConnell and Trezise before sending to groups for general

proposals. Saffron suggested inviting proposals for amounts smaller than \$30,000. Lee and Harvey will check with Emma Campbell to firm up cost estimates for wetland education. Once estimates and a recommendation are drafted, a recommendation will be made to the Township Board. Once approved, staff/Directors will facilitate purchasing according to current policies. Harvey will assemble responses and invite commissioners to offer additional comments for discussion at our May 1st meeting. We may decide to invite representative to speak at a future meeting.

Meeting Time: McConnell asked if Commissioners have an interest starting E.C. meetings a little earlier, such as 6:30pm. Saffron and Diedrich favor keeping the time at 7pm and others are flexible and open to exploring earlier time. McConnell will check with other Commissioners before discussing further.

Unfinished Business

Staff Update: Harvey briefly highlighted items in a staff update located at <http://bit.ly/update-leroy>. The Green Gazette is out. Norm Cox (Greenways Collaborative) will speak at the next Green Dialogue. Future dialogue guests include Amanda Frattarelli and EV owners. McConnell mentioned that Norm Cox helped us develop the Meridian Greenspace Plan.

Energy Team: Trezise reported about the Solarize workshop which was well-attended on April 1. There was media coverage. (Staff add: See April Staff Update: <http://bit.ly/update-leroy> for link to news story)

Green Team: Frazier reported good attendance at the Sustainable Fashion Show. He also reminded folks about the April 27 Spring Recycling Event which will include latex paint, document shredding, bikes, and metal. More volunteers are still needed.

Earth Club: Saffron also heard good things about the Sustainable Fashion Show. There is a tech recycling box at the high school. Saffron offered to remind Action and NHS about volunteer opportunities.

Land Preservation: LPAB met in February. Lee reported that the land acquisition in the Cornell neighborhood is moving forward. This property is across from Cornell Elementary School. The Meridian Conservation Corp 23-24 annual report was delivered. There are over 100 volunteers active in the Corps. There will be an increase in staff for MCC. There is additional signage going up. There are a couple of items in the Master Plan that the Land Preservation Advisory Board (LPAB) is interested in discussing such as wetland setbacks, a woodland ordinance, and the shifting of focus from acquisition to maintenance of land preserves. LPAB is also wondering if EC is interested in discussing a tree ordinance. LPAB meets next week. Harvey mentioned that we might explore other Townships. Diedrich mentioned that Canton Township has done a lot.

Other: McConnell attended a film series on "[Roots So Deep](#)" with discussion about grazing practices and alternatives for sustainable beef production impacting CO2 sequestration and water quality. McConnell asked that if anyone has insights into horse manure composting and/or sand casting aluminum, please let him know.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:24:08 pm

Note: Recording available on HOMTV at www.homtv.net

<https://meridianmi.new.swagit.com/videos/301758>

Green Team Recommendations to the Environmental Commission for 2024 Grant Funding

1. Purchase of food scrap compostable bags and pick up of food waste from the Meridian Farmers Market, Valarie Lafferty & Gabi Mayer: The Climate Sustainability Plan for the township states in part, “Partner with the Meridian Township Farmers Market to promote and offer recycling events and enhanced recycling opportunities” and “Identify and implement food, cooking oil/grease, composting, and related organic material recycling options.” In 2023, a pilot food scrap collection began at the Market and Meridian Township Drop-Off Recycling Center where township residents can drop off food scraps for recycling. In addition, compostable food bags were made available on Market days at no cost or for a minimal donation for residents to collect their food scrapes and return them to the market for drop off. Late in the year, the program went to a subscription based system, which resulted in some complaints by residents.

This grant request aims to make the compostable food bags and drop off program at the Market free to residents for the coming year. The concern is that the program was just getting off the ground when it changed to a subscription based system. We would like to make the program free to residents for the next year (approx. May 2024-April 2025) in order to better establish the habit of residents collecting their food scraps to be composted. Once the program is better established, consideration to convert to a fee-based system would be considered at that time. The purpose of the grant would be to provide residents free compostable food scrap bags and to pay for the cost of weekly food waste bin pick up by MyGreen MI for the coming year. **Estimated cost of the compostable bags and food waste pick up \$9,320.**

2. Meridian Gleaners, David Batten & Susan Ziara, Co-Chairs: The Climate Sustainability Plan for the township states, “One way to reduce the environmental impacts of our food system is to reduce food waste and divert wasted food from landfills.” The Meridian Gleaners project does that by encouraging shoppers to directly purchase produce from vendors for donation to area emergency food providers. This, in turn, benefits residents in need, and local farmers and producers. For 2024, the gleaners aim to double the amount of public donations achieved in 2023 further reducing food waste and benefiting those in need.

Briefly our strategies intend to include direct support for vendors and recipients, facilitating personal interaction between citizens, recipients, and vendors, and increasing awareness of Meridian Market Gleaning purpose and progress, as well as opportunities for participation. Non-profit agencies eligible for participation include Southside Community Kitchen, First Presbyterian Church Panty, Okemos Community Food Pantry, Cristo Rey Community Center, Haslett Community Church Pantry, St. John Church Food Cupboard, and Williamston Food Bank.

The purpose would be to provide a stipend to the non-profit leadership to come to the Market and purchased produce directly from the vendor. The non-profit would stay at the Market for a period of time to provide information or answer questions about their programs to the public. The vendors profit as they would with any sale, but gain a relationship with a recipient agency that may promote more donations. The public interaction with the agency promotes additional support for the Market as well as greater understanding of the needs of the community. **Estimated expenditures are expected between \$1,983-\$2,683.**

3. Signage for Meridian Recycling Drop Off Center, Trevor Hoover: The Climate Sustainability Plan for the township states, “Improve signage that promotes recycling and directions to recycling drop off facilities.” While the Ingham County Road Commission has provided signage in each direction along Lake Drive to the Meridian Recycling Drop Off Center, signage within the drop off location is nearly non-existent. Residents trying to utilize the recycling drop off center have difficulty in identifying where specific items to be recycled are supposed to be deposited into the various bins. Better signage to identify where items should be placed would make the drop off center more convenient and user friendly and reduce the chance for contamination. This request would establish 10 aluminum signs (36” x 24”) with stands to clearly identify the proper usage of each recycling bin. **Cost for the signs would be \$635.25.**

Wetland Education Team

Meridian Township / Environmental Commission Funding Proposal/Request 2024

Wetlands cover over 25% of Meridian Township and play key roles in maintaining healthy watersheds and communities while providing resilience both to extreme precipitation events and to drought conditions. They help to mitigate climate change by providing significant carbon storage sinks as well. Due to their ecological and social value, in 2011 the “no net loss” policy was adopted by the Meridian Township Board of Trustees. To further their protection, the Township created a wetland ordinance that regulates wetlands as small as 0.25 acre in size. The Township also maintains a wetland inventory map and incorporates considerations of wetlands into their site plan review processes. In 2021, a Wetland Education Team was created to help develop educational resources for use by residents, developers, local landscapers, and contractors. Key information includes preserving and developing vegetative buffers and avoiding the use of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. In support of Objective c.2 in Meridian Township’s Climate Sustainability Plan which focuses on protecting wetland ecosystem health and services by strengthening policies and activities that favor wetland area expansion, enhance wetland quality and resilience, and expand efforts to assure public awareness of the value and stewardship of wetlands, one of the strategy focuses on wetland education, including creating public signage identifying wetlands and their importance, seasonally distributing seasonal educational materials, and providing educational programs explaining wetlands’ critical importance, protective functions, and stewardship opportunities. The Township’s Master Plan recently updated in 2023 also highlights continuing to support efforts from the Environmental Commission to educate the public on wetland regulations and benefits under the goal of balancing strategic growth and environmental preservation.

To help support the goals and objectives in the Township’s Climate Sustainability Plan and Master Plan related to enhancing public awareness and understanding of wetlands, the Wetland Education Team would like to submit a funding request of \$7,000-\$10,000 to continue to help support wetland education efforts in the Township. A summary of the funding request is provided in the table below.

Wetland Education Funding Request 2024	
Item	Estimated Total Cost
Wetland Interpretive/Education Signs <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3-5 signs that focus on presence and importance of wetlands and wetland buffers and wetland flora and fauna• Nancy Moore Park on the boardwalk overlooking a wetland• Central Park South wetland buffer planting and floating islands• Hillbrook Park wetland	\$3,000 - \$6,000
Residential Yard Signs	\$250
Residential Mailing, Social Media, and Other Outreach	\$1,500
Grand Total	\$4,750 - \$7750

Other Environmental Projects & Initiatives

Green Burial Design

The Green Burial Committee (GBC) believes the most efficient way to provide the Township with a green (natural) burial option is to utilize a vacant section (Section 7) of Glendale Cemetery. In order to provide the Township Board with sufficient information to make changes to the cemetery ordinance to allow green burials in Section 7, the GBC wishes to contract with WC Fry Design, a cemetery landscape design firm, to develop a feasibility study complete with 3D rendering of the modified section. **Estimated cost for this study is \$7,500 - \$10,000.** The GBC wishes to obtain a grant to cover this cost.

Green Burial Committee: Bruce Peffers, Kim Peters, Sarah Allen

Note: Wendy Fry is another presenter at our weekly Green Dialogue series. She spoke about green cemeteries and passive recreation: See recording <https://youtu.be/EF5LcbuDgms?si=Jyt3jeiqntgzL5sr> . We also heard about West Michigan's Burial Forest: <https://youtu.be/3WUpJM6lIX0?si=ar8YNPtDyt9mQleV> .

Update Greenspace Map

For 20 years, the Meridian Greenspace Plan has helped the Township envision a network of green spaces and non-motorized linkages that protect and connect valued natural and cultural resources, provide linkages to adjacent communities, and improve the quality of life for township residents. As Mentioned in the Township's Master Plan, the Township is interested in updating this 20 year old plan and is seeking more information about the process, potential levels of depth, and costs. The original plan can be viewed here: <https://greenwaycollab.com/projects/meridan-township-greenspace-plan/>

This plan was innovative in its time. What might innovations look like today? How might this relate to the [Green Infrastructure Audit](#) that Tri-County Regional Planning Commission helped us with? Are there gaps or endangered gaps in our connected greenspaces that should be protected or restored? How do our current transportation, pathway, blue trail/Red Cedar, corridor, land preservation, and redevelopment plans connect/relate? Could this be done regionally – and/or in collaboration with adjacent communities? Norm Cox, of the Greenway Collaborative recently spoke to at a Green Dialogue https://youtu.be/50-U4YDz8z0?si=NGGH3d_N-nbgw0FJ

Other Potential Budget Items (not necessarily Climate Sustainability-related)

- **Composting Promotion:** Provide \$500 for Compost Bin Promotion: Provide a \$10 discount on the first 50 compost bins sold at our Compost/Rain Barrel Sale. <https://meridiantownship.compostersale.com/>
- **Environmental Programs Coordinator Position:** LeRoy Harvey is considering scaling back in September. The Environmental Commission might recommend continuation of this position and possibly contracting with LeRoy to assist with the transition and/or selected projects.
- **Additional Recycling Center Improvements:** The Mich. Dept of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) has been hesitant to fund improvements on our existing recycling center. There is a need for increased storage, signage, possible electrical improvements, and possible paving. Trevor is creating a new priority list.