

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
TOWNSHIP BOARD JOINT MEETING - **APPROVED** -
ASSESSING BOARD OF REVIEW
CABLE COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
COMMUNITY RESOURCES COMMISSION
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD
PARK COMMISSION
PLANNING COMMISSION
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864-1198
853-4000, Town Hall Room
TUESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2016 **6:00 P.M.**

TOWNSHIP BOARD

PRESENT: Supervisor LeGoff, Treasurer Brixie, Clerk Dreyfus, Trustees Scales, Styka, Veenstra
(6:04 P.M.), Wilson
ABSENT: None

ASSESSING BOARD OF REVIEW

PRESENT: None
ABSENT: Members Durand-Hollis, Ellis, Federau, Galbraith, Pentecost, Spengler

CABLE COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

PRESENT: Chair Benenson, Commissioner Kiyak, Trustee Styka
ABSENT: Commissioners Crowley, Lathrop

COMMUNITY RESOURCES COMMISSION:

PRESENT: Commissioners Friedland, Lane
ABSENT: Commissioners Ahlbrand, Brouse, Jones-Henry, Langhals, Lincoln, Theroux

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

PRESENT: Supervisor LeGoff, Associate Planner Menser
ABSENT: Chair Raynak, Members Cawood, Fisher, Korrey, Kreft, Spanos, Weaver

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

PRESENT: Chair Buck, Clerk Dreyfus, Treasurer Brixie (Ex. Officio), Manager Walsh
ABSENT: Members Barr, Carlson, Dunham, Epolito, Ledebuhr, Madle, Olson, Rowlee

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

PRESENT: Members N. Jackson, Kielbaso, McConnell
ABSENT: Members Dickmann, Sarver, Schools

LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

PRESENT: Members Kielbaso, Lee, Mayes, Treasurer Brixie
ABSENT: Members Harmes, Hatfield, Smith, Commissioner Stephens

PARK COMMISSION

PRESENT: Chair Wilson, Commissioners Deschaine, McDonald
ABSENT: Commissioners Jaramillo, Stephens

PLANNING COMMISSION

PRESENT: Chair Scott-Craig, Vice-Chair Jackson, Commissioners Ianni, Opsommer, Tenaglia
ABSENT: Commissioners Cordill, DeGroff, Honicky, Van Coevering

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

PRESENT: Chair Beauchine, Ohlrogge, Alternate Ken Lane, Supervisor LeGoff, Commissioner Jackson

ABSENT: Members Hershiser, Kwok

STAFF: Township Manager Frank Walsh, Assistant Township Manager/Director of Public Works and Engineering Derek Perry, Director of Community Planning and Development Mark Kieselbach, Associate Planner Peter Menser

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor LeGoff called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS

Supervisor LeGoff led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

The secretary called the roll of the Board.

4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Treasurer Brixie moved to approve the agenda as submitted. Seconded by Trustee Wilson.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustees Scales, Styka, Wilson, Supervisor LeGoff, Treasurer Brixie, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS: None

Motion carried 6-0.

5. PUBLIC REMARKS

Supervisor LeGoff opened and closed Public Remarks.

6. JOINT MEETING WITH TOWNSHIP BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS (Assessing Board of Review, Cable Communications Commission, Community Resources Commission, Downtown Development Authority, Economic Development Corporation, Environmental Commission, Land Preservation Advisory Board, Park Commission, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals)

Meeting participants discussed 2015 accomplishments, as well as the following goals, objectives, concerns and ideas for 2016:

Cable Communications Commission (CCC)

- Review of 2015 achievements
- Highlights of the internship program
 - Production of 348 programs with closed captioning and high definition
 - Approximately one-half of the interns find jobs in the field
- Supervision of Township branding and new website design
- Preparation of streaming television in the future
- Broadband can be accessed through cable or over the air
- Consideration of Township wide free wi-fi for Township residents
- Possible name change for the CCC
- Current vacancy on the CCC

Community Resources Commission (CRC)

- Appreciation to the Township for providing necessities (e.g., rent, gas, electric, prescriptions) for many less fortunate residents within the Township

- CRC raised \$10,000 through the Meridian Cares Programs this winter
- CRC will host a golf outing in the summer to generate additional funds
- Board appreciation for the CRC's involvement in the Meridian Cares Program

Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

- Explanation of the DDA boundaries and its mission
- Election of Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary for 2016
- Business owners within the DDA own some of the longest running businesses in the Township
- Brief history on the creation of the DDA
- Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds as the primary source of DDA revenues
- Explanation of how TIF funds are procured
- 2015 accomplishments:
 - Demolition of the closed central fire station and the sale of the Meridian Area Resource Center (MARC) building
 - Continuation of a few ongoing streetscape projects
 - Sponsorship and administration of the Celebrate Downtown Okemos Event
 - Celebrate Downtown Okemos Event brought approximately 6,000 people into the downtown Okemos area
 - Appreciation for the leadership and vision of the Director of Parks and Recreation and her staff
- 2016 goals:
 - Increase outreach efforts to businesses within the DDA
 - Create a coalition of businesses as a result of the outreach
 - Research for potential grants
 - Another successful Celebrate Meridian Event
 - Development of the MARC site into a Tap and Tavern restaurant
 - Several other developers in the DDA

Board discussion:

- Boundaries of the DDA are Grand River Avenue on the north, Okemos Road on the west, Marsh Road to the east (including the roundabout), and south to Mt. Hope Road
- Four (4) vacancies currently on the DDA Board
- Prerequisite for appointment is ownership in a business within the boundaries of the DDA

Economic Development Corporation (EDC)

- Mission is to set the standard in creating an entrepreneurial culture and to be the example for revitalization of our business districts and to be leaders in building sustainable public/private partnerships
- Approximately 12 members on the board who are essentially business owners, entrepreneurs in management within the community
- Three goals in 2015:
 - Pivotal player in the redevelopment of the Haslett Shoptown/Village Square area, Carriage Hills Shopping Center and potential implementation of the Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) for the section of Grand River Avenue within Meridian Township
 - Assist in the redevelopment efforts of downtown Okemos including the site of the previous central fire station and the relocation of the MARC
 - EDC took over the administrative oversight of the MARC in 2015
 - MARC property has been sold
 - Assist and offer leadership in the strategic plan for the Farmers Market as it consists of a group of small business owners
 - Support the endeavors which foster entrepreneurship, startups and businesses of all sizes through volunteerism, advocacy and funding
 - Reignite the incubator
 - Partner with MABA to financially support the Joan Smith Memorial Scholarship
- Goals for 2016:
 - Engage with school districts to offer entrepreneurial opportunities at the public school level
 - Work strategically to ensure Meridian Township is a great place to run a business

- Contribute ideas towards a possible sign ordinance revision
- Advocate for a Township CIA
- Assist in the creation of the CIA Board once created
- Disseminate information discovered through the CIA outreach to the proper entities
- Maintain efforts to foster the revitalization of the Township's business districts
- Welcoming Community Initiative
- Feasibility of Facebook or website video series which highlight the stories of non-American born business owners in the community
- Offer of volunteer assistance during Welcome Book
- Assist in the design of a welcome brochure to send out to regional employers, the Visitors Bureau and the Chamber of Commerce
- Collaborate with other entities within the Township and the greater Lansing area to ensure Meridian remains competitive and congruent with regional development initiatives
 - Necessity of joining the established multijurisdictional consortium on the CIA once a Township CIA is established
 - Continue to extract all information available from the Lansing Economic Area Partnership (LEAP) as a member
 - Attendance at the Tri County Regional Prosperity Initiative meetings to stay aware of tri county activity, contribute and participate in the initiatives and ask for assistance
 - Offer of the EDC's services to contribute in the update to the Township's Master Plan
 - Offer of assistance to the Township in its branding initiative and website redesign
 - Better communication among the various Township Boards and Commission by having EDC members attend other Board and Commission meetings

Board discussion:

- Revitalization of downtown Haslett through finding the right business developers who can work with the ownership group
- Appreciation that one of the EDC's goals is to work with the Township's school districts
- High school talent exposure to what entrepreneurialism looks like
- Recognition of the need to effectively communicate amongst the Township's Boards and Commissions
- Possible creation of a more formalized appointment process which would restructure the Planning Commission to include two (2) of its nine (9) seats that has appointments from other Boards and Commissions (i.e., Environmental Commission, Economic Development Corporation)

Environmental Commission (EC)

- Educational and advisory capacity through the use of a Green Theme Series and an Environmental Stewardship Award Program
- Involvement in specific campaigns relative to environmental educational materials
- By statute, the EC advises the Township on wetland use permits, open space and preservation, as well as sustainable energy and transportation
- In the process of filling the last vacancy on the EC to revitalize youth participation on the Commission
- Consideration of college student recruitment which will eventually become voting members of the EC
- 2016 Goals:
 - Focus on greater collaboration with other Boards and Commissions
 - Assist Land Preservation Advisory Board (LPAB) with site reviews
 - Informal connection to the Planning Commission as its Chair regularly attends EC meetings
 - Students in an engineering course at MSU produced a term project regarding the redevelopment of Haslett Village Square
 - Interest in sustainable non-motorized transportation regarding a regional connection of the inter urban pathway
 - Continue to engage residents, and other elected officials on environmental issues
 - Review of Township ordinances which relate to environmental issues
 - Zoning ordinance relative to the adaptation of climate change

- Brownfield redevelopment
- Street tree replacement
- Fracking
- Increased way finding
- Appreciation for the Township's commitment to plow the interurban pathway as it creates value
- Importance of conveying existing values to Township residents
- Further investment in linkages between the Board and other Boards and Commissions
- Nominations for Environmental Stewardship nominees

Land Preservation Advisory Board (LPAB)

- Preserves and parks add to the desirability of the Township as they contain valuable habitat and native plants
- Preserves of various types are located throughout the Township
- Original goal was to obtain approximately 10% of available greenspace identified in the then Greenspace Plan (620 acres) which has been surpassed (755 acres acquired to date)
- Voters have twice approved a millage for land preservation beginning in 2000
- 2015 accomplishments:
 - Removal of invasive species in Towar Woods
 - Planting of a combination of 3,000 white and red pines in addition to 125 deciduous trees
 - Many of the trees were food for deer herds over the winter
 - Thirteen (13) of the land preserves were used in the deer management program
 - Work on existing properties to bring them back to their natural state
 - Review of one (1) potential land acquisition
- Creation of an individualized stewardship plan for each property
- 2016 goals:
 - Community engagement at each property
 - Complete pending acquisition(s)
 - Completion of signage as a general land management function
 - Continued participation in the deer management program
 - Placement of an overlook on the Davis Foster Preserve
 - Participation with the parks in the butterfly garden
 - Continuation of site restoration projects

Board discussion:

- Meridian Township as the pioneer in the visionary Land Preservation program
- Appreciation to the LPAB for not only meeting its objectives, but expanding its vision
- Bollards installed at the entrance to the preserves discourage vehicular traffic
- Bollards are also installed to establish boundaries of the preserves to prevent neighbors from "claiming the land as their own" for various purposes
- Highest point in Meridian Township is in the Central Meridian Uplands located off Lake Lansing Road near Whitehills
- Assistance with invasive species management through efforts by various volunteers
- Several volunteers have received Environmental Stewardship Awards in appreciation for their efforts on LPAB properties
- LPAB has sitting members of the EC, Park Commission, and the Township Board and should be used as a model of cross communication

Park Commission (PC)

- Voters approved a revised park millage in 2014 which allowed for an infusion of funds used for park projects
- Millage money used for improvements and preventive maintenance activities in existing facilities as well as addressing the needs for maintenance in facilities to be built over the next 12 years
- In 2015, the Park Commission sent out several grant requests
- Receipt of a grant for outdoor fitness equipment at Wonch Park, which will be installed in the Spring
- Receipt of a grant for a pavilion to be built in North Meridian Road Park
- Consultant hired to assist with redevelopment of the Central Park Master Plan over the summer
- "Rethinking" of the entire Central Park area as a destination point in the Township

- Acquisition of an additional 1.6 acres adjacent to Towner Road Park
- Towner Road Park, in its entirety, will commence in the Spring
- Towner Road Park will be a multi-use sports complex, two (2) baseball/softball fields, and mixed use fields for lacrosse, football, soccer, etc.
- Harris Nature Center (HNC) Foundation fundraising has resulted in significant improvements to the nature exploration area
- Lifeblood of the Parks Commission and parks and recreation programs is its volunteer base
- Dollar value assigned to volunteer hours exceeded the amount of money realized through the parks millage

Board discussion:

- Adoption of parks for regular cleanup by girl and boy scout troops
- Consideration of the appropriate group to plan Meridian Township's 175th Birthday Celebration in 2017

Pension Trustees (PT)

- PT oversight of the Township's pension plan
- Only one active employee remains in the plan
- For a period of more than a decade, the fund was doing so well, the Township did not have to place contributions into this plan, comprised mostly of stock holdings
- Impact of the "great recession" (2008) on this pension plan
- Plan does not receive contributions from active employees through their paychecks
- After the recession, the plan lost value and the Board subsequently approved a few infusions of cash to sustain the plan, which is approximately 85% funded

Planning Commission: (PC)

- Mission is to evaluate land use issues for proposed developments to ensure compliance with Township ordinances
- Appreciation to the Board, Township Manager, Assistant Township Manager and staff for their support and expertise
- PC frequently interacts with members of the EDC EC, PC and the ZBA
- Projects which came before the Planning Commission in 2015 covered a broad spectrum: zoning amendments, rezoning requests, special use permit requests, wetland use permits, mixed use planned unit developments, commissioner reviews, etc. for construction of a variety of housing types, business developments and park improvements
- PC members attended various Boards and Commissions meetings to open channels of communication
- 2016 Goals:
 - Completion of the Master Plan update
 - RFPs have been solicited for planning consultants and one has been selected
 - Timeline for completion of the plan is a maximum of six (6) months
 - Staff and members of the PC have done a great deal of preliminary work on the update to the Master Plan
- Planning Commissioner appreciation for Chair Scott-Craig's strong leadership
- Appreciation for the Master Plan public input session hosted by the Planning Commission

Board discussion:

- Announcement that a BRT corridor input meeting will be hosted by CATA on Thursday, January 14th beginning at 4:30 PM in the Town Hall Room
- Meeting will focus on Meridian Township's section of the BRT

Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)

- ZBA is charged with enforcing the Township's ordinances as written
- Quasi-judicial board considers eight (8) different criteria in order to approve a variance
- Appreciation to staff for its efforts in educating an applicant
- Goal to find ways to better communicate with Township residents on what a variance means

Board discussion:

- Decision by the Township Manager to host a Board and Commission Appreciation Event on January 28th from 5:30 to 7:00 PM at the new Central Fire Station
- Ribbon cutting for new central fire station to be held on February 1st at 1:00 P.M.

Manager Walsh provided a detailed visual and oral summary of the National Citizen Survey results.

Board and staff discussion:

- Importance of controlling invasive species as they outcompete native species upon which wildlife depends
- Local government is the foundation of democracy and elected officials could not accomplish much without the volunteer efforts of those who serve on Meridian's various Boards and Commissions
- Announcement that Community and Planning Director Kieselbach will celebrate his 36th anniversary in service to Meridian Township on January 21st

7. PUBLIC REMARKS

Supervisor LeGoff opened and closed public remarks.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Supervisor LeGoff adjourned the meeting at 7:59 P.M.

ELIZABETH LEGOFF
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

BRETT DREYFUS, CMMC
TOWNSHIP CLERK

Sandra K. Otto, Secretary