

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
REGULAR MEETING TOWNSHIP BOARD -**APPROVED**-
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198 517.853.4000,
Township Hall Room
Tuesday, June 18, 2024, 6:00 pm

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

ABSENT: NONE

STAFF: Interim Manager Schmitt, Deputy Manager Opsommer, Director Gebes, Director Ianni,
Director Clark, Manager Diehl, Lieutenant Squires

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor Hendrickson called the June 18, 2024, Regular Township Board meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS

Supervisor Hendrickson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

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

4. PRESENTATION

A. 2023 Township Audit Presentation – Ali Barnes, Yeo & Yeo

Ali Barnes, representative for Yeo & Yeo stated that they issued an unmodified opinion for the 2023 Audit and Single Audit. She reviewed a 5 year comparison of Revenues and Expenditures, year-to-year general fund balance, components of the general fund balance, activity in enterprise funds, bonded obligations, and internal controls and compliance.

Treasurer Deschaine asked about the reasoning behind reporting the capital improvements fund separate from the general fund but did not do the same with the pension stabilization fund. Ali Barnes explained that it was included because it's not supported by external resources like the capital improvements fund.

5. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Supervisor Hendrickson opened comments from the public at 6:19 pm.

R. X. Harrington, Township resident, showed maps of the Great Lakes region and explained geological forces on the region.

David Pawsat, Township resident, spoke in opposition to marijuana dispensaries. Asked Board to learn about product.

Marvin Karana, representative of DNVK 4 LLC, spoke in favor of DNVK 4 Recreational Marijuana License Application for Zone 3.

Kevin Blair, representative of DNVK 4 LLC, corrected a typo in the letter he sent to the board and spoke in favor of DNVK 4 LLC.

Savinder Singh, representative of Amsterdam CC and Township resident, spoke in support of Amsterdam CC.

Jay Meyer, Township resident, spoke in opposition to marijuana dispensaries. Asked the board to table the item and put it up for a vote.

John Ebert, Township resident, spoke in opposition to locations of marijuana dispensaries.

Marlene Stover, Township resident, spoke in opposition to marijuana dispensary at Jolly and Okemos Rd.

Dr. Clara Regal, Township resident, spoke in opposition to marijuana dispensary at Jolly and Okemos Rd.

Marcy Kizner, Township resident, spoke in opposition to marijuana dispensary at Jolly and Okemos Rd.

Julie Essa, Township resident, spoke in opposition to marijuana dispensary at Jolly and Okemos Rd.

Supervisor Hendrickson closed comments from the public at 6:53 pm.

6. INTERIM TOWNSHIP MANAGER REPORT

Interim Manager Schmitt gave updates about the following:

- Thanked Ali Barnes, Yeo & Yeo, and Director Ianni for work on the 2023 audit.
- Directed Board and residents to the location of the AbleEyes project on the Township website and thanked Communications Director Diehl for her work on the project.
- 11,000 ballots have been issued will be mailed next week.
- MERS 2023 actuarial evaluation will be provided to the Board and posted on the website. 74% funded.
- Road construction is almost done for the year. Wood Valley is being delayed due to a Drain Commission project.

7. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS OF ACTIVITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Treasurer Deschaine gave copies of the tax bill insert regarding online payment to Board Members and updated residents on the day that they will receive their tax bill. Attended a County meeting during which the County announced that the park entry fees will be waived during the current heat wave.

Trustee Wilson reported that she attended the Juneteenth Celebration and encouraged residents to attend events at the Bandshell at Lake Lansing South

Clerk Guthrie informed residents that absentee ballots will be mailed on June 27, that the Township offices will be closed on June 19 for Juneteenth, and noted the upcoming concert at the Farmer's Market.

Trustee Trezise reviewed the work that Policy Review Committee has accomplished, that the Committee is beginning to work on the Board policy manual.

Supervisor Hendrickson attended Policy Review Committee and Juneteenth Celebration, has visited the nearly complete Marshall Park, briefly reviewed the most recent listening session, and reminded residents of the upcoming listening sessions. He also reminded residents of the upcoming Celebrate Meridian event and the ribbon cutting event for the Styka Memorial Pathway.

8. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Trustee Wilson moved to approve the agenda. Supported by Trustee Trezise.

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

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

9. CONSENT AGENDA

Supervisor Hendrickson listed the items on the agenda.

Trustee Wilson moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Supported by Treasurer Deschaine.

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

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

10. QUESTIONS FOR THE ATTORNEY

NONE

11. HEARINGS

A. Whitehills Lakes South #1 – Streetlight SAD Public Hearing

Supervisor Hendrickson opened the public hearing at 7:08 pm

Deputy Manager Opsommer reviewed the SAD.

Supervisor Hendrickson closed the public hearing at 7:14

B. Whitehills Lakes Subdivision #7 – Streetlight SAD Public Hearing

Supervisor Hendrickson opened the public hearing at 7:14

Jagjit Khanuja, Township resident, suggested evaluating light placement to add an additional light.

Bill Mueller, Township resident, asked how the previous streetlights were funded and assessed, and questioned the need for streetlights.

Deputy Manager Opsommer recommended tabling this SAD to re-evaluate placement and number of lights.

Supervisor Hendrickson closed the public hearing at 7:18

At 7:18 pm Supervisor Hendrickson called for a 5-minute recess. The board reconvened at 7:23 pm.

12. ACTION ITEMS

A. Recreational Marijuana License Application in Zone 3 – Marsh and Grand River Area

Interim Manager Schmitt recapped the application process with the Board.

Township attorney Kuschel presented to the Board the additional information Board Members asked for at the May 9, 2024 meeting. Asked the Board to utilize the competitive review worksheet for each applicant when reviewing the applications.

Treasurer Deschaine indicated his support for Amsterdam CC because of their local ties and redevelopment plan, and indicated his opposition to the development plan of DNVK 4. Attorney Kuschel clarified that the legal perspective turns more on residency than on local preference, that residency is not part of the application criteria for Meridian Township.

Trustee Wilson recognized the work of staff people and adherence to deadlines, indicating her support for DNVK 4.

Trustee Trezise concurred with Trustee Wilson, indicating his support for DNVK 4, but wanted to know what enforcement ability the Township has if the development does not meet the commitments. Attorney Kuschel clarified what items can be enforced and what would have to be reviewed on a periodic basis.

Supervisor Hendrickson indicated his support for DNVK 4 based on the details provided in their application.

Trustee Trezise moved to adopt the resolution granting CONDITIONAL APPROVAL of the recreation marijuana license application to DNVK 4 for the proposed marijuana retailer location at 1614 GRAND RIVER AVENUE The property is zoned C-2,

COMMERCIAL and is located within the Marijuana Facilities Overlay District. Seconded by Trustee McCurtis.

ROLL CALL VOTE YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson

NAYS: Treasurer Deschaine

Motion carried: 6-1

B. Acceptance of 2023 Township Audit Findings

Interim Manager Schmitt introduces the item and opened the discussion to Board Members.

Trustee Trezise asked about an auditor comment regarding foregoing recording lessee finances. Director Ianni explained that the item was, this year, slightly above trivial so it was included in the audit letter, but not material so it did not require additional procedures.

Treasurer Deschaine moved to approve the 2023 audited financial statements and the 2023 single audit as presented by Yeo & Yeo. Supported by Trustee Wilson.

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

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

C. Township Legal Services Contract

Interim Manager Schmitt reviewed previous discussion, highlighting slight changes in rate structure.

Clerk Guthrie asked for examples of fees that go beyond the monthly contract, for the total cost of services for 2023, and wanted to know if there was a conflict-of-interest document. Interim Manager Schmitt answered that items that exceed the agreed cost per month or are specific items are billed on an hourly basis. Attorney Kuschel clarified that there have been clauses for conflict of interest, but not a separate document.

Trustee Wilson moved to approve a two-year extension of the legal services contract with Fahey, Shultz, Burzych, and Rhodes until July 1, 2026. Supported by Clerk Guthrie.

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

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

D. Draft Liquor License Ordinance - Introduction

Director Clark reviewed the document, stating that changes were made based on Board recommendations.

Clerk Guthrie asked how the fees are calculated and asked about specifics regarding proximity to schools. Director Clark stated that fees are associated with the work it takes to process an application, not what could be charged based on the market price of the license. Attorney Kuschel explained that proximity is used in the ordinance in two different contexts so it has been intentionally left loose, but that it can be tightened.

Supervisor Hendrickson stated his concern that tighter restrictions may create unintended effects in the future.

At 8:23 pm Supervisor Hendrickson called for a 5-minute recess to allow staff to create a motion to present to the board. The board reconvened at 8:28 pm.

Trustee Trezise moved to introduce Ordinance 2024-05 to regulate liquor licenses as presented for first reading and subsequent adoption. Supported by Trustee Wilson.

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

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

E. Whitehills Lakes South #1 – Streetlight SAD Public Hearing

Clerk Guthrie moved to approve the Whitehills Lakes South #1 Public Streetlighting Improvement Special Assessment District #428 – Resolution #3, which approves the construction of the public improvement, the estimate of cost and defraying the cost by Special Assessment, determines the Special Assessment District, and direct the making of an Assessment Roll. Supported by Treasurer Deschaine.

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

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

F. Whitehills Lakes Subdivision #7 – Streetlight SAD Public Hearing

Supervisor Hendrickson acknowledged the need, after hearing public comment, to table this item for further discussion. Deputy Manager Opsommer stated that Consumers has already set the pedestals as requested by the developer without verification from the Township and will speak with Consumers to determine if the pedestals can be relocated at no additional cost. He will contact the member of the public who asked about streetlight funding to answer that person's questions.

Trustee Trezise moved to table the proposed motion for 12.F Whitehills Lakes #7 Public Streetlighting Improvement Special Assessment District #429 until it can be brought to the next meeting. Supported by Clerk Guthrie.

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

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

13. BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Community Survey

Director Clark presented the draft survey and introduced Mr. SaintAmour, representative for Cobalt Community Research in attendance via Zoom. She acknowledged a typographical error in how the questions are numbered.

Trustee Wilson noted typographical errors and asked for clarity regarding the phrase 'reimagined Meridian Mall.' Director Clark clarified that it is to determine what the community might like to see in that particular area of the business corridor. Trustee Wilson asked that the question be worded to provide an explanation. Supervisor Hendrickson offered a suggestion for wording the question more clearly.

Trustee Trezise asked about the classification grouping in regards to the selection box for 'research park,' suggesting that it be broken down instead of grouping them together as currently shown.

Treasurer Deschaine suggested combining questions 24 and 25, and adding a question asking if people would support it through taxes. He noted that taxpayers are making comments suggesting they are experiencing tax fatigue. He offered a suggestion for wording the question. Trustee Wilson responded that, according to the consultants, the Township first needs to assess what the community wants before asking about a millage. Once the Township knows more about what the community wants and where funds will be found and subsequently spent, the Township can then calculate what a millage might be and present it to the community. Trustee Trezise and Supervisor Hendrickson concurred with Trustee Wilson. Clerk Guthrie, Trustee McCurtis, and Trustee Sundland concurred with Treasurer Deschaine, citing transparency. Supervisor Hendrickson and Trustee McCurtis suggested wording for such a question. Supervisor Hendrickson acknowledged that four of seven Board members supported the question and asked Director Clark to add a question regarding support for the Center through taxes.

Supervisor Hendrickson asked if unique online codes could be provided instead of waiting for residents to mail back the survey. Director Clark clarified that the survey will offer that option.

Clerk Guthrie asked why there weren't questions similar to the previous survey, in particular Parks related questions, noting that it is difficult to determine if residents are still getting what they want from Township services. Director Clark stated that there is space in the survey and those questions can be included.

Supervisor Hendrickson noted typographical errors and questions in need of clarity, and offered suggestions.

B. 2025 Township Budget Priorities

Interim Manager Schmitt gave an overview of the concepts that have been brought so far and asked Board Members for their priorities and feedback.

Trustee Wilson prioritized taser funding.

Treasurer Deschaine prioritized the number police officers brought up to 44 and adding an additional fire inspector, and asked about perhaps adding an additional firefighter.

Clerk Guthrie stated that the school election costs will be reimbursed. She reminded the Board of the remaining work that needs to be done in the Municipal Building. Director Schmitt added that there are a few buildings that have work needing to be done.

Trustee Trezise asked about the staffing requests. Interim Manager Schmitt explained that it is to address the staffing needs that have lagged as the Township has grown, and that the line item for HR costs is to address the issues surrounding salaries lagging behind market.

Supervisor Hendrickson expressed concern about adding 2 more officers in the short term, instead focusing on reaching the current need to reach 42 officers and seeing how the department functions at that level before trying to attract and additional 2 officers. He reminded the Board that the contracts were opened early in 2023 in order to address low wages and recommended waiting until the contracts open in 2026 when they come due. Supports the commitment to exit the Township from fossil fuels by relying more upon solar and suggested waiting on EV charging stations to move up placement of a solar array on Harris. Also supports the MSU to Lake Lansing parkway.

14. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Supervisor Hendrickson opened comments from the public at 9:54 pm

Matt Kuschel, Township attorney and representing Fahey, Shultz, Burzych, and Rhodes, thanked the Board for placing their confidence in Fahey, Shultz, Burzych, and Rhodes

Supervisor Hendrickson closed comments from the public at 9:55 pm

15. OTHER MATTERS AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

NONE

16. ADJOURNMENT

Treasurer Deschaine moved to adjourn. Seconded by Trustee McCurtis.

VOICE VOTE

YEAS: Supervisor Hendrickson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustee McCurtis, Trustee Sundland, Trustee Trezise, Trustee Wilson

NAYS: NONE

Motion carried: 7-0

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 pm.



Scott Hendrickson
Township Supervisor



Deborah Guthrie
Township Clerk