



# 2024

## Annual Report

Charter Township of Meridian



**Meridian Township**  
5151 Marsh Road  
Okemos, MI  
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[meridian.mi.us](http://meridian.mi.us)

# TOWNSHIP BOARD MEMBERS

**Scott Hendrickson, Supervisor**

**Angela Demas, Clerk**

**Phil Deschaine, Treasurer**

**Nickolas Lentz, Trustee**

**Kathy Ann Sundland, Trustee**

**Peter Trezise, Trustee**

**Marna Wilson, Trustee**





**To: Board Members**

**From: Tim Dempsey, Township Manager**

**Date: February 4, 2025**

**Re: 2024 Annual Report**

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The Meridian Township Board, and Management Team, are pleased to present the community with the Township's 2024 Annual Report. The enclosed report of departmental activities is meant to satisfy the requirements of the Charter Township Act and provide our residents with a complete overview of 2024 operations. This report is a compilation of activities provided by each department.

A copy of this report will be on file in the Clerk's Office, both libraries, and posted on the Township's website at [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us).

Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding this report. We will continue our efforts in 2025 to work as a team united in spirit for the betterment of our 44,000 Township residents.

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2024

## GOALS ACTION PLAN

### A. INFRASTRUCTURE ENHANCEMENTS

#### **Complete the second phase of the Timberlane Water Main replacement project.**

The second phase of the Timberlane Street Water Main was replaced between Linden Street and Melrose Street. The work was completed by late summer and involved replacing 290 feet of main.

#### **Complete the reconstruction of the County North Lift station.**

Construction of this project began in November of 2024 and will continue through May of 2025 when we complete the asphalt restoration. This project includes the following scope of work:

- Removal of the existing lift station including all hardware and plumbing
- Installation of a new lift station including:  
Valve Vault, Control Panel, Antenna, Pumps, Generator and all plumbing, conduits, etc;  
Installation of a new 750 gallon Oil and Grease interceptor; Installation of a new 48" Sanitary Manhole; Connection of the Existing Gravity Sewers (8" and 12") and Pressure Sewer (6") to the Station; Connection of an existing 6" Sewer Service to existing 12" Gravity Sewer; Bypass Pumping of the Lift Station (250gpm); and, Dewatering of the construction zone.

#### **Begin the first phase of the water meter replacement project. In total, we will replace approximately 9,000 water meters, or 60% of our water meters, that are approaching the end of their battery life over the next 3-5 years.**

Staff has made substantial progress on replacing water meters, using in-house Staff. Although there has been a great deal of upheaval in the Utility Billing area of Township operations, these replacements should allow us to get ahead of future issues, while we catch up on existing ones.

#### **Complete year four of the Meridian Township Local Road Improvement Plan. Our PASER rating at the end of 2024 shall be a minimum of 5.7.**



During the 2024 construction season, we completed the following road reconstruction projects:

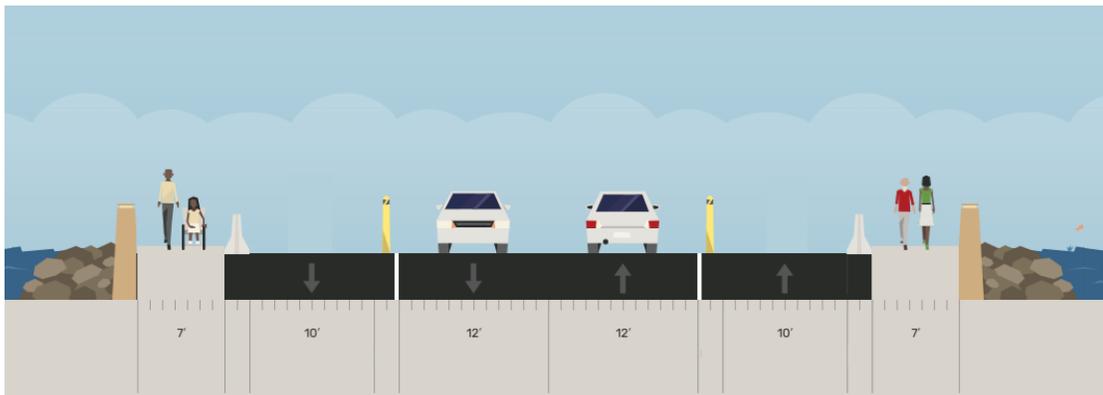
- All 6.32 miles of road reconstruction schedule for 2024
- Reconstructed the roads in the Randall St, W Reynolds Rd, E Reynolds Rd, Milenz St, Perry Rd, and Quail St neighborhood under a 2023 contract (this road project was delayed to 2024 due to the winter construction schedule required to complete the 2024 County Park West Sanitary Sewer Replacement Project)
- Reconstructed Linden St (Timberlane St to the cul-de-sac) and Timberlane St (Linden St to Melrose Ave) under a 2022 contract (this project was delayed due to a storm drain project and a water main replacement project)

In 2024, we also reconstructed the following roads that were scheduled for 2025 construction:

- Tomahawk Rd (Tacoma Blvd to Manitou Dr)
- Tacoma Cir (Tacoma Blvd to End)
- Kenosha Dr (Penobscot Dr to Birchwood Dr)
- Redwing Dr (Birchwood Dr to End)
- Dobie Cir (Dobie Rd to End)
- York Way (Westminster Way to Everett Ln)

During the first five years of the new Local Road Program millage, we have reconstructed 39 miles of our poorest condition roads and will have completed over 50 miles of preventative maintenance road work.

**Work with MDOT to plan and coordinate for the Grand River Avenue bridge replacement project between north and south Meridian Rd in 2025.**



Beginning in February 2025, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) will start work on a project to replace the Grand River Avenue/M-43 bridge located east of the North Meridian Road intersection.

This project will involve a complete bridge replacement. There will be a full closure eastbound and westbound Grand River Avenue while the existing bridge is demolished and the new bridge is constructed. Once the details have been finalized, the closure date and detours will be announced.

Future phases of the project will involve work at the North Meridian Road/Grand River Avenue intersection and the South Meridian Road/Grand River Avenue intersection. The project is estimated to be completed between December 2025 and February 2026.

This project was designed in 2023 and 2024. As part of this project, the new bridge will include protected bike lanes and seven-foot-wide sidewalks on both sides of the bridge. The pedestrian and bicycle facilities on the new bridge deck are critical to constructing the regional trail to Williamston and Webberville that has been identified as a priority trail project for funding under the Ingham County Trails & Parks Millage.

## **B. DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

**Maintain steady efforts to ensure that Township programs, policies, and procedures are managed and improved through DEI best practices. Continue to work on updates to the Township’s Personnel Handbook.**

The Board-designated policy committee, met regularly to review and update the Township Board Policy manual and Township Personnel Policy Manual. Final edits and reviews are being conducted with Township Counsel with an anticipated completion date of both manuals expected in February of 2025. Township programs, policies, and procedures are managed and improved through DEI best practices and we continue to welcome community and employee input.

**Offer training opportunities to all Township Staff to provide operational DEI framework for all that we do throughout our employment experience.**

All permanent Township employees attended “Building a Conversational Culture” which was presented as a mandatory educational opportunity in October 2024. Multiple dates were offered in order to accommodate all work schedules, shifts, and departments and allow operations to continue while staff were able to attend this interactive learning session about different ways of communicating and connecting with each other across the organization.

**Celebrate diversity through programs, events, and increase opportunities for DEI education and unity in a fun, inclusive, and engaging way.**



We continue to celebrate diversity through programs, events, and increased opportunities for DEI education in multiple ways. The Township held its annual Celebrate Meridian, Juneteenth, and Meridian Pride Celebrations in June and August, respectively, and which facilitates the enjoyment of employees and community alike. We are steadfast in our commitment to generate new and ongoing opportunities for unity in a fun, inclusive, and engaging way.

**Implement AbleEyes virtual tours of all public buildings in the Township. Virtual tours allow customers to explore beforehand to decrease anxiety, but the tours can also be used by persons with disabilities to explore accessibility beforehand.**

Meridian Township partnered with Able Eyes to create virtual walk-through tours of the Township's public buildings. These virtual tours can be used by anyone, but they were specifically designed to help people with both physical and invisible disabilities such as autism, anxiety, or PTSD. Tours include the Meridian Township Municipal Building, the Meridian Township Service Center, Meridian Township Central Fire Station #91, Harris Nature Center, and Nancy Moore Park.

**C. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Begin the implementation of the 2023 Master Plan focusing redevelopment efforts to the PICAs of the community. Create an implementation matrix for each Potential Intensity Change Area (PICA) with tasks identified that will progress the development timeline to completion.**

Work has begun on the implementation of the 2023 Master Plan, notably the inclusion of Accessory Dwelling Units throughout residential districts, elimination of minimum house sizes, working with MSU on Van Camp business relocations, and working with Okemos Public Schools on the reconstruction of their buildings. However, the changes in staffing in the Township Manager's Office in 2024 directly impacted the Community Planning and Economic Development Team's ability to make further progress. In 2025, barring additional staffing changes, the Planning Teams should have ample staff time to focus on the Code of Ordinances.

Redevelopment efforts continue, headed by the Economic Development Department's work to see the final approvals for the Haslett Village Square 2.0 project, allowing construction to commence. The potential for the area is vast and we are ready to see the project complete the Board's vision for redevelopment. We continue to work with the owners of the Village of Okemos and Meridian Mall to determine the future for those important properties.

**Continue efforts to bring vitality to Downtown and commence development of the Village of Okemos Project with the assistance of the Meridian Redevelopment Fund, Brownfield Redevelopment Authority and Downtown Development Authority Tax Increment Financing Authority.**

The future of redevelopment in Okemos, Haslett, Carriage Hills, and Meridian Mall will rely heavily upon State and Local incentives for redevelopment. The Redevelopment Fund started the initial conversations with developers interested in revitalizing our PICA's, but the fund was fully removed from the budget and is not expected to be revisited in the future. Each of the PICAs is still in the planning phases, although Haslett Village Square is closer than the other three to actual construction. Staff has spent countless hours on the project and expect to see vertical construction in the coming months. Development Assistance remains available for redevelopment through the BRA, EDC, and CIA, as needed for any given project.

**Conduct a market, housing, or other analytical research study that will aid the development boards in the community with their decision making. Utilize the updated data to move the needle on stagnant projects sites.**

A housing study was not conducted in 2024 due to the lack of support from the Development Boards. In 2025, staff will attempt to gain support to conduct another study to assist with community planning.

**Work cooperatively with the several Meridian Township Boards and Commissions, CBL Property Management team, Meridian Mall property owners and the Ingham County Drain office to implement development goals, in support of redevelopment of the Meridian Mall.**

The mall is on stable footing going into 2025. A new tenant is proposed in the vacant Younkers space, bringing life to that vacant and high profile wing of the building. Additionally, Schuler’s Bookstore is transitioning to a larger space. Both projects will launch the Meridian Mall into a new stage of development. Staff has continued to work with the Drain Commissioner’s Office to develop a stronger relationship, with an eye towards major redevelopment of the mall site. We hope to facilitate additional steps between CBL and the Drain Commissioner’s Office to allow for further redevelopment on the site, ensuring the viability of Meridian Mall for decades to come.

**D. COMMUNITY PLANNING**

**Develop a Township Affordable Housing Development Policy.**

The Township took initial steps towards an affordable housing development policy during the discussion on State legislation that allowed for Tax Increment Financing to be used for development costs related to housing. Although the Board opted not to proceed with this development tool, they were able to agree on several ordinance changes that can have the effect of promoting housing affordability, including the elimination of minimum unit sizes, elimination of minimum lot sizes, and the allowance of accessory dwelling units in the Township. Moving forward, Staff will continue to evaluate the zoning ordinance with an eye towards eliminating administrative burdens on housing, to further lower potential costs in the Township.

**Effectively administer the marijuana licensing and permitting process.**

At the beginning of 2024, the Township Board opened up an application window for recreational marijuana in the Township, after having developed the standards of review and process in 2023. The Township received five applications in four of the potential districts. One district did not receive an application. Three of the applications were reviewed and processed as single applications in the district and were ultimately approved by the Township Board. Two of the applications were in the same district and a competitive review was completed by Staff, with a recommendation made to the Township Board. After multiple rounds of discussion, the Township Board issued conditional approval to one of the applicants, giving the Township four conditionally approved licenses.

The applicants then moved through the Special Use permit process, which is still ongoing for one of the locations, who had issues with their traffic study, which was required. Of the remaining three applicants, two locations are opened (Jolly Road and Haslett Road), while the third location is awaiting the start of construction sometime in 2025.

There is no intention for Staff to recommend a new application window and each of the remaining two conditionally approved licensees are currently ‘on the clock’ under the ordinance to open their facility or risk revocation of their conditional approval.

**Pilot the concept of “single-page” zoning for single-family properties.**

Given the personnel changes in the Township Manager’s office, Staff was unable to make progress on this goal. Staff has already started preparing to discuss this in 2025, to substantially streamline the zoning ordinance.

**Continue modernizing the zoning ordinance.**

Two major items were worked on in 2024 to further modernize the Zoning Ordinance. First off, the RN zoning district was updated, eliminating confusing and sometimes contradictory references throughout and providing direct standards for the district, rather than referencing other standards. This is a first step towards a complete overhaul of the district, which is one of the more complicated zoning districts currently. The second, and substantially larger update, is work on the parking ordinance. Staff and the Planning Commission have discussed this a number of times and an initial draft is being developed for formal presentation in the early part of 2025. Modernization of the Zoning Ordinance will continue for years, as the majority of the Code still has not been updated since the 1970's.

**Implement MSHDA Community Development Block (CHILL) Grant**

In March 2024, the Township entered into a grant agreement with Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Housing Improving Local Livability (CHILL) Program. This grant awarded the Township with \$480,000 in funding to use for homeowner improvement projects in the Towar Gardens neighborhood and the Core Haslett neighborhoods. The tier I environmental review has been completed. In June 2024, the Township signed a third party grant administrator agreement with Capital Area Housing Partnership (CAHP). CAHP has assisted with creating the application packet for residents to apply for the grant, promotional materials to garner interest in the program, and managing incoming applications. The application for residents to fill out was put on our website in August. Currently, submitted applications are being processed and undergoing income verification, with five property owners moving on to the next step of the process, with an eye towards construction in mid-2025.

**E. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

**Continue to improve the service drive at the Recycling Center on Lake Drive and reapply for the EGLE grant to construct a new Recycling Center behind the Service Center.**



We completed spring maintenance of the recycling center in April. Many years ago, the Township would receive a significant number of complaints because of the poor condition of the Recycling Center service drive. As a result of our new maintenance program, we no longer receive any complaints about the condition of the service drive.

We also added recycled millings to the Recycling Center service drive in the summer of 2024 as part of the adjacent Local Road Program projects. After we crushed Carlton St, Hickory Island St, W Reynolds, Roe St, Lee St, and Mack Ave, we took the excess millings and transported them to the Township's Recycling center where they were graded out to improve the condition of the drive.

After talking with EGLE staff, we did not apply for a grant this year, as the funding was geared towards recycling deserts, as opposed to improving existing systems. We will continue to monitor the funding and expect to apply in 2025, if the funding is allocated by the State.

**Construct our fifth major solar array at the North Fire Station, which will supply the entire building with 100% renewable energy generation via a 29.71 kW system that will generate 35,255 kWh per year.**

Due to Staff resources, this project has been postponed to 2025. It will be completed this year, along with the solar project at the Historic Village, the last of the easy to implement projects. After these two projects, Staff will begin evaluating next steps, looking for our most cost effective next step.

**With the support of the Environmental Commission, finish developing a plan for the Township to construct and install its first electric vehicle charging stations.**

This project is in design and we hope to have it completed in 2025. We have a first draft of the design that we are currently reviewing.

**Work with the Environmental Commission to continue educating the community on the importance of protecting our wetlands, natural resources and the Township's wetland protection ordinance, including the installation of new wetland protection and education signage.**

Staff has designed, purchased and received the wetland educational signage to be installed at wetlands located on township property to continue educating on the importance of protecting our wetlands, natural resources and the Township's wetland protection ordinance.

**Oversee and administer the 2024 Green Grants Initiative.**



Eight total grants were awarded for a total of \$19,705. These projects included the following: Printing and distribution of the book Mud Lake (\$1,500), pollinator Garden at the Haslett Public Library (\$300), tree planting and raised bed for trellises/grapes at Haslett Child Development Center (\$1,660), construction of a native garden and an outdoor lending library at Haslett Community Church (\$4,345), rain garden restoration project at the Burcham Drive and Park Lake Road roundabout (\$2,750), Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy tree planting (\$700), construction of a mycology (i.e. mushroom/fungi) garden with native plant diversity and a plant ID sign at Montessori Radmoor School (\$7,450), and invasive species removal at the Pine Creek Condo Association Property (\$1,000).

**Continue active stewardship of parks and land preserves utilizing trained staff and volunteer support through the Meridian Conservation Corp (MCC) Program.**



The Meridian Conservation Corps (MCC) consists of 346 community volunteers who work under the leadership of Stewardship Coordinator, Emma Campbell, and conduct valuable work to improve our natural environment in Township parks and preserves. The MCC logged 632.5 hours in 2024 and 55 Meridian Conservation Corps Stewardship Workday and Educational Events were successfully completed. These events included invasive species removal, native planting and seed sowing, native seed collection, trash cleanup, and education on wetlands and local flora and fauna.

The Meridian Conservation Corps partnered with MI Waterways Stewards for a community wide Red Cedar River Cleanup, collaborating with East Lansing to remove trash from over a mile corridor of the Red Cedar between Meridian and East Lansing. 2024 marked the start of invasive species education and removal as part of this annual event.

**F. FACILITIES, PARKS AND GROUNDS**

**Finish constructing Phase II of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail by July and complete the design of Phase III for bidding and construction in 2025.**

The wildly successful MSU to Lake Lansing Trail gained a new phase in 2024, with the opening of Phase 2. This phase, running from Grand River Avenue, overland to Okemos Road at Gaylord C. Smith Drive, provides the gap connection between Phase 1, which ends at Grand River and Park Lake, to the Interurban Pathway system, which is just north of Gaylord C. Smith. After a ribbon cutting in the fall, we are currently closing out the contract.

As of right now, here is where our finances stand:

Funding Source	Amount	Percentage
Township Pathway Millage	\$75,749.75	9.93%
Ingham County Trails & Parks Millage	\$687,000.00	90.07%
Total	\$762,749.75	100%

We completed the surveying for Phase III in 2024 and began land acquisition and design. This phase will require us to work with CN Railroad to allow access. Working with other agencies is always a challenge, but we have started that coordination now and are confident that we will get to construction in the near future.



**Replace the original standby generator at the Public Safety Building and configure the transfer switches to provide emergency power to the entire building to ensure the Police Department has reliable energy supply during emergencies.**

This project was put out to bid in early 2024 and we are currently waiting for our contractor to apply for their permits before we begin construction on this project.

**Complete the construction and installation of the Township’s new welcome, facility, wayfinding, and park signage. This project includes 56 new signs across the Township, with welcome signs at each gateway into Meridian Township, new facility and wayfinding signs at the Municipal Complex, and the construction of all new park signs.**

We are now at 76 total signs under the contract, with a total contact amount of \$736,820.68:

- 37 Park Signs
- 15 Facility Signs
- 23 Pathway Signs
- 1 Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Sign

The Parks Department has now invested \$400,605 to update all 37 of their signs (some are new signs for parks that did not have a sign). The average cost per park sign is \$10,827.16. The final sign we have to install is the west welcome sign. This sign, currently located in front of the International House of Pancakes on Grand River Avenue, is being moved further west to better outline our boundaries.



We have had difficulty in securing the necessary easements from one property owner and Township staff are currently working on another property to secure the easement for this final sign to be installed in 2025.

**Modernize the interior signage in the Municipal Building and Service Center. Take inventory and establish a plan to modernize the signage in the Public Safety Building and the north and south fire stations.**

The Township worked with Johnson Sign Co. to design new internal signage for the Municipal Building, Public Safety Building and the Service Center. The new internal signs provide more direction and information than previous signs, as well as a fresh update using Township branding standards.

**Complete additional renovations to the Municipal Building and Public Safety Building including new counters, sinks, and faucets, and painting some existing cabinetry.**



Municipal Building Projects: Painted cabinetry and installed new counters, sinks, and faucets in the:

- Mail Room
- Clerk/Treasurer Break Room
- Assessing Conference Room

Public Safety Building Projects:

- Updated the Front Counter in the Lobby
- Painted the Locker Rooms
- Installed New Counters, Sinks, and Faucets in the Locker Rooms
- Painted the Cadet Room
- Updated the Desks and Counters in the Cadet Room

The last update to the Public Safety Building will occur in 2025, with the budgeted expense to replace the last desks that need to be updated and the replacement of the workout equipment in the building.



**Establish a site plan for a trail head for the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail, including amenities and parking, at the recently acquired property at the northwest corner of Okemos Road and Gaylord C Smith Court.**

Staff development a site plan at the recently acquired property at 5280 Okemos Rd. for a trailhead intended for the MSU to Lake Lansing pathway including restrooms, water station, bike repair station, shade seating and parking. Funding that project is now the focus of Staff, with an eye towards a Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant application in 2025.

**Complete the design and begin construction of the park and pathway connections for the newly constructed pathway under the Okemos Road Bridge, including a new accessible kayak launch at Wonch Park.**

Staff completed the design and began construction of the park and pathway connections for the newly constructed pathway under the Okemos Road Bridge and completed the site engineering for a kayak launch to be installed at Wonch Park. Once completed, these will be excellent additions to the burgeoning Red Cedar Water Trail that runs through the region.

**Replace playground in Marshall Park and renovate/replace pavilion in Central Park.**



Installed an inclusive play structure, a native plant wet meadow and resurfaced the parking lot and basketball courts at Marshall Park. This project, which was slowed by poor soil conditions on the property, will have final touches completed in 2025 and an official ribbon cutting, opening the park officially.

The Central Park Pavilion renovation project included a new roof, gutters, ceiling, sliding barn doors, siding, bathroom remodel, and painting the structure. The pavilion, one of the oldest and most used facilities in the Parks’ portfolio, will allow the structure to continue to be a focal point of the community for decades to come.

**G. PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Implement the 2023 Public Safety Township Retention and Recruitment Program.**

All sworn Police Officers and Firefighters received an additional 10% pay increase on January 1, 2024. Throughout the year, the Police Department hired twelve new officers. Eight Officers were sponsored through the Police Academy using a state-funded grant. The Police Department successfully retained all officers who were off of probation throughout the year. The Fire Department hired four new Firefighters in 2024. Four employees received the Township’s recruiting bonus for referring Firefighters and three employees received the bonus for referring Police Officers who were hired by the Departments.

**Provide each officer with additional mobile technology to more efficiently collect evidence and share information with partner agencies while also allowing more time for proactive duties.**

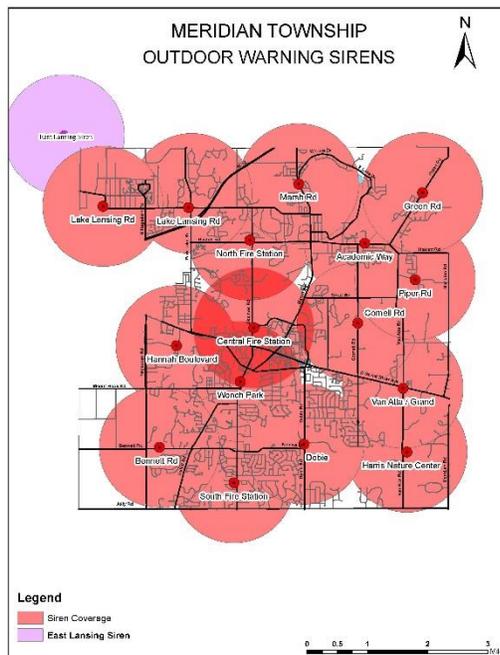
All Officers were assigned iPads which are used daily to collect evidence, conduct training, document reports, assist with field training, allow access to policies and procedures, and many other functions leading to increased productivity all around.

**Provide the sworn employees with new handguns and enhanced pistol optics that improve public and officer safety through increased accuracy and situational awareness during high-stress encounters.**

New Glock 45 MOS handguns and holsters were purchased to replace the previous model with a more modern option. The new handgun uses a caliber of rounds that are cheaper and easier to find. State-of-the-art Trijicon RCR red dot sights were added to each handgun. The sights will increase accuracy and situational awareness during high-stress encounters.

**Because of the severity of the September 2023 thunderstorm, the Township Board made the decision, out of safety for the residents, to install the final four emergency sirens in 2024.**

The final four emergency sirens were installed in Summer 2024. These were installed and tested at the following locations: South of Tihart 4979 Cornell, North Meridian Road Park-5191 Meridian Road, 6191 Green Road, and 6157 Towar Road. This brings near 100% perfect coverage to the Township for our emergency sirens and is a huge improvement for our emergency planning and response efforts.



**Create, design and build updated bunking area for firefighter/paramedics.**

We have made great strides in designing the new addition to Central Fire Station. The addition will result in private dorm rooms for each Firefighter. The current layout involves sleeping quarters separated by half-walls. This addition is essential to Department operations given the gender makeup of the Department.

## H. TOWNSHIP FINANCES

**Maintain a fund balance in the General Fund of at least 25% of annual General Fund expenditures.**

The fund balance on the General Fund is currently budgeted at nearly 50%, taking into account transfers out in 2025 authorized by the Board for pension payments and capital projects.

**Continue our 2017 pledge to voters by investing an additional \$1,500,000 into MERS to help reduce our underfunded pension liability.**

We continue to make additional payments to our unfunded pension liabilities on an annual basis, led by the \$1,500,000 from the Police and Fire millage that was approved by the voters to help pay down this liability. Our contribution in 2025 will exceed \$5.5 million. We await our 2025 actuarial report to get updated information on our funded levels across all funds.

**Complete the audit of our 2023 fiscal year to assure the public that our finances are being effectively managed.**

The 2023 audit was completed and reviewed by the Township Board on June 18, 2024. No major concerns were found and Staff continues to implement any and all recommendations from the auditors to continue to improve our management of public dollars.

**I. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

**Work with Progressive AE Consultants to engage multiple segments of the community to obtain feedback and direction on the new proposed Meridian Community/Senior Center.**

In preparation for the Meridian Senior Center to find a new home once Chippewa Middle School is demolished, we continue to work with Progressive AE Consultants to engage multiple segments of the community to obtain feedback and direction on the new proposed Meridian Community/Senior Center. The Senior/Community Center Task Force has been meeting monthly since September 2024.

**Increase the Meridian Township website's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 levels and fix issues that make it difficult for people with disabilities to use the website. Achieve Level AA (acceptable compliance)**

The Communications Department is still working on achieving Level AA compliance on the Meridian Township website. This is an ongoing project due to the website's frequent updates and the many documents added every week. Since the Township will be required to have all digital assets ADA compliant by April 2027, the Communications Department is working on an accessibility plan in 2025 to ensure that requirement will be achieved.

**Implement a year-long 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of the Meridian Farmers' Market.**

The Communications Department and Parks and Recreation Department implemented a year-long campaign for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Meridian Township Farmers' Market. This campaign included the creation of a new Farmers' Market logo, a community mural painting that was installed at the Marketplace on the Green Pavilion and Central Park Pavilion, merchandise with the new logo that the public can purchase, and a history tent and recipe tent that was available at various markets throughout the year. In 2025, a cookbook with recipes gathered from vendors and community members will also be available for the public.



## **J. RETENTION, RECRUITMENT AND WELL-BEING**

### **Continue to foster teamwork and connection through Township events and gatherings.**

In 2024, we celebrated Administrative Professionals Day with a lunch for all members of this group. The Township Annual Holiday Party was held on December 13, 2024 at High Caliber Karting. David Lester, Utility Worker in the Water Department was recognized with the Archie Virtue Excellence Award, intended to highlight the Staff member whose peers believe is one of the best of the best.

### **Promote creative ideas to spark interest in employees' self-care and activities that promote wellbeing.**

The police and fire recruitment/retention bonus was successful in attracting new talent. The Township is taking a closer look at alternative scheduling to provide better work/life balance, while still meeting all of the needs of the Township residents. We've offered onsite flu clinics and blood drives to promote health and wellness. Working more of these unique ideas into our day to day activities will help us be successful in recruiting and retaining talent in the long run.

### **Continue ongoing employee incentives that add value to the employee experience, retain employees, and serve as an attractive benefit to future hires.**

The Township continues to offer a robust benefits package, including fully paid health care for employees and families and a variety of team building events. Although these benefits and events change on an annual basis, we will continue to monitor the market to stay best in class, retaining the talent we have. Going forward, we will put the focus back on the achievements of our teams and teammates, as they are the fuel that keeps us moving forward.

### **Continue to offer team incentives such as casual wear, flex time and fully paid health care premiums.**

Along with the aforementioned items, the Township also adopted Paid Parental Leave as of January 1, 2024. In just one year, we had nine employees take advantage of this for their families, representing 36 weeks of time for families to spend with their newborn babies. Staff will continue to analyze this issue as the labor market changes to ensure that Township is a prime place to work.

# ACCOUNTING AND BUDGETING



The Department of Accounting and Budgeting is responsible for all aspects of the Township's accounting system. The Department maintains the general ledger, processes outgoing payments through the accounts payable system, approves purchase orders, processes utility billing transactions, prepares and monitors the budget, coordinates the pension board meeting, coordinates grant accounting, and is the coordinating department for the annual financial audit.

## 2024 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **2023 Township Audit**

The annual audit was completed by Yeo & Yeo CPA's & Business Consultants. The audit was given an unmodified, or clean opinion. A single audit was also performed for the 2023 fiscal year and the Township received an unmodified opinion for our federal grants. There were no material weaknesses, no significant deficiencies, and no federal award findings.

### **2025 Budget**

The 2025 budget was presented to the Township Board on September 3, 2024 and approved at the September 17, 2024 Board meeting. The budget is showing a surplus of \$40,254 to the General Fund and the Township will have a strong expected fund balance of \$14.7 million, including the Capital Projects Fund and Pension Stabilization Fund. The projected fund balance, including these subfunds, is approximately 52% of our annual budgeted expenditures of \$28,257,414.

### **\$1.5 Million MERS Payment**

We made our \$1.5 million additional MERS payment in 2024 to help pay down our pension liability, improve our long-term financial position, and fulfill our promise to our voters and retirees under the Police and Fire millage that was adopted.

## TEAM MEMBERS

Vacant, Director  
Eunil Lee, Accountant  
Christina Weber, Bookkeeper  
Vacant, Bookkeeper  
Kimberly Graham, Account Payable Clerk

# ADMINISTRATION



The Township Manager works directly with the Township Board and the various departments of Meridian Township. The Manager is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Township, budget preparation and administration, human resources, public service, public safety, public works, parks and recreation, and community relations. The Department Directors report directly to the Township Manager.

Numerous activities and projects were accomplished in 2024 under the leadership of the Township Manager's office:

- Coordinated the development of the 2025 Township Goals
- Continued to seek opportunities to reduce overall operating costs
- Development and oversight of the Township's 2025 Budget
- Conducted three listening sessions with the Board in the community
- Implemented Public Safety recruitment and retention program
- Continued our collective efforts to foster an environment that is welcoming, diverse and inclusive
- Restarted the Task Force analyzing the potential for a new Meridian Community/Senior Center
- Completed 6.32 miles of local road reconstruction
- Installed final four Outdoor Warning Sirens, providing full coverage for the Township
- Conducted 11 2024 performance reviews
- Coordinated Trustee recruitment process
- Responded to hundreds of citizen inquires
- Oversight of 2023 Audit
- Organized the Annual Township Holiday Party
- Effectively transitioned Township leadership to new Township Manager in early 2025
- Served on Michigan Municipal League's Economic Development & Land Use Subcommittee
- Coordinated purchase and delivery of new fire engines, while continuing litigation on unusable ladder truck
- Worked through solutions to move forward development of the Haslett Village Square Project with Drain Commissioner's Office

## TEAM MEMBERS

Timothy R. Schmitt, AICP, Interim Township Manager  
Dan Opsommer, Deputy Township Manager/Director of Public Works & Engineering  
Michelle Prinz, Executive Assistant

# ASSESSING

The Assessing Department is responsible for establishing assessments of taxable property for the equitable distribution of the property tax burden in accordance with Michigan's General Property Tax Act and other applicable statutes. The Assessing Department's responsibilities include creating the annual assessment roll, maintaining ownership records and property descriptions for taxing purposes, processing Personal Property Statements and personal property exemption requests, and inspecting existing property and new construction for property tax purposes. Taxable values established by the Assessing Department annually are used by the Township Treasurer to produce property tax bills for property within the Township.

## 2024 TOP TEN TAXPAYERS

2024 TOP TEN TAXPAYERS (BY TAXABLE VALUE)					
RANK	TAXPAYER	PROPERTY TYPE	REAL PROPERTY TAXABLE VALUE	PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXABLE VALUE	TOTAL TAXABLE VALUE
1	CONSUMERS ENERGY COMPANY	UTILITY	\$889,389	\$35,072,490	\$35,961,879
2	C150 2929 HANNAH LOFTS, LLC	APARTMENTS	\$23,103,300	\$274,200	\$23,377,500
3	EAST LANSING I, LLC	APARTMENTS	\$16,977,842	\$0	\$16,977,842
4	MERIDIAN MALL, LP	RETAIL	\$15,488,300	\$0	\$15,488,300
5	TEG CENTRAL, LLC	APARTMENTS	\$11,724,294	\$0	\$11,724,294
6	GC CLUB MERIDIAN APARTMENTS LLC	APARTMENTS	\$11,627,700	\$0	\$11,627,700
7	EAST LANSING ATHLETIC CLUB, INC.	HEALTH CLUB	\$11,023,876	\$0	\$11,023,876
8	BRANDYWINE CREEK II, LLC	APARTMENTS	\$10,274,061	\$0	\$10,274,061
9	ACC OP, LLC	APARTMENTS	\$9,601,990	\$0	\$9,601,990
10	OKEMOS POINTE I, LLC	APARTMENTS	\$8,613,659	\$0	\$8,613,659

## 2024 VALUE SUMMARY

PROPERTY CLASS	PARCEL COUNT	SEV	TV
Commercial	668	575,013,500	485,928,041
Industrial	41	5,369,800	4,292,342
Residential	13,307	2,117,179,100	1,721,508,814
Personal	1,615	71,775,800	71,775,800
Exempt	357	0	0
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>15,919</b>	<b>2,549,094,366</b>	<b>2,283,504,997</b>

## 2024 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **Defend Tax Appeals with Vigor**

At the end of 2024, there were eight parcels under appeal in the Entire Tribunal Division of the Michigan Tax Tribunal. Six appeals were resolved during 2024. The taxable value in contention for pending 2024 appeals is just 0.29 of a percent of the Township's tax base. Efforts are being made to determine which of the pending cases can be resolved without a trial and which, if any, may need to be defended at trial.

### **Conduct Annual Assessment/Re-Inspection of Taxable Properties**

The annual re-inspection program continued for 2024, two summer interns joined the Staff part time to assist with the re-inspection program. Assessing Staff reviewed and inspected the 1,958 parcels in 2024. During this process record cards were reviewed for accuracy and photos were updated.

## 2024 BOARD OF REVIEW MEMBERS

Kathy Birchen	Michael Nussdorfer
Xavier Durand-Hollis	Nathan Ide (alternate)
David Lick (alternate)	Sonya Pentecost
Deborah Federau	Lanny Brunette

## TEAM MEMBERS

Ashley Winstead, Assessor  
Jennifer Flower, Appraiser II  
Angela Ryan, Appraiser II  
Danielle Hughes, Assessing Clerk

# CLERK'S OFFICE



## RESPONSIBILITIES

The Clerk's Office responsibilities are largely set by state statute and include, but are not limited to; election administration, Freedom of Information Act coordination, record retention, free notary services to Township residents, fiduciary responsibilities, oaths of offices and ethic statements, Township notices, updates to the Code of Ordinances, and maintaining official Township records.

## ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AND 2024 ELECTIONS IN MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP

The Clerk's Office is also responsible for preparation, publication and posting of all public notices pertaining to elections, performing public accuracy testing on all tabulators, logistics for all polling locations, processing ballots, and transmitting election data to the County Clerk. In 2024, the Clerk's office election voting records included:

### **Meridian Township had four elections in 2024**

<b>Absentee Voting (AV) Turnout:</b>	<b>Sent</b>	<b>Received</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>February Presidential Primary</b>	8,360	7,107	85.01%
<b>May East Lansing Schools</b>	1,128	694	73.94%
<b>August State Primary</b>	11,735	8,677	61.52%
<b>November State General</b>	14,911	14,453	96.93%

**Total Voter Turnout** (Including In-Person, Early Voting, and Absentee Voting):

**February Presidential Primary:** 10,057 – 30.43%

**May East Lansing Schools** (Precincts 18 & 19 only): 783 – 19.88%

**August State Primary:** 11,188 – 33.37%

**November State General:** 25,903 – 75.46%

### **February 2024 Presidential Primary Election:**

MVIC Voter Requests: 200

FPCA Requests: 39

Accessible Ballot Requests: 10

**May 2024 East Lansing Schools Election:**

MVIC Voter Requests: 32  
FPCA Requests: 5  
Accessible Ballot Requests: 0

**August 2024 State Primary Election:**

MVIC Voter Requests: 380  
FPCA Requests: 99  
Accessible Ballot Requests: 9

**November 2024 State General Election:**

MVIC Voter Requests: 1,661  
FPCA Requests: 270  
Accessible Ballot Requests: 7

Qualified Voter File (QVF) Data Records in 2024

**Registered # New Voters: 4,117**

Master Card and Voter Information Cards for new registered voters

**Master Cards: 34,228**

Maintained Master Cards and Voter Identification Cards for registered voters

**Voter Status Changes: 3,034**

Returned mail by Post Office resulting in follow-up with a response card to voters

Records Management of 2024

21,790 total changes requiring data and/or manual updates regarding Individual Master Cards

<b>Total Changes:</b>	<b>21,790</b>
Change:	15,735
Active:	1,091
Cancel:	613
Reject:	1
Challenge:	580
Verify:	1,851
Voting Status:	1,919

**Implementation of New Election Laws**

Proposal 2022-2 implementation began with some of the many new changes including: adding nine additional days of early voting, additional drop box requirements, drop box video monitoring and the Permanent Ballot List. In compliance with the Law, Meridian Township installed four new ballot boxes, all under video surveillance, and increased security where our election equipment is stored. Over 13,000 voters signed up for the Permanent Mail Ballot List in Meridian Township.

Meridian Township completed the twenty-seven total days of early voting for 2024 and brought in some of the highest voter turnout in Ingham County. Pre-processing of absentee ballots took place the day prior to the February, August, and November elections, which resulted in making absentee ballot processing go much smoother on each election day.

## **2024 ELECTION COMMISSION**

Clerk Deborah Guthrie (January-November 2024)  
Clerk Angela Demas (appointed November 2024)  
Supervisor Scott Hendrickson (January-May 2024)  
Trustee Kathy Ann Sundland  
Trustee Peter Trezise (appointed May 2024)

## **TEAM MEMBERS**

Deborah Guthrie, Township Clerk (January-November 2024)  
Angela Demas, Township Clerk (elected November 2024)  
Emily Gordon, Deputy Clerk/Election Administrator  
Stephaney Keroson, Administrative Assistant II  
Rebekah Kelly, Records Technician III

# COMMUNICATIONS



The highest priority of the Communications Department is to provide residents with an increased access to transparency in governance with relevant information in a timely fashion. The Department is responsible for coordinating a strategic and comprehensive effort to inform the public of the Township's goals, plans, activities and events through various multimedia platforms including web, digital, and print.

The Department ensures that all media and communications successfully reaches their intended audience. Other main functions of the Communications Department includes serving as the Local Franchise Authority for nine Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) Channels in Meridian Township, overseeing the operations and production for HOMTV (Government Access Channel), and CAMTV (Public Access Channel), operating a multimedia television internship training program, and providing staff support to the Township's Communications Commission.

## 2024 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Campaign for the Meridian Township Farmers' Market**

The Meridian Township Farmers' Market celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024. As part of this milestone, the Communications Department partnered with the Parks and Recreation Department to implement a year-long campaign. This campaign included the creation of a new Farmers' Market logo (created by Courtland Jenkins), a community mural that was installed at the Marketplace on the Green and Central Park pavilions, merchandise with the new logo, and a history and recipe tent that was available at multiple markets throughout the year.

### **2024 Prime Meridian Magazine**

The Communications Department designed and mailed its annual print publication, the Prime Meridian Magazine. This 16-page publication was sent to all residents in Meridian Township, with additional copies available at the various Township buildings. A digital copy of the magazine was also available on Meridian Township's website. To allow the Communications Department to provide more information to residents, the Township Board approved an increase to a 24-page issue for 2025. The 2025 Prime

Meridian Magazine will be mailed out in mid-February.

### **Able Eyes Virtual Tours**

The Communications Department partnered with Able Eyes to create virtual walk-through tours of the Township's public buildings. Anyone can use these virtual tours, but they were specifically designed to help people with both physical and invisible disabilities such as autism, anxiety, or PTSD. The tours allow people to view Meridian Township's public buildings, leading to decreased anxiety and allowing them to explore a building's layout before their visit. Tours include the Meridian Township Municipal Building, the Meridian Township Service Center, Meridian Township Central Fire Station #91, Harris Nature Center, and Nancy Moore Park.

### **HOMTV's Your Choice 2024 Election Coverage**

For the August 6 primary election, HOMTV requested interviews from 32 candidates across nine races. Of those 32 candidates, 18 replied and were interviewed. The interviews aired on Comcast channel 21 and were made available on HOMTV's YouTube and website. The races that were included are as follows:

- 7th Congressional District
- 73rd District State Representative
- 75th District State Representative
- Ingham County Commissioner (12th, 13th, 14th, and 15th Districts)
- Meridian Township Supervisor
- Meridian Township Clerk
- Meridian Township Treasurer
- Meridian Township Trustee
- Meridian Township Park Commission

### **HOMTV Televised Meeting Addition – Senior/Community Center Task Force**

At their September 17, 2024, regular meeting, the Township Board requested that HOMTV televise meetings for the newly formed Senior/Community Center Task Force. Manager Diehl brought the item before the Communications Commission at their September 25, 2024, regular meeting, and the Commission voted unanimously to approve their request. The first meeting aired in October 2024 and will continue to be televised until April 2025. A webpage for the task force was also created and made available to the public.

### **HOMTV Intern Wins Philo Award**

On September 10, 2024, HOMTV was notified that one of their submissions won Best Documentary in the Student Division for the 2024 Philo Festival of Media Awards. The submission was titled Meridian Makers: Young Environmentalists and was created by Stella Govitz, a HOMTV intern during the summer and fall 2023 semesters.

### **Meridian Township Newsletters**

The Communications Department sent out three different newsletters in 2024: Meridian Happenings, The Playbook, and the Green Gazette. All three of those newsletters were staggered and sent every month. There are 9,430 contacts across all three newsletters, with an average open rate of 56%. The industry average for open rates is 42%, which means Meridian Township is performing above average. In 2025, the Green Gazette will be discontinued due to a personnel change in the current Environmental Programs Coordinator position.

### **Meridian Township Event Marketing**

The Communications Department worked with various departments and organizations to help market events targeted toward Meridian Township residents and community members who visit the area. Some of those 2024 events included:

- Chinese New Year Celebration
- Meridian Historical Village Speaker

Series

- Sustainable Fashion Show
- Celebrate Meridian Festival
- Juneteenth Over Lake Lansing
- Meridian Pride
- Summer Concert Series
- Memorial Day Tribute
- Victorian Tea in the Village
- Friends of Historic Meridian 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party
- Spring and Fall Native Plant Sales
- Spring Recycling Day
- Team Puzzle Competitions
- Summer Green Fair
- Karaoke at the Marketplace
- Senior/Community Center Information Sessions
- National Night Out
- Touch-A-Truck
- Turtle Toast
- Beer in the Barn Fundraising Event
- Pancake Breakfast
- Farmers' Market 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Mural Ribbon Cutting
- Halloween Events (Parks and Recreation, Police)
- Heritage Festival
- Nokomis Holiday Market
- Christmas in the Village
- Fire Prevention Open House

**MEMBERS OF THE CABLE COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION IN 2024**

Lisa Whiting-Dobson, Chair  
Leslie Charles, Vice Chair  
Amol Pavangadkar, Commissioner  
Mike Nevells, Commissioner  
Vacant, Commissioner  
Vacant, Alternate Commissioner  
Vacant, Alternate Commissioner  
Angela Demas, Township Board Liaison

**TEAM MEMBERS**

Samantha Diehl, Communications Manager  
Rachel Stohlin, Marketing & Public Relations Specialist  
Danneisha McDole, Multimedia Production & Operations Specialist

# COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT



Once again, the Community Planning and Development Department is seeing levels of activity that are well above the levels seen after the COVID-19 pandemic. 2024 represented a high water mark in permitting activity, with the highest value of construction permits issued in the past thirty years, lead by the Township’s review of the Okemos Public Schools reconstruction of Chippewa Middle School and a major renovation at the Delta Dental Headquarters. In terms of numbers, Trades permits (plumbing, mechanical, and electrical) also hit near record levels, with then umber and value of permits up substantially from the year before. Code Enforcement activity remains robust, with most of our issues coming through anonymous neighborhood complaints and focused on sidewalk clearing, junk/unlicensed vehicles, and general neighbor complaints. We continue to put pressure on the owners of the Winslow Mobile Home Park to improve the property, something that will continue for years to come. Although there was not a great deal of forward progress in 2024, we did not backslide substantially, which is just as important. Our rental inspection program remains on track, despite loss of and medical issues among Staff in 2024. Our customer service focus continues in the Department through building permits and inspections, site plan review, public engagement and education, code enforcement, and rental housing inspections. The Department works closely with residents, businesses, property owners, and provides Staff support to the following Boards and Commissions:

- ✓ Township Board
- ✓ Planning Commission
- ✓ Zoning Board of Appeals
- ✓ Transportation Commission
- ✓ Brownfield Redevelopment Authority
- ✓ Building Board of Appeals

## 2024 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **Implement the 2023 Update to the Master Plan**

Work has begun on the implementation of the 2023 Master Plan, notably the inclusion of Accessory Dwelling Units throughout residential districts, elimination of minimum house sizes, working with MSU on Van Camp business relocations, and working with Okemos Public Schools on the reconstruction of their buildings. However, the changes in staffing in the Township Manager’s Office in 2024 directly impacted the Community Planning and Economic Development Team’s ability to make further progress. In 2025, barring additional staffing changes, the Planning Teams should have ample staff time to focus on the Code of Ordinances.

**Finalize the Transition to Digital Permitting**

Given the personnel changes in the Manager’s office, this project was put on hold. It is expected to be completed in Q1 of 2025, as the software is in place and training is scheduled to start the transition officially.

**Effectively Administer the Marijuana Licensing and Permitting Processes**

At the beginning of 2024, the Township Board opened up an application window for recreational marijuana in the Township, after having developed the standards of review and process in 2023. The Township received five applications in four of the potential districts. One district did not receive an application. Three of the applications were reviewed and processed as single applications in the district and were ultimately approved by the Township Board. Two of the applications were in the same district and a competitive review was completed by Staff, with a recommendation made to the Township Board. After multiple rounds of discussion, the Township Board issued conditional approval to one of the applicants, giving the Township four conditionally approved licenses.

The applicants then moved through the Special Use permit process, which is still ongoing for one of the locations, who had issues with their traffic study, which was required. Of the remaining three applicants, two locations are opened (Jolly Road and Haslett Road), while the third location is awaiting the start of construction sometime in 2025.

There is no intention for Staff to recommend a new application window and each of the remaining two conditionally approved licensees are currently ‘on the clock’ under the ordinance to open their facility or risk revocation of their conditional approval.

**Pilot the Concept of ‘single-page’ Zoning for Single-Family properties**

Given the personnel changes in the Township Manager’s office, Staff was unable to make progress on this goal. Staff has already started preparing to discuss this in 2025, to substantially streamline the zoning ordinance.

**Continue Modernizing the Zoning Ordinance**

Two major items were worked on in 2024 to further modernize the Zoning Ordinance. First off, the RN zoning district was updated, eliminating confusing and sometimes contradictory references throughout and providing direct standards for the district, rather than referencing other standards. This is a first step towards a complete overhaul of the district, which is one of the more complicated zoning districts currently. The second, and substantially larger update, is work on the parking ordinance. Staff and the Planning Commission have discussed this a number of times and an initial draft is being developed for formal presentation in the early part of 2025. Modernization of the Zoning Ordinance will continue for years, as the majority of the Code still has not been updated since the 1970’s.

**2024 COMMISSION AND BOARD MEMBERS**

\*indicates former member

**PLANNING COMMISSION**

Alisande Shrewsbury, Chair  
Bill McConnell  
James McCurtis

Jeff Romback  
Brandon Brooks  
Christina Snyder, Vice-Chair

Milton Scales\*

Mark Blumer\*

The Planning Commission had a productive year in 2024, beginning the implementation of the Master Plan, that was updated in 2023. There were a total of 15 development projects reviewed by the Planning Commission throughout the year. Public Hearings were held and recommendations made on two rezoning requests and twelve unique Special Use Permit requests, including an request for a three-story self storage facility on Grand River Avenue in which the Commission recommended approval, but the

request was ultimately denied by the Township board. The Planning Commission reviewed and recommended approval on one text amendment, updating the RN district, while beginning work on overhauling the parking ordinance.

### ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Alexia Mansour, Chair

James Koenig, Vice-Chair

Max Benoit

Brandon Brooks, Planning Commission Representative

Peter Trezise, Township Board Representative

James McCurtis\*

Anthony Bennett\*

The Zoning Board of Appeals heard a total of 12 different requests in 2024. They denied two of those requests, one for a lot split of a lot that did not meet width standards and an oversized accessory dwelling unit. Additionally, one more request, regarding wetland setback reductions, is still under review after being tabled in December. The requests in 2024 were decidedly more on the commercial side than previous years, with only three traditional residential requests in the year.

### BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Jeff Theuer, Chair

Tim Dempsey, Township Manager

John Sarver Environmental Commission Representative

James Houthoofd

Dave Ledebuhr, Economic Development Corporation Representative

Kim Thompson\*

Timothy Schmitt, AICP\*

The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority met five times in 2024 and made two major decisions to move two projects forward. They approved the formal reimbursement requests for both Joe's on Jolly and American House of Meridian, allowing tax capture to be reimbursed, along with approving an amendment to the American House Reimbursement Agreement, to clarify some issues that were discovered. The BRA selected an alternative Brownfield consultant, in the event our primary consultant was not available to work on a project due a conflict of interest. Additionally, the BRA discussed the potential the an affordable housing brownfield plan, under the legislation that was adopted early in the year.

### BUILDING BOARD OF APPEALS

Pete Potterpin

Bill Cawood

Todd West

The Building Board of Appeals meets as needed on technical items relating to building construction and code interpretations. They did not meet in 2024.

### TEAM MEMBERS

Timothy R. Schmitt, AICP, Director of Community Planning and Development

John Heckaman, Building Official Emeritus

Debbie Budzynski, Administrative Assistant II

Jaime Barrows, Administrative Assistant II

Ron Rau, Senior Building Inspector

John Hines, Senior Building Inspector

Frank Christmas, Rental Housing Inspector

Zachary Fenner, Senior Code Enforcement Officer

Keith Chapman, Assistant Planner

Brian Shorkey, AICP, Senior Planner

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## 2024 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **Potential Intensity Change Area (PICA) Redevelopment**

The Haslett PICA, designated at the intersections of Haslett/Marsh Roads has moved the needle on redevelopment progressively. The approved redevelopment at 1673 Haslett Road known as the American House Meridian Project, achieved their certificate of occupancy in May 2024. The project includes 132 units for 55+ independent seniors, three stories of residential space only. This is a completely independent living multifamily facility. The site was approved to include mixed-use planned unit development. Approximately 10,000 sq. ft. of non-residential space includes the first floor currently occupied by The Therapy Institute, a long standing business in Haslett. The site will include a pathway connection to the interurban pathway, at the south end of the complex. This is the first of many buildings to be developed on the site. This site is owned as a ten acre parcel developed by Redico.

1655 Haslett Road, referred to as "Haslett Village Square 2.0," completed site demolition for the existing 30,000 square feet of commercial space. This included the old L & L Grocery store that serviced the Haslett area for about 30+ years. The site is owned by SP Holding LLC and is approved for a mixed residential and commercial project. About 300 rental housing and townhouse units will occupy the site. In August of 2024, Township Staff prepared to approve the developer to begin vertical construction on the site. Unfortunately, the Ingham County Drain Office has delayed the advancement of construction on the site, requiring the developer to redirect a private drain on the site to move most of the sites storm water to the Township's land preserve to the west of the site. The Ingham County Road Department has also made comments much later in the approval process than what is typical. Township Staff are hopeful the developer will be granted the approvals necessary to start Phase 1 construction in reasonable time.

The area commonly referred to as "Village of Okemos" has hit a delay that has caused the project to be indefinitely paused. There are no known timelines for the previously approved two-block redevelopment at Hamilton and Okemos Road. With the new Township Manager, a discussion with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) regarding next steps will need to occur within the first quarter of the year. To have the site developed, the community must be willing to invest where it makes the most financially feasible sense. Since the announced delay, Township Staff have met with the sites representatives to discuss new options. Discussions revolve around new proposed developments, public infrastructure improvements, and current available funding sources. Until a pathway is determined, Staff are working with the property owners to bring a new development to the community.

## **Community Survey**

The 2024 Community Survey was conducted out of the Economic Development Department. This is the second time this Department has facilitated the Community Survey. Our mission is to work with the Board to have a consulting team create an equitable survey to help staff understand the general public needs and desires. The survey got off to a later start than typical, with the analysis going out over the summer instead of in the early spring. A large portion of this survey focused on the Senior/Community Center proposal. Conditions in the community have not changed monumentally compared with 2021. Many factors like housing affordability, downtown redevelopment, recreational space, current status of the Mall, all remain key elements to the community. Cultural celebrations and promotions are also key elements that residents hope to see expanded.

## **New Housing**

Completed residential homes can be found in the Copper Creek subdivision off Haslett and Green Road. Approved for 98 homes, the development is complete and there are limited plots available. Silverstone is another residential single-family site with approved 150 single-family home developments. Construction began in the fall of 2024 off of Bennett near Hulett Road. These two subdivisions are brought to us by Mayberry Homes, with the first 25 plots under construction right now. Newton Place is a mixed-use project that will combine residential use with a small commercial gym at Newton Road and Saginaw Highway. Newton Pointe is a 239-unit development, with phase one the 100-unit apartment building that is currently open. There are several available units in the multifamily building for rent at this new complex. Finally, Grand Reserve, the approved 115-unit missing middle-density development off of Central Park Drive and Grand River is underway. The project brought to us by DTN Property Management. The development began construction in the fall of 2024, collaborating with Mayberry on the build of the units. As weather permits the first of several units will be open in 2025.

## **New Businesses**

Meridian also welcomed 14 new businesses, and many elected to forego a ribbon-cutting or promotional event this year. These services we offer free of charge to any new or expanding business in the Township. The wonderful establishments to open in Meridian Township include:

- Pins and Pints- renovated the City Limits East Lansing Bowling Alley at 2120 E Saginaw Highway. The renovated space has been open since summer 2024. Pins and Pints call the updated space a “new chapter in our story”. The existing space has been expanded to include an exterior patio. The Hagan family bought the site and have worked tirelessly to take the old City Limits facility to new heights.
- Moka & Co- brought to Meridian Township the first fine Turkish coffee house at 4738 Central Park Drive. This unique coffee house provides lite snacks, sweets, and a variety of delicate coffees at a reasonable price. This location previously was home to the Township’s local Panera Bread. Panera relocated over 5 years ago and the corner suite at Central Park and Grand River has been vacant since. The location is a new hotspot for young professionals, and connoisseurs of Turkish delights.
- Consumers Credit Union- welcomed their second location in the Lansing region. It was exciting for our teams as the project was initially announced in 2022. With the fluctuations in the market related to development, the project lagged on its initial timeline. Personal and commercial banking locations have changed their model significantly, in turn, new banking facilities are typically small averaging less than 5,000 square feet. The site has open seating, inviting ambiance, and access to several staff, with fewer walls, doors, and areas that are restricted to the client. This change in banking highlights the drastic change in business we have experienced in the last two decades.
- White Pine Sotherby’s International Realty- was a surprise opening. This business came quickly to the Township and was located in a vacant commercial office at 2124 Hamilton Road. The site

had been under discussion for redevelopment when a local realtor decided this was the place for a new office.

Other establishments to grace Meridian Township with their services and products:

Jars (Cannabis), Escapes Unlocked, Fahey Schultz office expansion, Becky Beachaine Kulka relocation, Baryames Relocation, Chateau Coffee, Pepperidge Farm, Uptowne Cheapskate, Herbana (Cannabis), Crunch Fitness Expansion, Planet Fitness expansion, Chtoura Grill Opening, Okemos Meijer Renovation, Char's Jerk Chicken.

### **DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

Thomas Stanko, Chair  
Angela Wright, Vice-Chair  
Peter Campbell, Secretary/Treasurer  
Scott Hendrickson, Township Supervisor

Bill Cawood  
Renee Korrey  
Don Romain  
Ron Sdao

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

Kim Thompson, Chair  
Adam Carlson, Vice-Chair  
Dave Ledebuhr, Secretary  
Phil Deschaine, Township Treasurer, Ex-Officio  
Kathy Sundland, Township Board Liaison

Shawn Dunham  
David Fosdick  
Sai Turlapati

### **CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY**

Bruce Peffers, Chair  
Barry Goetz, Vice-Chair  
Scott Hendrickson, Township Supervisor

Chris Nugent  
Adam Hodges  
Chris Rigterink

### **TEAM MEMBERS**

Amber Clark, Economic Development & Neighborhoods Director  
Michelle Prinz, Executive Assistant

# FIRE/EMS



*Serving our Community with Pride, Integrity and Professionalism since 1929.*

On behalf of the dedicated men and women of the Meridian Township Fire Department, I am pleased to present the 2024 Annual Report. The report provides an in-depth look at department operations for the 2024 calendar year and includes system structure, personnel assignments, response data, and other notable areas of interest.

We are proud to continue serving our community with the utmost professionalism and readiness in emergency response.

Call volume for the department increased slightly in 2024 as the department responded to 6,361 calls for service. Emergency medical services (EMS) represented 86% of the requests for service responses in 2024.

The department's fleet was also updated in 2024 with the replacement of a pumper and fire marshal vehicle. Our 2023 ladder truck was taken out of service due to electrical problems, and litigation was filed for the vehicle's repair and/or replacement.

We maintained our staffing levels with four new hires to cover two resignations and two additional staff added to our operation. We hired two firefighter/paramedics and two firefighter/EMTs who passed their National Registry Paramedic test in the fall of 2024. We are happy to report we are fully staffed as of January 2025.

Our community engagement in 2024 was successful as we worked with the community and local schools doing public education and smoke detector programs. This was accomplished via station tours and fire safety programs in schools. We also held our annual Open House in October during National Fire Prevention Month. Additionally we rolled out our HEART Safe Community program which allows businesses to purchase an AED at a discounted rate.

We continued to foster strong relationships with our neighboring fire departments through planning, training, and emergency response. Over the past year, we trained and responded with fire departments from East Lansing, Delhi Township, Mason, NIESA, Lansing Township, Bath, and Lansing. We look forward to continued cooperation with these outstanding departments as we work to make all our communities safer places to live, work, and play.

As Fire Chief, I am honored to lead Meridian Township Fire Department. I would like to thank all the members of the department for their commitment and professionalism as they serve the Meridian Township community. I would also like to thank Interim Manager Tim Schmidt as well as the other

Township staff, elected officials, and boards for their support over the past year. We could not accomplish what we do without their support. Finally, we would be remiss not to acknowledge our community. We are blessed to have incredibly strong support from the community, and we do not take this support for granted.

Fire Chief Michael Hamel

## OUR MISSION

Each year the Fire Department evaluates its programs and service delivery models to ensure cost effectiveness and efficiency, but more importantly, to ensure it can meet the emergency service, prevention and risk-reduction needs of the Township.

- Our mission is to provide efficient, dependable and professional services to the residents of Meridian Township.
- Our values are to educate and provide caring, compassionate service with excellence and dignity.
- Our vision is to exceed the expectations of the community by proactively responding to the established priorities and needs.

The Meridian Township Fire Department (MTFD) is a full-service organization providing fire, rescue and emergency medical services to a community of 44,935 residents across 32 square miles. Three stations are strategically located to provide timely responses to residents and visitors alike. Three dual-paramedic staffed advanced life support ambulances deliver emergency medical care at the highest pre-hospital level. The Department also provides fire prevention, code enforcement, plan review and fire safety related programming. The Department is an active member of the Metro-Lansing Technical Rescue and Hazardous Materials Teams. These teams respond to high-risk, low-frequency incidents involving confined spaces, trenches, bodies of water, high/low angle rescues, chemical/gas releases and structural collapses. Each department member is committed to serving the community with excellence through the delivery of outstanding customer service.

### **Fire Prevention**

The Fire Marshal is dedicated to the goal of reducing the number and impact of fire-related incidents within the Township of Meridian. This is accomplished through a comprehensive fire inspection program, plan review, testing of new construction, and fire protection systems, and investigation of all fires that occur within the Township. The Fire Marshal is also invested and involved in the fire and life safety education programs that are provided by the department.

Fire inspections are conducted in businesses on an annual basis. Scheduling is based on the risk posed by the building's occupants or operation (for example, a restaurant or theater has a greater inherent risk than a physician's office). These inspections are based on adopted codes and Township ordinances. In 2022, we started the process of identifying buildings/occupancies and inspection schedules to develop a plan for completing inspections based on high, medium, and low risk occupancies according to national standards and best practices. This process was continued in 2024. The process consists of the following steps:

1. Use the Apartment Rental Inspection List from the Building Department as our top priority for high risk inspection scheduling. This allows us to tackle several higher concentration life safety occupancies in quick order. The number of units and buildings per complex varies greatly. For scheduling purposes, we use the inspection time estimates list and adjust as needed. In an effort to reduce the amount of time needed to complete inspections, we are working on a plan to use our operations staff who have required NFPA Inspector 1 certifications.
2. Conduct a definitive Community Risk Assessment (CRA). Conducting a CRA to identify all commercial buildings and occupancies within Meridian Township establishes our master list of

buildings requiring inspections. Once that list is developed, it can then be applied to the NFPA 1730 Standard on Organization and Deployment of Fire Prevention Inspection and Code Enforcement, Plan Review, Investigation, and Public Education Operations. Through this document, these buildings can be categorized into an improved scheduling matrix for completing inspections, as well as estimate time and personnel requirements needed to keep the overall inspection schedule on target.

3. Initiate an Engine Company Inspection Program (ECIP). With the completion of the CRA, a significant portion of buildings and occupancies identified as low risk can be assigned to the ECIP for completion in their normally scheduled rotation (three years). With personnel investment it can be launched in conjunction with the other tasks as mentioned above.

### **2024 Fire Prevention Inspections**

- Total Inspections Conducted: 131
- Building Inspections: 56
- Plan Reviews: 77
- Fire Alarm Inspections: 20
- Fire Suppression Inspections: 23
- Residential Smoke Alarm Inspections/Installations: 31
- Food Trucks: 2
- Fire Investigations: 4

*Note from Fire Marshal Millerov:* 2024 had the lowest number of fire loss incidents (4) and the lowest total fire loss dollars (\$155K) in the past 11 years.

### **Training**

As a paramedic/firefighter, there is a tremendous amount of training required to maintain certifications, licensure, and job efficiency. The Training Chief is responsible for coordinating and providing this training. In 2024 Training Chief Pennell worked extremely hard to increase our ability to function at higher aptitudes by ensuring our annual training plan encompassed current required training along with new training. Additionally, the department's adjunct instructors utilized their expertise to advance our knowledge base.

All Meridian Township firefighters are state-certified Firefighter I, II, and state-licensed paramedics. Paramedics must earn 45 continuing education credits and renew their licenses every three years. We require each paramedic to be certified in Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) and Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS). The initial certification courses are 24 hours each followed by eight hours of recertification every two years. Firefighters are held to state-mandated standards in highly technical areas, each with their associated training requirements. Some areas of training include firefighting tactics and strategy, incident command, emergency driving, hazardous materials, ice and water rescue, extrication, confined space operations, and medical care for the sick and injured.

Our fire officers carry Fire Officer I, II, and III certifications based on rank. These courses allow the officer to learn fire ground and day-to-day leadership skills.

Last year the Training Division spent many hours on live fire training at Lansing Community College. This training provided simulated fire conditions for firefighters to practice search and rescue, ventilations, hose advancement, building construction, forcible entry, and command and control of the fire scene in a live fire scenario.

Continuing to keep Meridian Township safe, in 2024 the Training Division trained parks and police staff in CPR & First Aid and provided continuing education. Additionally, all Meridian Township employees received training on how to use our new AEDs.

### Training Hours in 2024:

- Fire Training: 2646 hours
- EMS Training: 928 hours

### Fire Operations

The addition of two full-time firefighter positions in 2024 brought us closer to meeting the National Fire Protection Association’s standards for staffing (NFPA 1710), enhancing the quality of service we provide to the community.

Fire Operations is composed of shift operations consisting of individual firefighting and EMS companies which perform the day-to-day public safety activities for Meridian Township. The members that comprise Operations are divided into two shifts and work a 24-hour on/24-hour off/24-hour on/72-hour off shift. A Battalion Chief fulfills the role of Shift Commander and supervises each shift. The Shift Commanders handle daily staffing issues and the scheduling of training and other activities for their shift. They also act as the liaison between the shift and Fire Administration. The Battalion Chiefs are responsible for command and control of most emergency incidents in the Township.

The Township’s fire district is geographically divided into three districts each containing one fire station. The three fire stations are strategically located to support quicker response. Each station houses an ambulance, fire pumper, and one station also houses our ladder truck.

Each individual fire company is made up of a Company Officer (usually a Lieutenant) who is responsible for the supervision and safety of the company members assigned to them. The Company Officer is also responsible for all reports and communications relating to the operation of their company.

2024 demonstrated once again that Meridian Township Fire Department did more than respond to emergency medical calls and residential structure fires. We are an all-hazards fire department that also responds to significant motor vehicle accidents and a variety of rescues and fires that present unusual hazards for the community. While responding to emergencies is the priority of the Operations Division, personnel also spend their time completing required training classes, conducting station tours for the public, maintaining the stations’ apparatus and equipment, and performing annual inspections.

In 2024, our emergency response calls increased slightly to 6,361 total calls. Below is a table showing total fire and EMS incidents over a ten-year period from 2015-2024 (Fig. 1). Figure 2 lists mutual aid and automatic aid incidents. Mutual aid is when we respond to calls (primarily medical calls) in another jurisdiction. Automatic aid is an automatic response for structure fires based on an agreement with a specific jurisdiction (our auto aid agreements are with East Lansing Fire Department and NIESA). Figure 3 contains a comparison of monthly calls in 2023 and 2024.

Figure 1

10 Year Incident Count			
Year	Fire Incident	EMS Incident	Total Incident
2015	623	3,884	4,507
2016	925	4,028	4,953
2017	1,181	3,988	5,169
2018	991	4,226	5,217
2019	1,217	4,220	5,437
2020	875	4,031	4,906
2021	963	4,627	5,590

2022	795	5,286	6,081
2023	883	5,424	6,307
2024	878	5,483	6,361

Figure 2

<b>Mutual and Automatic Aid</b>	
Mutual Aid	352
Auto Aid (structure fires)	49
<b>Total Aid</b>	<b>401</b>

Figure 3

<b>EMS Calls by Month</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>January</b>	516	528
<b>February</b>	465	477
<b>March</b>	537	523
<b>April</b>	520	501
<b>May</b>	532	551
<b>June</b>	513	553
<b>July</b>	550	501
<b>August</b>	577	540
<b>September</b>	531	566
<b>October</b>	584	580
<b>November</b>	494	502
<b>December</b>	488	539

## 2024 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **Outdoor Warning Sirens**

In 2024, Meridian Township Fire Department completed our multiyear project to install emergency warning sirens throughout the Township to alert residents to severe weather and other emergencies. In early 2024, the Township Board voted to finish installing the final four sirens in 2024 instead of one siren per year through 2027. As of August 2024, the final four sirens have been installed and are operational.

### **Fire Department Safety Equipment**

Over the past five years, we have been diligent in replacing equipment specified in our replacement schedule. The five-year plan is updated annually and includes replacement schedules supporting NFPA 1971 and MIOSHA Part 74 requirements. In 2024, we replaced the following pieces of equipment that failed to function, broke, or reached their life expectancy.

- Four Gas Monitor
- Structural Fire Gear
- Saws
- Fire Boots
- High Vis Safety Reflective Response Coats
- AVI Plate Carriers, Plates, and Helmets
- Personal Protective Hoods (carcinogen reducing exposure)
- Gloves
- SCBAs
- Cascade SCBA Cylinder Fill Station

## **Department Policies**

In 2023, a goal was set to update our outdated Standard Operating Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures. Four operational polices were updated in 2024.

- Wildland Fires PPE
- SCBA Operational Inspection and Donning
- Rapid Intervention Team
- Carbon Monoxide Incidents

## **Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)**

The Township Board approved the 2023 Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). This plan outlines each Township department's roles and responsibilities during emergencies. Meridian Township's COOP plan consists of the Basic Plan, a comprehensive 30-page document that covers the entire Township, along with the COOP Functional Annex and Support Plan for each department. In 2023 the preliminary department meetings were held prior to the Town Hall renovation. This consisted of training on the document and instructions on moving forward to implement the rest of the plan. Each department was given a copy of the COOP Functional Annex and COOP Support Plan. In 2024 we continued to work on educating the departments on the COOP and restructured the forms for more practical use. Our target date to complete COOP planning which will involve training and practice exercises is the end of 2025.

## **Grants**

In 2024, the Department received a FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant for \$65,000 to replace our 24-year old Cascade fill station. This device is used to fill the cylinders of our Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), so we can enter an immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH) atmosphere, such as a fire, and protect our lungs and bodies from exposure.

## **Health and Wellness**

In 2024, we formed a firefighter health and wellness committee with the goal to improve firefighter health and quality of life, reduce lost work time, workers' compensation and disability, and provide resources for mental health issues due to stress and trauma. Since 1989, 43% of firefighter line of duty deaths have been cardiac-related. We have written a grant for high-level physicals (stress test, coronary artery calcium scan, comprehensive blood panel, all-organ ultrasound, pulmonary function test, etc.) for each employee. Firefighters also have a 34% higher likelihood of cancer due to the nature of the job. When entering a structure on fire we are exposed to over 100 carcinogens. We have put protection measures in place, but we do still absorb carcinogens through the skin. In November, a medical team was hired to perform a series of ultrasounds of organs from the chin to reproductive area. 30 firefighters took part in the ultrasound testing. Additionally, we have written a grant for high-level physicals (stress test, comprehensive blood panel, all-organ ultrasound, pulmonary function test, etc.) for each employee.

## **Future**

As we work to improve our department for the health, wellness and safety of our firefighters and our residents, we have continually examined our response procedures, staffing and response times. In early 2024, we entered into discussions with the Township Manager and HR Director regarding adding six additional firefighters over the next three to five years.

This increase is based on national best practices, threat and risk, and NFPA 1710 (staffing recommendations). Additionally, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) two-in /two-out rule is a safety requirement for firefighters fighting interior structural fires. The rule requires that at least two firefighters are stationed outside the building while two firefighters are inside the structure fire. This is required any time firefighters enter an immediately dangerous to life or health (IDLH) atmosphere.

NFPA 1710 recommends that the first alarm for a structure fire should have a minimum of 16 firefighters on scene. The first arriving unit should be on scene within four minutes and the remaining units to reach 16 firefighters should be on scene within eight minutes. Our current daily staffing model allows us to

have an average of eight firefighters on scene as long as all staff are in house and not on other emergencies. In 2019, we entered into an agreement with East Lansing Fire Department for automatic aid on all structure fires in Meridian Township and East Lansing plus MSU campus. This allowed us to increase the number of firefighters on scene of a structure fire to an average of 13.

In 2010, the fire department was forced to eliminate nine full-time positions in operations and administration in the aftermath of the 2008 recession. In 2024, we returned to our 2010 staffing level in operations by adding two firefighter positions in 2018, 2022, and 2024 to bring the operations staff to 36. Since 2010 our population has increased from 39,727 to 43,916, and our call volume has increased by 57% (4078 to 6400 emergencies).

Our goal for the past five years has been to increase our staffing to support more than our minimum staffing requirement of seven: three ambulances (one at each station with two personnel each) and one battalion chief. According to national standards based on call volume and threat and risk assessment, we should staff three ambulances (one at each station with two personnel each) and two ALS engines (one at Central Fire Station and one at South Fire Station) to support a safe response.

Fire departments of all sizes and locations are facing higher expectations for their service delivery, including emergency medical services (EMS), active shooter response, community risk reduction, and more. Additionally, longer response times and relying on mutual aid has become the norm. Adequate staffing levels help offset the strain caused by an increase in call volume; when a fire department is understaffed, it significantly decreases morale due to greater workload, stress, and concerns about safety, ultimately impacting firefighter well-being and job satisfaction.

The ideal ratio of firefighters to the population can vary depending on factors such as the size of the area being covered, the density of the population, emergency call volume, and the level of threat and risk within the response area. However, a commonly recommended ratio is around 1 firefighter per 1,000 to 1,200 people. Meridian Township Fire Department's current ratio is .81 (36 in operations divided by 44) per 1,000 residents.

We will continue exploring the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grant (SAFER) for additional staffing needs. If awarded, this grant will pay 100% of a firefighter's salary and fringe benefits for three years.

Meridian Township Fire Department is in a position to continue providing our residents and visitors with a high level of medical treatment/transport and fire suppression services. While the Township's great qualities will attract new residents, the department will be required to adapt accordingly.

## MTFD TEAM

### **Fire Chief**

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Michael Hamel

### **Administration**

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Christine Cassidy, Admin Asst. II

Tavis Millerov, Fire Marshal

Brian Pennell, Training/EMS Chief

### **Battalion Chiefs**

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Ryan Campbell

Rudy Gonzales

### **Captains**

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Chris Johnson

Al Diaz

Jeff Rommeck

**Lieutenants**

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John McDermott	Jason Hillard
TJ Booms	Bob Caretti
RJ Lewis	Sam Weber
Eddie Dennis	

**Firefighters**

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Corey Pant	Steven Garelik
Amanda Arnett	Andrew Cummins
Erik Sellen	Chuck Malesko
Nate Lafayette	Emma Brown
Benjamin Haviland	Tony Kozlowski
Gavin Ulman	Don Carr
Tyler McNalley	Carson Nitz
Dustin Farhat	Andrew Zaleski
Nicholas Irving	Joshua Hengesbach (hired in 2024)
Joseph Harrison	Leslie Ireland (hired in 2024)
Steven Schott	Max Slabbekoorn (hired in 2024)
Michael Weber	Ben Conners (hired in 2024)

# MERIDIAN Cares Making a Difference

Meridian Cares, the Township's Human Services program, aims to strengthen the community safety net for Township residents facing financial hardship. The emergency needs fund provides one-time yearly assistance to these households and aims to prevent them from facing further crises such as eviction or utility shut-off. These households are provided with additional resources and referrals as needed. This emergency needs account is funded 100% by donations and 100% of those donations assist Meridian Township residents who are in emergency need.

In 2024, Meridian Cares assisted 123 families with a total of \$51,088.69 in emergency financial assistance, averaging \$415.00 per family. Of the 123 families, 92 were assisted with rental payments to avoid eviction and 31 were assisted to prevent electricity shut off.

218 discounted Redi-Ride passes were provided to the community. The Township receives a 50% discount on these passes from Capital Area Transportation Authority.



Additional ways that Human Services worked with the Township's Community Resources Commissions (CRC) in 2024 includes:

- Coordinated with Operation Gratitude to give out 26 bags of goodies to local Seniors in our community.
- Participated in several community events including Protect the Pack, #SockoutSuicide, Celebrate Meridian, MTPD Halloween Event, Recycling events and more.
- Participated in the Santas First Responder's event and provided food items for hundreds of residents to take home to help them prepare their donated venison.
- Collected information and coordinated sponsorships for 285 families that requested Thanksgiving food assistance and 287 families that requested Holiday food assistance.
- Coordinated and held a Community Resource Connection in the Town Hall with over 70 people representing 40 organizations, all to learn more about how we can help our community.
- Collaborated with Okemos Community Church to hold a coat drive. 76 families were served (adults and children). 236 Coats, 30 pairs of snow pants and 78 pairs of boots were given to local families in need through the Okemos Food Pantry.
- Coordinated the Michigan Sparrow Mobile Health Clinic coming to local apartment complexes to assist in bringing free health services to local families.
- Worked in collaboration with Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs of Haslett and Okemos to support a Back-to-School project for Meridian Township schools. Each school was given a combination of high priority school supplies and snacks that they requested.

***"From the bottom of my heart thank you so much for saving my boys and I from a very difficult stressful situation right before Christmas"-local resident who used the Emergency Needs Fund.***

# HUMAN RESOURCES



## 2024 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **Retention, Recruitment, and Employee Wellbeing**

Creating the right balance for employees to thrive at the Township is imperative in our employment experience. As we welcome new employees and celebrate those already on our Team, we seek out and implement programs in order to demonstrate our dedication in supporting the wellbeing of each individual. We look forward to the continued offering of regular interactive opportunities during the year for the Township team to gather and connect, such as events, like team picnics, holiday parties, and enrichment and educational sessions on a number of topics. In 2024, we processed well over 200 employee traffic items, including selection, hire and onboarding, promotions, transfers, departures/retirements, and numerous temporary, seasonal, cadet, and election worker positions. As of the start of this year, we are working to fill numerous open permanent Township positions, work on promotional processes as planned retirements yield new vacancies, and will continue to plan ahead with succession planning for planning for their retirement in coming years.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

In our commitment to DEI, Human Resources continues to refine and update policies, training, and other employment activities to reflect our vision of promoting and supporting a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce. We work to ensure our Department's view operations through the lens of belonging, equity, and access, which also applies to our Township personnel policy manual, Board policy manual, employee inclusion events, and upcoming training opportunities. This year, we will commence negotiations with our Supervisory Professionals Union, whose current contract runs through the end of this year.

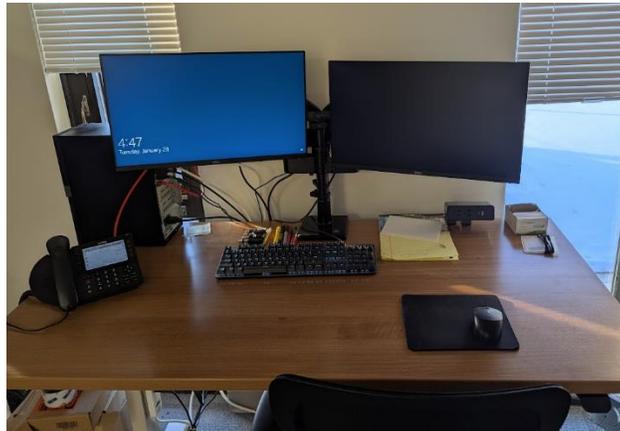
### **Employee Health Insurance Benefits**

Our Township team works in partnership with Gallagher Healthcare Benefits Consultants, to closely monitor actual expenses versus maximum expected costs throughout the benefit year and will continue to do so in order to ensure maximum cost effectiveness. The self-insured Blue Care Network (BCN) product has provided savings to the Township even with rising healthcare costs. The Township calculations went over the PA 152 Hard Cap in 2025, however the Board approved covering the cost so there would again be no employee premium cost sharing for BCN HMO health insurance coverage in 2025. Further discussions are pending regarding an opportunity for a Health Savings Account (HSA) deposit for those employees who take the Township's HMO coverage. There is an employee premium cost sharing for the alternative option for Blue Cross Blue Shield Michigan PPO insurance.

## TEAM MEMBERS

Abigail Tithof, Human Resources Director  
Carol Hasse, Human Resources Administrator  
Michelle Prinz, Executive Assistant

# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



In 2024, most Information Technology activities continued to revolve around projects implemented in conjunction with our third-party consultant, Brightline IT. This included new backup systems for Township local and cloud resources. These projects significantly enhanced the Township's business continuity posture across the entire operation. Additionally, IT assisted a wide variety of our internal departments and divisions with technology enhancements related to their specific functions. Most of these initiatives are detailed later in this report.

## METHODOLOGY FOR OPERATIONAL IMPERATIVES

1. Highest priority is given to core infrastructure stability and keeping existing services and resources operating at optimum performance and availability.
2. Resolution of emergent end-user issues related to technology is an important function that all Department personnel spend a significant time addressing.
3. Training initiatives are presented in cases where staff resources are recognized to be deficient in the use of available technology or additional expertise would increase employee productivity and/or enhance overall data security.
4. Remaining resources are committed to replacing technology that is still functioning, but aging, and at end of useful life.

## 2024 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

The Department's primary goal continues to be to support Township Board established Goals to the greatest extent possible. While successful in this endeavor, many other new important initiatives were prominent throughout the year. These included, but were not limited to the following:

### **Upgrades to Backup Infrastructure**

The Technology Team continued work with our third-party consultant, Brightline IT to implement hardware, software, and design improvements to the backup systems utilized across the entire organization.

### **Network Firewall & Switching Infrastructure**

The Technology Team worked with Brightline to enhance switch and firewalls configurations. Additional Palo Alto Firewall configuration and traffic segmentation will continue throughout 2025.

### **Training Initiatives for all Employees**

IT Staff utilizes third-party vendors to provide training to all end users. Special attention continues to focus on proper response to phishing, malware, and social engineering, and then IT follows up with test events that assess our overall responses. Additionally, IT coordinates classes, videos, sample documents,

and other educational materials on a variety of topics such as BS&A Utility Billing, Cash Receipting, Accounts Payable, General Ledger, Teams, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Acrobat, and other technology-based resources.

### **Cloud Services Security**

The IT Department continues work with Brightline to enhance security of the Township's cloud-based services. Most of the 2024 initiatives revolved around the projects to improve security and integrity for data backup systems.

### **Evaluation of Cellular Services**

IT staff worked with AT&T to conclude our evaluation the FirstNet service. Overall, it was determined that for our region and the current configuration, the FirstNet service causes more complications than it resolves when the service is compared to Verizon's Wireless Priority Service. Any existing FirstNet services will be converted to Verizon Wireless Priority Services as staff resources allow.

### **Continued Expansion of Cloud-Based Assets.**

IT staff worked with end user Departments to increase utilization of OneDrive, SharePoint, Teams, and other applications to support virtual operations. These activities will continue throughout all of 2025.

### **Termination of Logicalis Contract for Third-Party Helpdesk**

Technical issues with the connection between the Township system and the provider were more common throughout the first half of 2024. Moreover, virtually all after hours calls ended up being forwarded to the Director for response. As a result of poor fit, the service was terminated in June. The IT Team has returned to using the Freshdesk system utilized prior to the Logicalis contract.

### **Enhanced Relationships with Third Party Network Engineering Services**

IT staff worked with Brightline, Avalon, CDW-G, Logicalis, Millennia, and other consulting services to expand knowledge of Network Technicians as they perform activities related to Telephone, Desktop, Server, and Network improvements undertaken throughout all of 2024.

### **IPads Deployed to all Police Sworn Personnel**

The IT team worked with the Police Department to procure and deploy iPad devices to all sworn Police personnel. Police Command Staff maintains administrative rights over the 42 new mobile devices. The hardware was paid for with forfeiture funds, and General Fund is paying for mobile service on several of the devices to facilitate Internet connectivity away from police cars.

### **Reconfiguration of Invoice Cloud and BS&A to Accept Online Building Permits**

The IT team worked with the Department of Community Planning & Development to streamline technical issues with the online permitting process.

### **Assisted in Election Operations**

The IT team worked with the Clerk's Office to set up user accounts for training of temporary election workers, maintenance of precinct laptops, transfer of election related files, and general support of election activities for three Township wide election throughout the year. Two new cameras were set up to monitor election activities at various locations throughout the Township.

### **Assisted in the Evaluation of and Transition to Fifth Third Bank**

The IT team worked with the Treasurer, Accounting, and HR office to transition to Fifth Third Bank.

### **Conversion from Verizon Fleet to Verizon Reveal Data Collection System**

The IT team worked with the Department of Public Works to convert our fleet over to the Verizon Reveal system. The previously deployed Verizon Fleet System was scheduled for shut down on December 31, 2024. Conversion activities will continue into 2025 when the Reveal system will be once again handing off vehicle mileage for maintenance use in the Cartograph system.

### **Addition of Electronic Plan Review to Further Facilitate Online Building Permits**

The IT team worked with the Department of Community Planning & Development to contract with E-Plan Soft for a hosted service to add Electronic Plan review to the building permit process.

### **Routine Items**

The Department responded to over 1,000 requests for service throughout the year, including security, application, file, print, backup, telephone, and other technology services. Activities spanned seven separate facilities, over 1,000 network nodes, and over 200 end-users.

## **TEAM MEMBERS**

Stephen Gebes, Director of Information Technology  
Kristen Cole, Network Technician  
Kamic Jok, Network Technician

# PARKS AND RECREATION



## 2024 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **Parks and Pathway Maintenance**

The Department of Public Works (DPW) Utility Workers assigned to the Parks & Recreation Department maintain 30 parks, 25 land preserves and over 85 miles of pedestrian-bicycle pathways. Ongoing maintenance each year includes: mowing, tree trimming and cleaning up downed trees from storms, emptying park trash, plowing and salting parking lots, sidewalks and pathways, collecting and disposing of residents' Christmas trees, mulching garden beds, maintaining ball fields, trail maintenance, playground maintenance, dog park maintenance, general park clean-up, pavilion maintenance and cleaning, cleaning and maintaining park restrooms, watering Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and Meridian Garden Club flower beds in the summer, event set-up and take down, repairing pathways, maintaining irrigation at various locations, installing new bricks in the Harris Nature Center (HNC) Patio, raising and lowering flags when necessary and maintaining the new ice rink on a daily basis during the winter months.

Special Park Maintenance Projects in 2024 included:

- Constructed a greenhouse for the Land Preservation program
- Replaced the split rail fence in the overflow parking lot at the Harris Nature Center
- Repaired/upgraded several play features in park playgrounds and/or installed new play curbs in the following parks: Wonch Park, Central Park, Hatrick Park, Towar Park, North Meridian Road Park, Marshall Park, Cedar Bend Heights Neighborhood Park, Nancy Moore Park, Ferguson Park, Orlando Park and Hillbrook Park
- Repaired and stained all the picnic tables under the Central Park pavilion
- Planted a memorial tree and installed a plaque for the George and Diane Grettenberger family in the Historical Village
- Replaced the railing on the overlook deck at the Harris Nature Center
- Upgraded indoor classroom and office lighting at Harris Nature Center to LED
- Upgraded the exterior lights at the Snell Towar Recreation Center to LED
- Installed benches in the parks that were donated by the Haslett-Okemos Kiwanis Club
- Installed new walkway lights at Nature Center
- Installed split rail fence at Central Park South to project the wetland buffer plantings
- Replaced the drinking fountains at North Meridian Road Park and Hillbrook Park

Parks & Land Preservation Superintendent managed the following notable projects in 2024:

- Central Park Pavilion renovation project

- Installation of an AED at Marketplace on the Green
- East baseball field at Towner Road Park was resized and resurfaced for better play in the spring
- Purchased three robot mowers that were a huge success in Historical Village
- Completed the Meridian Township Trails & Pathway Guide maps

Meridian Historical Village Building repair and maintenance included:

- Ceiling repairs, new roof, porch repairs and the addition of gutters to the Chapel
- Siding repairs and painting the Barn and Corn Crib
- Brick repairs and ceiling repairs on the General Store
- Several other small repairs to all other buildings in the Historical Village

### **Harris Nature Center (HNC) Facility/Programming Report**

The Harris Nature Center continued as a shining gem in our park system providing opportunities for environmental education, outdoor recreation, wildlife viewing and an accessible trail for a peaceful walk in the woods. Most notable accomplishments are listed as follows:

- With the addition of new siding, the exterior renovation project at the nature center was completed
- The Harris Nature Center had another successful year with program participants, as well as, drop-in visitors. School group numbers have started to return to what they were prior to the pandemic
- Hosted nine weeks of Annie's Big Nature Lesson exposing 321 students to a weeklong learning experience in an outdoor classroom
- 4,512 drop-in visitors at the center
- 4,549 total program participants
- 797 public program participants
- 2,968 school group participants (at HNC and outreach)
- 303 private organization program participants (at HNC and outreach)
- 481 attended Summer Camp (\$40,150 brought in from registrations)
- The park and trails remained very busy throughout the year with walkers/runners, bikers, dog walkers and skiers
- Hosted two Native Plant Sales (spring and fall) with 180 visitors in attendance purchasing over \$9,000 in native plants (profit \$3,708.50)

### **Harris Center Foundation Report**

2024 highlights included the following:

- Hosted the first annual Motivated by Nature Run/Walk with 44 participants and \$1,233 in profits.
- Hosted the annual Turtle Toast event featuring live music and light refreshments. Thirty people attended.
- Funded 12 school bus scholarships for a total of \$1,500 and 597 students (27 classes)
- Purchased an interactive weather panel play feature for the Nature Exploration Area (NEA)
- Worked with a contractor to enhance the Fossil Dig feature in the NEA. This included digging up the fossils and laying them back in a concrete bed to hold everything in place
- Worked with Sinclair Recreation, LLC/Game Time to purchase and install a new playground feature with the help of donations from the Haslett-Okemos Kiwanis Club. This feature is called the Log Jam, which replaced the original feature that deteriorated over time, and includes logs, stumps, rocks and mushrooms to help develop gross motor skills such as balancing, walking, climbing and crawling
- Participated in four Culver's Share Nights making \$1,763.37 in profits for HNCF
- Continued to donate winter clothing items for the "closet" at the nature center. These items are given to children that visit the nature center during field trips that are less fortunate and do not have the proper attire for being outdoors.

## **Farmers' Market Report**

This year the Farmers Market celebrated its 50th Anniversary, having begun as a hope and a dream on August 24, 1974. The celebration year began with a gathering of vendors and leaders from the market's inception to now. Promotion and marketing efforts included the creation of a market logo, a history display, launching market wearables, and tote bags. The celebration concluded with the dedication of four murals, painted by the public that captured the spirit and history of the market.

The Market operated every Saturday from May until Christmas, and first and third Saturdays January–April and every Wednesday June through October, for a total of 64 yearly markets and 300 total hours of shopping. The Farmers Market saw nearly 87,000 visitors this year, up 21% from last year's total.

Most notable 2024 accomplishments are listed as follows:

- Nearly \$33,000 in food assistance was dispersed through the Market, representing a 12% increase from 2023, due to changes in the Double Up Food Bucks and the end of the WIC Project Fresh Coupon Program.
- There were 201 unique vendors participating in the market in 2024, up 25% over 2023.
- Over 8,600 pounds of food from the Market was donated by farmers and customers for local pantries and soup kitchens - up 24% from last year. (7,300 from vendors & 1,300 purchased from vendors for donation by customers)
- Thirty-three musicians played at the Market on Wednesdays and Saturdays throughout the year
- Thirty-two Okemos High School students volunteered for over 115 hours at the Market counting people and assisting with the Food Assistance Program.
- Our food waste collection program at the Market received \$1,455 in donations and subscriptions by residents to support the composting 250-300 gallons of food scraps (keeping an estimated 140-180 tons of CO2 out of the atmosphere).
- The Capital Area District Library joined us every other Wednesday evening at the Market with their mobile library and activity station with make and take crafts for kids and families to create that were related to books they brought with them.
- Over 120 volunteers, children & adults participated in our four community mural painting events at the Market.

## **Senior Center**

Providing a fun and relaxing place for older adults to engage socially and keep their minds and bodies active is an important element to being a prime community. The Meridian Senior Center is located in Chippewa Middle School and served a membership of 393 older adults with 1,837 programs, events, and fitness activities throughout 2024. Integrative health services, including massage and reflexology, are very popular amongst the members.

## **Nokomis Cultural Heritage Center**

The Nokomis Cultural Heritage Center was started in 1988 and moved into its current building in 1989. The purpose of Nokomis, which means My Grandmother, was to have a cultural center for the native community and to teach the public on native culture.

In the fall of 2024, programming was initiated at the Okemos elementary schools and Grand Ledge elementary schools, teaching all third-grade classes on the history of the Anishinaabeg, which are the Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi nations in Michigan. Three classroom lessons occurred during the 2024-2025 school year. This is set to continue into the 2025-2026 school year, with another public school coming on board.

The Nokomis Center staff and volunteers also provide presentations to organizations, of which 11 presentations occurred this past year. Additionally, various groups visit and use the Nokomis Center for meetings and are given a brief discussion of the Nokomis Center and the Anishinaabeg people. The Nokomis Center has partnered with various departments at Michigan State University. Recently, a partnership with the Wharton Center has developed.

The program includes Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday for organizations and in-house school presentations. Sundays are for public culture classes in which five classes occurred in 2024. Additionally, Saturdays have expanded hours for open craft day. From February through April, the number of visitors increased from 15 to 32 people every Saturday. Membership has more than doubled in 2024.

### **Deer Management – 14<sup>th</sup> Year**

The Parks and Recreation Department placed and managed 64 hunters on 1,600 acres of parks and land preserves (43 properties) during the 2024 Deer Management Archery Program, as well as, on 29 private properties. The total deer harvested by Township archers was 147.

### **Red Cedar Waterway Navigability Project**

Meridian Township is intertwined with the Red Cedar River, a variety of our parks and preserves borders on its shores and it is an invaluable part of our community in terms of natural beauty, as well as, for recreational purposes. We have put a lot of effort into the stewardship of this natural feature within our community and continue to put forward the best practices and procedures to keep this important natural resource in the best condition for our community.

Through a partnership with Williamstown Township, Williamston and Meridian Township, the Red Cedar River Multijurisdictional Clearing Project grant application was submitted by Meridian Township on September 16, 2024. The grant was approved for \$500,000 of funding from Ingham County, which was conditioned upon renewal of the Parks and Recreation millage in 2026.

This grant will allow for nearly 18-miles of water trail open and navigable from McCormick Park in Williamston to Hagadorn/Grand River Avenue in Meridian Township, for up to a period of three years. This cooperative effort will utilize a combination of volunteer support and licensed contractors where appropriate. The Red Cedar offers multiple opportunities for outdoor recreational experiences including canoeing, kayaking, fishing, photography and bird watching to name a few. Keeping the river open and navigable is a challenge based on the natural vegetation and mature trees that line the shoreline. The efforts of volunteers over the three years have helped but it is now to a point where dedicated financial effort is required.

### **Recreation Programs**

In 2024, Youth sports programs continued with a large number of participants engaging youth in physical activity. Youth sports also serve as a vital component in connecting parents and neighbors, as much time is spent on practices and games.

#### **Okemos**

- Spring Soccer: 512 participants
- Fall Soccer: 373 participants
- Flag Football: 61 participants
- Baseball: 105 participants
- Softball: 79 participants

#### **Haslett**

- K-1st grade basketball camp: 141 participants
- Spring Soccer: 266 participants
- Fall Soccer: 218 participants
- Flag Football: 115 participants
- Basketball: 161 participants
- T-Ball: 66 participants
- Baseball: 101 participants
- Softball: 82 participants

## Williamston

- T-Ball: 39 participants
- Baseball: 24 participants
- Softball: 7 participants

## Other Programs

- Sporties for Shorties: 543 (ages 3-5)

## Special Events

- Meridian Pride Celebration: Nearly 900 participants
- Halloween at the Market Event: 220 kids and families
- Two Howl-o-ween parties: 25 dogs
- Mom to Mom Garage Sale: 35 vendors
- Music at the Market: 17 weeks of live music with more than 5,000 participants for the season
- Two Yappy Hours (dog park parties): 50+ participants
- Running Club: 26 participants
- Teen Event: More than 120 participants
- Two Children's Concerts: More than 75 participants
- Three Skating Parties: More than 80 participants
- Cops and Bobbers Fishing Derby: More than 60 participants
- Karaoke: More than 40 participants

## Adult Sports

- Adult Softball Leagues: 6 teams
- 4 on 4 Sand Volleyball Leagues: 23 teams
- Meridian pickleball courts at Hillbrook and Towner Road Parks host drop-in play at scheduled times daily. Each site has a Facebook group to assist with communicating with other players and to promote events and social activities. These courts have been greatly used and appreciated by our older citizens.
- Fitness Over 50 Exercise Group had a total of 100+ participants in 2024. They meet year-round on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings at the Central Park Pavilion and inside at the Meridian Mall Food Court.

## **Celebrate Meridian**

The greatest special event of the year was the Celebrate Meridian Block Party that occurred June 27 through June 29, 2024. The event has grown significantly over the years and now includes the first annual Children's Night, the very popular Teen Night, and the grand finale Block Party that included music, food trucks, vendors, children's area, dog parade, two beer gardens, Historical Village ice cream social, Nokomis Native American cultural arts and food vendors, the first annual cultural art performances, and a fireworks show. The community-wide celebration was the result of a team effort from nearly every Township Department and from the generosity of local businesses and volunteers.

## **Meridian Heritage Festival**

The Meridian Heritage Festival took place on September 26, 2024, in the Meridian Historical Village hosted by the Friends of Historic Meridian and Nokomis Cultural Center. The event offered historical reenactments, demonstrations, food, music, fun and education. There was also a vintage baseball game between the Lansing Capitols and the Chelsea Monitors.

## **Snell Towar Recreation Center**

Throughout 2024 we had the center open most Tuesdays and Thursdays for open play. There has been an average of 10-15 kids from the neighborhood who regularly attend the center. There were two Block Parties in which 40 – 50 residents attended. The center was also utilized for other gatherings such as record clubs and story readings.

## **Puzzle Nights**

This year our recreation team initiated the first Puzzle Competition Program. Teams of four were given a 500-piece puzzle and a two-hour time limit to complete the puzzle. Winners were given gift cards to the Farmers' Market or a local business who had donated a prize. The first competition was held at Snell-Towar Recreation Center; however, the number of teams that registered outgrew the center. The competitions moved to the Marketplace on the Green to accommodate more teams. The five events hosted nearly 175 participants.

## **Park Pavilion Reservations**

Central Park Pavilion received a beautiful renovation in 2024. New paint, bathrooms, and a new roof on the pavilion brightened up the pavilion. The popular pavilion welcomed 100+ drop in usage events at Central Park pavilion after the remodel. The Meridian Township Park System offers a total of eight parks with pavilions for public use. The year ended with a total of 200 paid reservations at pavilions and over 10,500 people using the pavilions on a reservation basis in 2024.

## **PARK COMMISSION**

The Meridian Township Park Commissioners are elected to four-year terms and have the responsibility of setting policy and direction for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of parks.

## **PARK COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Mary Nardo Farris, Chair  
Amanda Lick, Vice Chair  
Mark McDonald  
Mark Stephens  
Ami Van Antwerp

## **LAND PRESERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

### **Land Preservation Program**

- Signage stating rules and citing the land preservation ordinance were installed in land preserves at trailheads and property lines to increase awareness and accessibility of these areas.
- New hanging name plates were installed at all land preserves with fully updated signage, with seven preserves receiving a new, more geographically accurate name.
- An 8' X 10' greenhouse was installed at the Township Service Center to facilitate germination of native seeds as well as to improve the care of native transplants for habitat restoration efforts.
- An 8' X 20' storage shed was installed at the Township Service Center for the improved organization of equipment, tools and supplies used for stewardship staff and volunteer efforts.
- For the first time ever, three part-time staff positions were filled to aid the Stewardship Coordinator and carry out land management activities, such as managing invasive species.
- In Fall of 2024, contractors from Wildtype began managing 1.52 acres of priority invasive black locust tree species at Davis Foster Preserve.
- In partnership with the Environmental Commission, new Wetland Ordinance and Wetland Educational Signage has been designed for installation in special areas of our public lands.
- Spring/summer floristic surveys completed for the first time to gather more data to guide more specific land management practices.

### **Prescribed Burn Management**

A prescribed burn was successfully completed on 17 acres of Davis Foster Preserve, Burn Unit 1, in the spring of 2024. Prescribed burns are part of the Township's land management goals to enhance local biodiversity of native plants that are fire dependent.

## **Wetland Education and Restoration Program**

The goal of this program is to expand the community's knowledge of ecosystem services that wetlands provide, as well as, Township ordinances and state regulations for wetland protection. In 2024, staff worked to identify areas of greatest need at Township wetland sites. These sites have been assessed for the following: invasive species management, floristic inventories, native seed collection, native plantings, and educational signage and fencing installation. Staff completed inventory reports for interested Township residents to help restore wetland buffers on private property. All these practices are a collective restoration effort to ensure the preservation of wetlands in Meridian Township.

### **LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS**

Jamie Hiller, Chair  
Steve Thomas, Vice-Chair  
Yu Man Lee  
Kathy Fay

Kris Parnell  
James McCurtis, Township Board Liaison  
Mark Stephens, Park Commissioner Liaison

### **TEAM MEMBERS**

#### **Administration**

Courtney Wisinski	Director of Parks and Recreation
Bridget Cannon	Administrative Assistant II
Kati Adams	Parks, Pathways and Land Preservation Superintendent
Michael Devlin	Parks and Recreation Specialist
Nick Wing	Parks and Recreation Specialist
Emma Campbell	Land Stewardship Coordinator
Lucy Breda	Assistant Stewardship Coordinator
Rachel Mickey	Stewardship Field Assistant
Alex Skinner	Parks and Recreation Intern
Tom Cary	Farmers' Market Manager

#### **Harris Nature Center**

Kati Adams	Senior Naturalist
Allison Goodman	Park Naturalist
Kathryn Page	Assistant Park Naturalist
Lyra Moore	Assistant Park Naturalist
Audra Francis	Assistant Park Naturalist
William Quisenberry	Assistant Park Naturalist
Jesse Munson	Assistant Park Naturalist

#### **Parks, Land Preservation and Pathways**

Larry Bobb	Parks, Land Preservation & Pathways Maintenance Lead
Traverse Fuller	Utility Worker
Josh Cannon	Utility Worker
Dan Inman	Utility Worker
Tom Baker	Utility Worker
Troy Goodwin	Utility Worker
Daniel Fedorowicz	Park Ranger
Tobias Lyons-Callo	Seasonal Maintenance Worker
Ian Brown	Seasonal Maintenance Worker
Nathan McLain	Seasonal Maintenance Worker
Trenton Smiley	Seasonal Maintenance Worker

#### **Meridian Senior Center**

Cherie Wisdom	Center Coordinator
Jenise Turchan	Administrative Assistant

# POLICE



The Meridian Township Police Department is committed to establishing and maintaining partnerships in our community; and with understanding, cooperation and equality; we strive to enhance the quality of life and protect the rights of our community.

## CORE VALUES

### **COMPASSION**

We care for and empathize with our fellow human beings.

### **COURAGE**

We face danger to ensure the safety of others. We will stand up for what is right. We will be brave when others may not. We strive to eliminate fear through our actions.

### **EXCELLENCE**

We employ those who strive to achieve a higher standard. We listen to our employees and the members of our community to continually improve our effectiveness and reliability. We strive to exceed community and professional expectations.

### **FAIRNESS**

We will treat all individuals impartially. We will act in a just manner. We appreciate different points of view. We exercise discretion appropriately.

### **INTEGRITY**

We will fulfill our mission in its entirety using sound principles, honesty and sincerity.

### **RESOURCEFULNESS**

We can be relied upon for help and support. We have the ability to deal with situations effectively. We build on our mutual experiences to effectively resolve problems.

### **RESPECT**

We value the rights and beliefs of others. We are courteous. We treat others as we expect to be treated. We appreciate diversity.

**WORK ETHIC**

We are self-motivated and self-directed. We do what is asked and strive to achieve expectations. We hold ourselves to a higher standard.

**Uniform Division**

The Uniform Division personnel includes a Lieutenant, 7 Sergeants, and 29 Officers. Within the division, there is the Road Patrol, Canine Unit and the School and Community Resource Unit. Road patrol personnel provide 24-hour patrol services to Meridian Township and Williamstown Township. Patrol officers are assigned to four platoons that work twelve-hour shifts with a sergeant on duty at all times.

In 2024, there were 19,533 calls for service (excluding 5,083 traffic stops).

2024 Written Reports	
Alarms	440
Traffic Crashes	810
All Other	3,804
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,054</b>

**Yearly Comparisons**

**Written Reports**

2021	2022	2023	2024
5,008	5,526	4,963	<b>5,054</b>

**Calls for Service**

2021	2022	2023	2024
17,211	18,540	19,026	<b>19,533</b>

**Arrests**

2021	2022	2023	2024
554	503	441	<b>460</b>

**Citations**

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Citations Issued	1,711	1,231	736	<b>2,647</b>
<b>Total # of Charges</b>	<b>2,279</b>	<b>1,590</b>	<b>1,055</b>	<b>3,664</b>

**Traffic Safety**

The Meridian Township Police Department views traffic safety as a primary focus of keeping the community safe. The Department works in conjunction with the Ingham County Road Department and the State Highway Department to address concerns related to road design. The Department takes enforcement action in areas designated as directed patrols based on review of traffic crash data, citizen complaints, and traffic problems that are created as a result of road closures. Speed monitoring instruments including a speed trailer and speed signs are utilized to complete traffic studies regarding speed-related safety concerns and traffic counts. The equipment is used to educate the motorists and

can be deployed easily in areas identified internally or through citizen reporting. This year we completed thirteen directed patrols and seven traffic surveys.

Our officers provide free car seat inspections for the community. During 2024, fourteen car seats inspections took place throughout the year.

### **Traffic Crash Investigation Team**

Traffic crashes involving fatal or potentially fatal injuries require investigators with specialized training and equipment. The Ingham Regional Crash Investigation Team, IRCIT, was created for that purpose. Area law enforcement agencies commit personnel to the IRCIT and on-duty members are called to assist participating agencies with those type of serious crash investigations. Using on-duty personnel provides a more rapid response to the scene of a major accident, while the sharing of resources provides investigators with increased experience and reduces the financial burden on anyone member agency. Currently, the Department has three investigators on the team. The IRCIT was activated 30 times in 2024, with Meridian Township Police requesting it twice. Additionally, Meridian Township Police accident investigators assisted in a total of eleven IRCIT activations outside of the township in 2024. The Department had one fatal crash, one serious injury crash involving a pedestrian in 2024.

<b>Meridian Township Deer Involved Collision Data</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Injury Involved</b>	<b>No Injury Involved</b>	<b>Total</b>
2021	4	125	129
2022	2	99	101
2023	0	88	88
<b>2024</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>82</b>

### **Volunteers**

Volunteers continued to be instrumental this year during several events hosted by the Department. Volunteers assisted at our annual Halloween open house in October, greeting guests and helping to hand out treats and gift bags. Volunteers also came to assist the Department to help wrap presents for our Shop with a Cop event. A revival of our volunteer parking enforcement program was researched in 2024 and is still in the works. This would consist of a group of volunteers targeting handicap parking violations during the daytime hours.

### **Community Police Officers**

Community Policing is the foundation of all our actions and interactions. Officers are assigned specific neighborhoods to serve as a familiar point of contact for those neighborhoods and their leaders. Through this contact, relationships are formed, trust is built, and problem solving is shared. Officers communicate directly with their citizens, participate in community activities, and spend uncommitted time in their neighborhoods so our community trusts and understands our Department. Neighborhood leader meetings are held quarterly at the Township Hall and are well attended, both by residents and officers.

Annually on the first Tuesday of August the Department engages the community through a nationwide event known as National Night Out (NNO). The event is intended to strengthen relationships between the community and law enforcement to take a stand against crime. In 2024, 15 individual NNO events were attended by members of both the police and fire departments. Officers had the opportunity to interact with residents, play games with children, and enjoy food and casual conversations.

National Faith & Blue Weekend is based on the premise that strong communities are built on mutual respect, trust and understanding. Law Enforcement entities and faith-based groups are key pillars of a

local community, and when they work together, communities thrive. The Department attended several events hosted by local churches in October.

**Adult Crossing Guards**

The Department hires, trains, and manages six adult school crossing guards for schools in the township. The guards are supervised by the School Resource Officers and the Department is always actively accepting applications for more.

**Canine Summary**

In 2024, the Department maintained the two K9 teams for a total of 69 deployments. It consisted of Ofc. Anderson with K9 Ares and Ofc. Trevino with K9 Reno. Both teams are trained in article searches, area searches, building searches, narcotics detection, apprehension/protection and tracking. Surrounding Departments request or provide mutual aid from K9 Teams when they either do not have one on duty or do not have one readily available. Ofc. Anderson and K9 Ares completed 207 hours of monthly maintenance training as well as certifying nationally through the National Association of Professional Canine Handlers (NAPCH). Ofc. Anderson and K9 Ares were also added on to the Ingham Regional Special Response Team (IRSRT) in early August of 2024. Ofc. Trevino and K9 Reno completed 350 hours of monthly maintenance training. Ofc. Trevino and K9 Reno successfully certified nationally through the National Association of Professional Canine Handlers (NAPCH) seminar.

2024 Canine Team Activity Numbers	
Calls Handled By Meridian’s Canine Team	29
Calls Handled By Other Departments	4
Call Outs To Other Departments	40
<b>Total Calls For Service</b>	<b>73</b>
Activity Type	
Ingham Regional SRT	1
Article Search	7
Area Search	2
Building Search	3
Narcotics Search	26
School Sweeps (OHS/HHS/ELHS)	0
Tracking	36
Demonstrations	2
Other Use	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>

\*A canine call may include more than one activity type.

**Special Response Team**

The Ingham Regional Special Response Team (IRSRT) is comprised of personnel from the Ingham County Sheriff’s Office, Meridian Township Police Department, MSU Police Department, and East Lansing Police Department. The team is called upon by agencies when a tactical team is needed to respond. IRSRT’s primary jurisdiction is all of Ingham County, with the exception of the city of Lansing. Meridian Township commits four operators to the team, currently one lieutenant, two sergeants, and one officer. Meridian Township operators received 528 hours of regular monthly training and 100 hours of annual training in 2024. This totals 628 hours of yearly training. IRSRT had 19 activations in 2024.

**School and Community Resource Unit**

The School and Community Resource Unit is comprised of two School Resource Officers (SROs) who work with the Haslett and Okemos Public Schools. Officer Casaday continued his role as the Haslett SRO while Officer Short was assigned to the Okemos Public School District in the fall of 2024. The SROs provide several services to the schools to ensure a safe environment for children to learn. They also

assist with several community events throughout the year.

Our SROs hosted the Touch-A-Truck event this past year, where surrounding police and fire departments brought out their best vehicles and equipment for the ultimate show and tell session. The Meridian Mall volunteered their space for this event.

The SROs participated in the “No Senior with Christmas” event. This is a Tri-County TRIAD program which led to about 400 holiday baskets distributed to tri-county elderly residents. Meridian Township residents received 32 of the baskets that were delivered by our SROs and fire department.

The Department held its annual “Shop with a Cop” event in December. The SROs worked with school counselors and nine area students participated. The officers worked in conjunction with Walmart, Buddies Pizza, and Dunkin Donuts to fund the event. Numerous private donors also provided funds to support this event.

**Investigations Unit**

Sergeant Brian Canen handles the day-to-day operations of the unit and ensures each investigation is handled efficiently and with great care. In 2024, one sergeant and four officers were assigned to the unit.

Criminal complaints begin at the road patrol level but sometimes require additional attention from a specialized investigator. Our Investigations Unit may take over an investigation if it is determined the crime is complex or will require a more time-consuming and thorough investigation. Investigators work closely with victims, officers, other law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and the Township Attorney to ensure a thorough and fair investigation is complete.

The investigations unit assigned a total of 281 complaints in 2024.

Complaints Assigned Per Year	
2021	279
2022	171
2023	292
<b>2024</b>	<b>281</b>

**Court Services**

Our Court Services Officer (CSO) acts as a liaison between the police department, the Ingham County Prosecutors Office, the Township Attorney, and the court system. The CSO tracks and processes criminal complaints and submits them to the appropriate attorney’s office for review of warrant request and juvenile petitions. The CSO is also responsible for the registration and address verification of sex offenders in Meridian Township.

Court Services	2021	2022	2023	2024
Subpoenas Served	328	461	422	<b>502</b>
Personal Protection Orders	40	40	44	<b>40</b>
Warrant Requests	787	809	873	<b>646</b>
Warrants Signed by CSO	251	339	398	<b>326</b>
Twp. Attorney Requests	93	122	112	<b>100</b>
Total Petition Requests	50	107	102	<b>85</b>
Retail Fraud Requests	145	145	111	<b>199</b>
OWI Requests	69	55	36	<b>30</b>

Assault Requests	127	73	175	<b>70</b>
Assault Requests-Domestic	138	142	90	<b>123</b>
Larceny/Fraud Requests	48	63	110	<b>139</b>
Narcotics Requests	16	19	20	<b>15</b>

### Records Unit

The Records Unit consists of a supervisor, two full-time technicians, and a part-time technician. They provide support to the Uniform Division as well as the Investigations Unit by preparing criminal reports for prosecution and reporting crime statistics to state agencies. They also maintain databases for statistical reports which are provided to department staff, the Township Manager, the Township Board, and is made available to the public.

Records personnel also process all police reports, crash reports, traffic citations, and other related documents. Customer service is an emphasis of our Records Unit. Records personnel assist the public by responding to FOIA requests, processing insurance requests for reports, processing pistol purchase licenses, and answering incoming phone calls.

Annual Crime Reporting Summary	2021	2022	2023	2024	% Change 2023-2024
Murder/Non-Negligent Manslaughter	0	1	0	0	0%
Rape and Attempted Rape	62	36	60	49	-18%
Robbery	10	17	6	10	67%
Aggravated Assault	35	35	51	47	-8%
<b>Total Part 1 Violent Crime</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>-9%</b>
Burglary	64	69	66	76	15%
Larceny	611	467	478	395	-17%
Vehicle Theft	56	75	74	95	28%
Arson	6	0	3	1	300%
<b>Total Part 1 Property Crime</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>-9%</b>
<b>Total Part 1 Offenses</b>	<b>844</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>738</b>	<b>673</b>	<b>-9%</b>
OWI Arrests (Liquor or Drugs)	69	48	35	37	6%
Traffic Accident – Roadway	785	818	711	810	14%

### Accreditation

Accreditation is an on-going program that encourages law enforcement agencies to improve performance and service to the community. Accreditation status acknowledges the implementation of conceptually sound written directives, policies, procedures, and training. It is the voluntary adoption of the best practices in law enforcement and requires constant evaluation of the professional objectives set forth by an independent body of professionals in the Michigan Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission (MLEAC).

In February 2020, the Department became the first police agency in mid-Michigan to gain full accreditation status from the MLEAC and the 19th overall in the state of Michigan. Today, there are 87 accredited agencies in the state and many more agencies are in the process.

The Department regularly assists other agencies throughout the state with their efforts to receive certification. Members of the Department act as on-site assessors for both mock and full accreditation events.

## **Mid-Michigan Police Academy**

The Services Division Commander represents the Department and acts as a coordinator for the Mid-Michigan Police Academy which is hosted by the Lansing Community College (LCC). Coordinators work closely with recruits during the 17-week academy, giving our coordinator an opportunity to identify possible candidates for employment. This also allows the coordinator to monitor each recruit's progress and assist in career development. Because of our involvement in the police academy, the Department can have an active role in shaping the future of law enforcement locally, regionally and across the state of Michigan. Three Department officers also teach various classes at the academy. The Department earns LCC credit hours for the time spent coordinating and teaching at the police academy. These credit hours can be used to send officers to training at LCC.

In 2024, the Department sponsored one recruit through the Mid-Michigan Police Academy during the winter session, and two additional recruits through the fall session. Three other recruits were sponsored through the Washtenaw Community College Police Academy, two through the Law Enforcement Regional Training Academy at Mott Community College, and one through the Delta Community College Police Academy. Four of the officers have completed training and are working on their own, while three remain in field training entering 2025.

## **Training**

Under the direction of the Chief of Police, the Training Sergeant oversees all training for the Department. The Department provided employees with 3,373.5 hours of training in 2024. It included some of the following:

- In-Service: 1,395 hours (legal update, active violence response, mental health/PRT training)
- External: 1,602 hours
- Firearms: 376.5 hours

Our commitment to excellence in policing rests on a foundation of continuous training. We prioritize equipping our officers with the most up-to-date knowledge, skills, and tools to effectively serve our community.

In 2024, our training program encompassed a wide range of critical topics, including de-escalation techniques, ethical considerations in law enforcement, implicit bias awareness, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), emergency vehicle operations, and advanced defensive tactics.

We employ a diverse training methodology, incorporating classroom instruction, hands-on simulations, rigorous firearm training at our range and using advanced simulators, and leveraging cutting-edge computer software. Our dedicated team of in-house trainers, supplemented by expert external instructors, ensures the highest quality of instruction across all areas.

Furthermore, we were fortunate to receive funding from the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCLEA) to support mandatory training in key areas such as ethics, interpersonal skills, and legal updates. This valuable support has enabled us to invest in new software and equipment, further enhancing our already robust and progressive training curriculum.

Our training team is committed to enhancing safety and security within Meridian Township. We offer a range of valuable training programs designed to equip individuals and organizations with the knowledge and skills to navigate challenging situations. In 2024, our services included:

- Security Assessments: Proactive risk assessments for schools, houses of worship, and businesses.
- De-escalation Training: Empowering customer service teams to handle conflicts with professionalism and composure.
- Run-Hide-Fight Active Shooter Training: Providing critical life-saving strategies for schools, places of worship, and businesses.

To inquire about our training services and schedule a consultation, please do not hesitate to contact us.

### Property Room Report

The Quartermaster maintains the property room. Activity involving the property room in 2024 included:

- 1,060 items entered as evidence
- 252 abandoned vehicles were processed

### Citizen Satisfaction Survey

A total of 1,200 citizen satisfaction surveys were mailed to victims and complainants involved in traffic accidents and other calls for service in Meridian and Williamstown Township. Surveys are used as a tool to monitor customer satisfaction with the Department's services. In 2024, a total of 241 surveys were returned. The 20% response rate was increased as compared to 2023.

#### Citizen Satisfaction Survey for Sworn Personnel

Category	Rating of Excellent/Good
Helpfulness	93%
Friendliness	98%
Knowledge	95%
Quality of Service	94%
Professional Conduct	97%
Response Time	94%

*\*Not all questions generated a response.*

In 2024, the Department looked to technology to supplement, or possibly replace, the mailed satisfaction survey using an automated system to send text messages to individuals that have called the police.

The process is started by sending a text message to the reporting phone number for limited types of calls. If the subject responds, there are a total of three questions asked. If the individual does not respond to the first text, no additional texts are sent. The questions are a combination of ratings and free text responses. The text messages are sent between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., but only after a six-hour delay from the time of the call.

Thirty-five percent of the 1,187 messages sent received responses with a 90% approval rating. In 2025, the Department will be using the data collected from 2024 to increase the types of calls that initiate a survey request.

## 2024 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

In conjunction with the Township Manager, the Department establishes goals to help in the delivery of law enforcement services. Many of our goal accomplishments and other activities are listed as follows.

**Continue our efforts to fill all vacant police officer positions with candidates that fit our standards through recruiting and academy sponsorship while simultaneously working toward creating a diverse and inclusive workforce that matches the demographics of our community.**

After starting the year with only 31 officers, we finished the year with 39 sworn. We hired several lateral transfers from other agencies and sponsored 8 recruits through the police academy using a state-funded grant. Though we were not able to retain 3 of our new hires, we made great progress in our efforts toward full staffing.

Due to our hiring practices, we were able to identify four female recruits who met and exceeded our

standards. Through sponsorship, we were able to hire these recruits. At this time, over 30% of our sworn workforce is female.

**Improve transparency through open communication with the public as well as our employees.**

Social media posts have been increased to communicate with the public. A new message board was installed in our lobby to communicate important events and safety tips with our visitors. Quarterly meetings with our neighborhood leaders were held.

A big part of communication is also in soliciting feedback. In 2024, we sent out 1,200 paper surveys to victims and utilize text message surveys to ensure we are providing the best service possible.

Internally, Chief Grillo sends out newsletters to the Department employees via email every two to three weeks. A departmental meeting was held in February for all employees. A scrolling message board was installed in the briefing room which is used to communicate important events.

**Improve public safety by continuing to engage in targeted proactive policing services while working with community partners to address quality of life issues in Meridian Township.**

The most prevalent concern of the public is traffic safety. As staffing has increased, our ability to conduct proactive policing tactics has also increased. The Department issued three times as many citations in 2024 as we did in 2023 and issued five times as many warnings as the previous year. This has led to safer roadways throughout Meridian Township.

We also helped the Ingham County Dispatch Center usher in a new community notification system to improve mass communications to the public.

A state funded traffic grant was obtained at the end of 2023 that is being used throughout 2024 for targeted enforcement of traffic laws in areas where crashes are most frequent.

Directed patrols are communicated more clearly to our officers through the use of Microsoft.

**Provide the sworn employees with enhanced pistol optics that improve public and officer safety through increased accuracy and situational awareness during high stress encounters.**

New handguns, holsters, and optics were ordered and received at the end of 2024. All the handguns and accessories have been issued to our officers. The optics, Trijicon RCR reflex sights, increase public safety and officer safety through increased accuracy and improve our officer's situational awareness.

**Provide each officer with additional mobile technology to more efficiently collect evidence and share information with partner agencies while also allowing more time for proactive duties.**

All officers were issued iPads in March which are used for evidence collection, note taking, quick access to email and calls for service, instant access to our Telehealth Program, and many other functions. The program has been well-received and has enabled officers to document and enter evidence more efficiently, saving time for proactive policing.

**Establish structured succession plans to better prepare personnel for special assignments and promotions through training and mentoring.**

Officers who were interested in promotions were sent through leadership training. Several officers have been sent to Field Training Officer training, generally regarded as the first step in introducing an officer to supervision.

**Assist the Parks Department with deer management efforts to reduce property damage and traffic crashes.**

The deer management program was again safe and successful. As we worked with the DNR to determine the best ways to cull the herd, we were issued 300 licenses. The Parks Department harvested 147 and

the Police Department harvested approximately 150. Since 2020, the number of traffic crashes involving deer has decreased from over 160 to just over 80 in 2024. The deer cull will continue in 2025.

### WILLIAMSTOWN TOWNSHIP POLICE SERVICES

The Meridian Township Police Department provides law enforcement services to Williamstown Township. The 2022-2024 contract arranges for Williamstown Township to compensate Meridian Township \$150,437.74 for calendar year 2024 and \$71.77 per hour outside of the 40 hours of weekly patrol for emergency and non-emergency responses.

Williamstown Township Statistics				
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Written Reports	280	251	232	224
Calls for Service	1,506	1,279	1,222	1,328
Calls for Service (excluding traffic stops)	1,143	1,063	1,035	1,090
Arrests	12	15	15	15
Citations Issued	95	46	10	10
Total Number of Charges	111	56	14	14

Written Reports				
	2021	2022	2023	2024
Alarms	29	23	19	16
Traffic Crashes	105	101	72	90
All Other	146	127	141	118
<b>Total</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>224</b>

### MTPD TEAM MEMBERS

**CHIEF**

Richard Grillo

**CAPTAIN**

Bart Crane

**LIEUTENANT**

Curt Squires

**SERGEANTS**

Edward Besonen  
 Dan King  
 Lorenzo Velasquez  
 Adam Slavick

Chris Lofton  
 Jason Clements  
 Brian Canen

**OFFICERS**

Kyle Royston  
 Rebecca Payne  
 Bryan LeRoy  
 Doug Strouse

David Reinke  
 Megan Heinemann  
 Meghan Cole  
 Bryant Martin

Maggie Cole  
Ian Mandernack  
Kolby Casaday  
Megan Klein  
Blaine Anderson  
Michael Hagbom  
Kendall LaFlair  
Elisha Olgine  
James Spencer  
Sara Hanson  
Antonio Trevino

Isabela Acker  
Jack Akers  
Stacey Bazan  
Natalie Tyndall  
Larry Vandermolen  
Nathan Wicks  
Jacob Scarvey  
Dustin Short  
Gabe Burroughs  
Taylor Berman

**CIVILIAN PERSONNEL**

Kristi Schaeding, Administrative Assistant

Heidi LaFargue, Records Supervisor

**CADETS**

Carrigan McGraw  
Maggie Eggleston  
Shane Helps  
Cassidy Allen  
Alex Short  
Amanda Thiele

# PROJECT MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONS



## 2024 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **Central Fire Station Dorm Addition**

A Request for Proposals (RFP) was posted in January 2024, seeking a firm to provide design services for the Central Fire Station Dormitory Addition. The selected firm is Hobbs + Black Architects. Throughout 2024, several meetings have taken place to discuss project timelines, design concepts and working on getting all documents ready for when the project is ready to be put out to bid for construction.

### **CHILL Grant**

In March 2024, the Township entered into a grant agreement with Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Housing Improving Local Livability (CHILL) Program. This grant awarded the Township with \$480,000 in funding to use for homeowner improvement projects in the Towar Gardens neighborhood and the Core Haslett neighborhoods. The tier I environmental review has been completed. In June 2024, the Township signed a third party grant administrator agreement with Capital Area Housing Partnership (CAHP). CAHP has assisted with creating the application packet for residents to apply for the grant, promotional materials to garner interest in the program, and managing incoming applications. The application for residents to fill out was put on our website in August. Currently, submitted applications are being processed and undergoing income verification.

### **Making Meridian a HEARTSafe Community**

To help Meridian Township become a HEARTSafe Community, the Meridian Township Fire Department will be partnering with Stryker Corporation to provide businesses with Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) at a discounted rate. Our goal is to have AEDs placed throughout Meridian Township and provide sufficient training on how to use them so that when someone is experiencing an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA), they have a better chance of survival.

The Fire Department is partnering with the Meridian Economic Development Corporation to help local businesses install AEDs in their public locations and supply them to businesses that cannot afford them. Businesses participating in this program can also donate funds to other businesses to help them purchase AEDs.

A webpage on our Township website was created for interested parties to fill out and submit their information. Once a business orders an AED, they are delivered upon receipt and training is scheduled with the Fire Department.

At this time, two businesses have joined this program -- Arnouts Insurance Agency and the Capital City Rifle Club. We are currently working on setting up trainings for these customers. Promotional materials and training schedules are still being worked on and we are hoping to have the program fully operational and promoted in the next few months.

### **Public Safety Building Updates**

In early 2024, the new flooring project in the Public Safety Building was completed. New counters and sinks were installed in both locker rooms. New furniture was installed in the Records Department, providing a much needed update to their space. Both locker rooms have been painted. In 2025, we will continue to work on updates, including painting hallways and slowly replacing furniture as needed.

### **Internal Signs**

The Township worked with Johnson Sign Co. to design new internal signage for the Municipal Building, Public Safety Building and the Service Center. The new internal signs provide more direction and information than previous signs, as well as a fresh update using Township branding standards.

### **TEAM MEMBER**

Melissa Massie, Director of Project Management & Operations

# PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT



Charter Township of Meridian Code of Ordinances: Chapter 2, Article 1:

A Department of Public Works shall be created and the department shall be headed by the Director of Public Works and Engineering. The department shall be responsible for all matters relating to the management, maintenance, and operation of all the physical properties of the Township. This department shall have exclusive control of the construction, maintenance, and operation of the Township sewers and water mains, the operation of Township dumps and landfills, the operation and maintenance of the cemetery, and the maintenance of all Township facilities.

## 2024 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **2023 Sanitary Sewer Rehab Project**

Construction was completed in 2023. We started our warranty inspections for this project in November of 2024. These warranty inspections will continue into 2025.

### **2024 County Park West Sanitary Sewer Replacement Project**

We completed this project in the spring of 2024, which involved replacing 1,305 feet of sanitary gravity sewer and 1,450 feet of sanitary force main that was failing under portions of East Reynolds Road, Quail Street, and the Ingham County boat launch property. The failure in these sanitary sewer force and gravity mains was discovered during the televising we completed through our 2017 SAW grant. We also replaced six manholes and constructed new sanitary lateral stubs to 22 single-family homes.

Construction of this project had to be completed between the day that the frost laws were lifted in late February and May 1 in order to reopen the boat launch in time for boating season. This required a very condensed construction schedule, significantly adding to the complexity of the project. The boat launch was reopened on schedule.

### **2024 Water Main Replacement Projects**

In 2024, we replaced the following water main:

- Timberlane St (Linden St to Melrose Ave)
- Blue Haven Dr (Raphael Rd to Linden St)
- Chili's and Olive Garden
- ELMWSA Park Lake Rd Raw Water Main Project
- ELMWSA Okemos Rd Raw Water Main Project, Phase II

### **Central Park Drive/Okemos Road Intersection Signal Replacement Project**

The Ingham County Road Department completed this signal replacement in 2024. As part of the project, the Township replaced the opticom at this intersection. Opticom is used by the Fire Department to be able to control the signal for emergency response.

### **Phase I, MSU to Lake Lansing Trail**

Phase I opened to the public on December 9, 2023. We have a very small list of final work that the contractor needs to complete in the spring of 2025, then we will close out the construction contract for this project.

As of publication date, project finances stand:

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Township Pathway Millage	\$366,427.47	9.7%
Federal TAP Grant	\$1,700,000.00	44.9%
Ingham County Trails & Parks Millage	\$1,715,461.49	45.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,781,888.96</b>	<b>100%</b>

We are reallocating the \$375,000 Ingham County Trails & Parks Millage (ICTPM) grant from the Northern Tier Trail (i.e. Towar Ave pathway) to Phase I to help fund the timber revetment project to stabilize the steep embankment immediately west of the boardwalk on Phase I. The embankment started to erode into the Red Cedar River in July of 2024 when the river crested after the three severe rain events we had caused the river elevation to rise.

### **Hamilton Road Pathway/Tacoma Hills Park Sign Project**

We reconstructed the existing pathway system at the Hamilton Road/Washing Heights Avenue intersection adjacent to Tacoma Hills Park in order to create enough space in the Hamilton Road right-of-way to install the new park sign and to create an ADA compliant pathway crosswalk at this intersection.

### **Fox Hollow Pathway Project**

Construction of this new pathway was completed in 2024 to improve safe routes to school. The concept for this new pathway came from parents who were seeking to improve their children's walking route to school.

### **Hamilton Road Pathway Gap Project (1878 Hamilton Road)**

Construction of this new pathway was completed in 2024. This gap in our pathway system had lingered for decades due to the former property owner being unwilling to sign an easement. The property recently sold and the new owner was willing to grant an easement to the Township so we could eliminate this gap in the system.

### **Bennett Road Pathway Gap Project**

We are in the process of redesigning this project as a boardwalk and hope to have it out to bid in the spring of 2025 for summer construction.

### **American House Pathway Project**

This project has been designed and we are working to obtain all necessary permits before we put this project out to bid.

### **Ronald J. Styka Memorial Pathway**

In June of 2024, we held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the newly renamed Ronald J. Styka Memorial Pathway, formerly known as the Okemos Hartrick Trail.

**Recycling Old Roads to Build New Trails, Signs, etc.**

In 2022, the Township began crushing asphalt from the Local Road Program to use the millings to save on the cost of constructing various Township projects. These millings were used to construct:

- Phase II, MSU to Lake Lansing Trail
- Fox Hollow Pathway
- Tacoma Hills Park Pathway Project
- The New Sander Farm Preserved Natural Area Park Sign
- The New Harris Nature Center Park Sign
- The New DDA sign
- As Temporary Driving Surfaces after Water Main Breaks in a Roadway

In 2024, we restocked our construction yard with approximately 8,500 yards of millings from the 2024 Local Road Program. These millings will be used to construct Phase III of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail and other Township infrastructure.

**Williamstown Township Pathway System**

We have also been assisting our neighbors in Williamstown Township throughout 2024 as they are in the early planning stages of establishing a pathway system similar to ours.

**Park Parking Lot and Basketball Resurfacing Projects**

We assisted the Parks Department with reconstructing the following park facilities in 2024:

- Marshall Park parking lot
- Marshall Park basketball court
- Ted Black Woods parking lot
- Harris Nature Center parking lot and service drives

**ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION**

Bill McConnell, Chair  
 Yu Man Lee  
 Laur Belisle  
 Nickolas Lentz, Township Board Liaison  
 Richard Milsicek

John Sarver  
 Harrison Batten, Student  
 Cynthia Peterson  
 Tom Frazier

**TEAM MEMBERS**

**Administration**

Dan Opsommer

Deputy Township Manager  
 Director of Public Works & Engineering  
 Administrative Assistant II

Denise Green

**Engineering**

Younes Ishraidi, P.E., C.F.M.  
 Caycee Hart  
 Ryan Schaner  
 Jack Hughes  
 Michael Love  
 Tom Westerfield

Chief Engineer/Deputy Director of Engineering & Public Works  
 Project Engineer  
 Records Manager & GIS Specialist  
 Project Engineer  
 Engineering Technician  
 Engineering Technician

**Environmental Programs**

LeRoy Harvey

Environmental Programs Coordinator (PT)

**Public Works Superintendent**      Rob MacKenzie

**Water Utility**

Robert Stacy	Lead Utility Worker
Mike Ellis	Utility Worker
David Lester	Utility Worker
Dan Palacios	Utility Worker
D’Destin Kaufmann	Utility Worker
Derrick Bobb	Utility Worker
Ben McCann	Utility Worker
James Arnett	Utility Worker

**Sewer Utility**

Jacob Flannery	Lead Utility Worker
Kyle Fogg	Utility Worker
Don Cuson	Utility Worker
David Borowicz	Utility Worker

**Buildings, Grounds and Cemetery**

Tyler Kennell	Lead Utility Worker
Keith Hewitt	Utility Worker

**Motor Pool**

Todd Frank	Lead Mechanic
Justin Caroen	Mechanic

# TREASURER'S OFFICE



The Treasurer’s Office is required by law to receive and take charge of all funds belonging to the Township, and distribute other funds collected to the appropriate taxing authorities. These collections are primarily real estate and personal property taxes, but also include fines, licenses, permits, deposits, bonds, and fees.

In 2024, The Treasurer’s Office:

- Mailed out 30,000 summer and winter tax bills, and nearly 1,000 special assessment bills
- Provided extensive financial reporting to the Board, auditors, and other taxing authorities
- Provided the Township with nearly two and a half million dollars in interest earnings from long and short-term liquid investments

During the calendar year 2024, the total property tax collected and distributed were \$123,850,242, an increase of ten percent over 2023. Here are the annual revenues for the past five years:

Tax Revenue	Amount	Increase
2024	\$ 123,850,242	10%
2023	\$ 112,892,043	2%
2022	\$ 110,997,504	2%
2021	\$ 109,131,271	4%
2020	\$ 105,219,167	2%

In 2024, we received \$19,088,958 in checks, over \$308,491 in credit card payments, and \$729,711 in cash and currency. Online payments for taxes totaled \$1,372,688 in 2024, a 40% increase over the past 24 months. The Treasurers office and counter are open nine hours a day, five days a week at the Municipal Building.

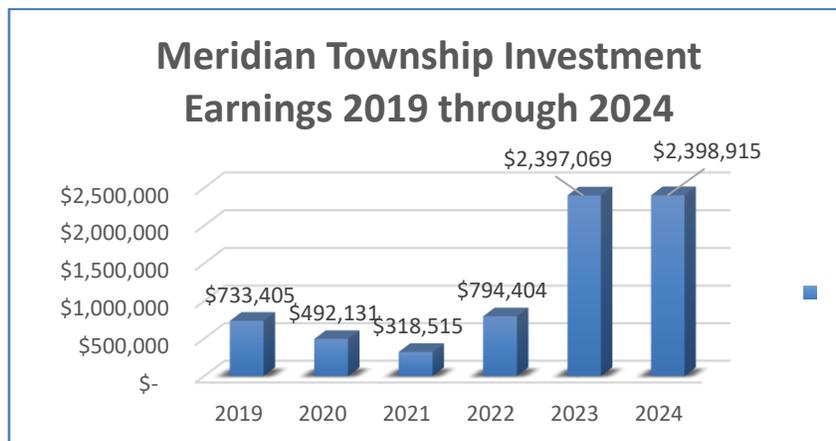
The Treasurer is required to pay out collected funds to local school districts with 10 days of receipt. In Meridian Township, these include the Okemos School District, Haslett School District, East Lansing School District, Williamston School District, and Ingham Intermediate Schools. Other governmental units also were distributed to Ingham County, Lansing Community College (LCC), Capital Area Transit

Authority (CATA), Capital Area District Library (CADL), and the Capital Region Airport Authority (CRAA).

<b>Meridian 2023 Tax Year Distributions</b>	
<b>Education:</b>	
Okemos School District	\$ 17,856,486
Haslett Schools District	\$ 6,382,183
Ingham Intermediate Schools	\$ 13,860,424
East Lansing School District	\$ 2,596,950
Williamston School District	\$ 412,647
<b>Ingham County, LCC, CATA, CADL, &amp; CRAA:</b>	
Ingham County	\$ 37,346,312
Lansing Community College (LCC)	\$ 6,301,483
Capital Area Transit Authority (CATA)	\$ 4,997,942
Capital Area District Library (CADL)	\$ 2,610,897
Capital Region Airport Authority (CRAA)	\$ 1,168,570
<b>Meridian Township:</b>	
Meridian Police, Fire, Parks, and Gen. Govt.	\$ 18,860,255

### Meridian Reserve Funds & Investments

At the end of 2024 the Treasurer’s office managed \$51,510,017 in fixed and non-fixed investments. In 2024, Interest earnings on liquid (cash) investment matched the 2023 earnings. This was largely a result of prudent, safe investments of Certificate of Deposits’ and U.S. Treasuries at higher interest rates.



The interest earned was for the general fund and nine other Township funds maintained by the Treasurer’s office.

# Taxpayer Outreach

With the Winter 2024 taxes, this information sheet was sent out to all taxpayers explaining the millages that are found on their Winter Tax bills. A Summer Tax bill sheet will be included in the Summer 2025 tax bills.

From Township Treasurer Phil Deschaine:  
**What Is On My Winter Tax Bill?**



The calculations below are based on the median taxable value (TV) of properties in Meridian Township of \$116,414. The median state equalized value (SEV), or 50% of a property's market value, is \$147,500.

### Meridian Township



Millage Purpose	Voter Adopted	Expires	Rate	Tax Collected
Operations	1959	N/A	4.1344	\$481
Community Services	2022	2031	0.1474	\$17
Pathways	2016	2028	0.3289	\$38
Fire Protection	2020	2035	0.6302	\$74
Parks & Recreation	2014	2025		\$76
Police Protection	2020	2035		
Land Preservation	2020	2029		
Local Roads	2019	2028		
Fire Station Debt	2012	2024		
Police & Fire Protection	2017	2026		
<b>TOTAL</b>				

\*Meridian Township: [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us)

### Transportation, Libraries, and LCC



Millage Purpose	Voter Adopted	Exp
Lansing Community College	1964	
CATA - Capital Area Transportation Authority	2024	
CADL - Capital Area District Libraries	2022	
Capital Region Airport Authority	N/A	
<b>TOTAL</b>		

\*LCC: [www.lcc.edu](http://www.lcc.edu), CATA: [www.cata.org](http://www.cata.org); CADL: [www.cadl.org](http://www.cadl.org)

To calculate a property's taxes, multiply the taxable value (TV) show millage rate is the amount of tax that a property owner has to pay for the taxes described here are for your winter tax bills. The summer Intermediate School District, Ingham County, and the State Education Commission also pay special assessments like neighborhood street lights and other services. Contact the Township Treasurer at 517.676.8395.

From Township Treasurer Phil Deschaine:  
**What Is On My Winter Tax Bill? (cont.)**



### Ingham County



Millage Purpose	Voter Adopted	Expires	Rate	Tax Collected
911 Emergency Services	2020	2029	0.8483	\$99
Jail/Justice	2018	2037	0.8476	\$99
Basic Health Services	2024	2027	0.6300	\$73
Juvenile Justice	2022	2029	0.6000	\$70
Public Transportation	2020	2026	0.5988	\$70
Affordable Housing	2024	2027	0.5000	\$58
Potter Park Zoo	2020	2026	0.4986	\$58
Parks/Trails	2020	2025	0.4986	\$58
Elder Persons Services	2024	2027	0.3000	\$35
Animal Control	2022	2029	0.1500	\$17
Farmland Preservation	2018	2027	0.1395	\$16
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>5.6114</b>	<b>\$653</b>

\*Ingham County: [www.ingham.org](http://www.ingham.org)

### Local Schools (Okemos, Haslett, East Lansing, and Williamston)



Millage Purpose	Voter Adopted	Expires	Rate	Tax Collected
Operating	N/A	N/A	9.000	\$1048
Less Primary Resident Exemption (PRE)	N/A	N/A	-9.000	(-\$1048)
Debt	N/A	N/A	3.8300	\$446
Building	N/A	N/A	0.7300	\$85
<b>AVERAGE TOTAL (WITH PRE EXEMPTION)</b>			<b>4.5600</b>	<b>\$531</b>

**WINTER 2024 MEDIAN MILLAGE RATE: 29.2563 MILLS**

**MEDIAN WINTER 2024 TAX BILL: \$3,405**



"Our tax bills reflect the essential funding Meridian residents have provided for our police officers, firefighter/paramedics, parks, trails, and to fix our 155 miles of Township neighborhood roads. It has been an honor to serve as your Treasurer for the past six years. If you have any questions, please call my direct line at 517.853.4144, or email [deschaine@meridian.mi.us](mailto:deschaine@meridian.mi.us)."

- Phil Deschaine, Township Treasurer

Again in 2024, the Meridian Township Treasurer’s office provided our resident idents with in-person and online access to tax and utility bill payments. The forms of payments received in the Treasures office continue to trend toward electronic payments.

## Community Engagement

The Treasurer served as a Township Board member and attended twice-monthly meetings and presented quarterly reports to the Board on investments, collections, and distributions.

In 2024 the Treasurer’s staff worked closely with other Township departments and organizations:

- Assisted the assessor with various Tax Tribunal property tax appeal cases.
- Assisted the Finance Director with documentation for the annual audit.
- Served as Chair of the Meridian Township Pension Board.
- Assisted the Meridian Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA).
- Served as the Treasurer of the Meridian Economic Development Corporation (EDC).
- Secretary Treasurer of the Capital Area Transit Authority (CATA).
- Member of the two service clubs: Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs of Haslett & Okemos.
- Board Member of the Capital Area Treasurers Association (CAT).

Residents can receive free tax information on their own property by using the Township website ([www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us)) or calling the Treasurer’s Office at (517) 853-4140.

### TEAM MEMBERS

Phil Deschaine, Treasurer  
Deanne Muliatt, Deputy/Assistant to the Treasurer  
Korissa Freier, Bookkeeper