



**AGENDA**  
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
DECEMBER 2, 2020 7 pm

---

ZOOM MEETING: ID: **867 3903 8953** Password: **5151**

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER
2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA
3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES
4. PUBLIC REMARKS
5. GREEN THEME: A Dialogue with Amber Clark, Neighborhoods & Economic Development Director
6. NEW BUSINESS
  - A. Green Liaisons
  - B. Other
7. OLD BUSINESS
  - A. Green Infrastructure Audit & related Environmental Review
  - B. Green Infrastructure Grants
  - C. Other
8. CHAIR'S REPORT
9. STAFF REPORT
10. WORKGROUP REPORTS & DISCUSSIONS
  - A. Environmental Justice
  - B. Sustainable Development
11. Commission, Committee, and Trustee Reports
  - A. Board of Trustees
  - B. Brownfield Redevelopment Authority
  - C. Energy Team
  - D. Green Team
  - E. Land Preservation Advisory Board
  - F. MI Township Association (MTA) or MI Municipal League (MML)
  - G. Planning Commission
  - H. Transportation Commission
12. PUBLIC REMARKS
13. ADJOURNMENT



## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

WEDNESDAY, November 3, 2020 7:00 PM

**PRESENT:** Tom Frazier, Ned Jackson, Jim Kielbaso, Bill McConnell, John Sarver (Chair), Rose Vadnais (Vice Chair), Courtney Wisinski (Trustee Liaison), Luca Wisinski

**STAFF:** Phil Deschaine (Treasurer), Samantha Diehl, Stephen Gebes, LeRoy Harvey

**GUESTS:** Cliff Walls, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission  
Kendra Grasseschi, Resident

**Approval of Agenda:** Commissioner Kielbaso moved to approve the Agenda. Supported by Commissioner McConnell. Motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes:** Commissioner McConnell mentioned a few edits. Commissioner McConnell moved to approve the Minutes. Supported by Commissioners Jackson and Frazier. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Green Theme: Kendra Thelen Grasseschi**

Grasseschi presented **Saving Our Wetlands**. (see outline below). She also mentioned a Wetland Brochure which she has worked on with Harvey, Walls, and others. Sarver asked about potential distribution including a potential mailing. Harvey mentioned potential inclusion in township newsletters and possible in utility bills and welcomed edits. Masten mentioned a problem with yard waste disposal in wetlands and a related \$75 penalty for not complying. McConnell mentioned that signage has been used and notifying residents that are directly affected should not be too challenging. Treasurer Deschaine mentioned support for building awareness, as we did with reducing litter campaign in the 60s and 70s. Trustee Wisinski appreciated Kendra's contributions and encouraged us to teach residents not just about dumping but also in reestablishing native plants and encouraging residents to share their success stories. Commissioner Kielbaso suggested a companion brochure about composting and yard waste. Grasseschi mentioned a problem with people removing from material from the wetlands and the buffer strips. Commissioner Jackson mentioned importance of mulching (grasscycling) and other alternatives for yard waste. Chairman Sarver also mentioned the Green Infrastructure Grants as another way to reach out to students and parents in schools. Commissioner Luca Wisinski mentioned that schools are still on-line so material might need to be mailed. Grasseschi mentioned that there are already laws on a local, state, and federal level that just need to be understood and enforced.

### **New Business**

Harvey reported that a Regional Environmental Networking Meeting will be held on November 17 at 1pm and to let him know if interested in tuning in.

Sarver mentioned that EGLE will be holding a 2 hour conference related to Climate Change. It's part of the State's Catalyst Communities program. More at [Michigan.gov/EGLEvents](https://www.michigan.gov/EGLEvents)

### **Ongoing Business:**

**Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) Audit & Memo:** Harvey reviewed Walls' summary of the GSI Audit. McConnell suggested preparing a memo to the Planning Commission and seek feedback (a green light? ;-). Masten would also like to encourage expansion of buffer strips and native landscaping around ponds and other wetlands. McConnell agreed that this fits with the current Phase II plans. Harvey shared a slide describing the broader environmental review of our policies and procedures and that there are other emerging opportunities to have input in other areas besides the GSI Audit such as electric vehicle charging ordinance, lawn height (see Cliff Walls' communication), purchasing, green development.

**Green Infrastructure Grant:** Vadnais, Sarver, and Harvey met on 11/2 to review the ideas that the Environmental Commission discussed in October related to a 2021 Green Infrastructure Project. Sarver proposed two \$5000 grants to each school district (Haslett and Okemos) supporting green infrastructure projects. This could be any of the projects we've mentioned (rain garden, green roof, permeable pavement, tree planting, etc.) or other green infrastructure-related initiatives. Projects that are student-led, replicable, innovative, collaborative, and completed in 2021 are envisioned. Vadnais mentioned continued interest in Tree Initiatives in addition to, or as part of, the 2021 Green Infrastructure Grant projects. Sarver asked if others support this plan. Deschaine agreed that this fits with his original vision. Vadnais and Sarver mentioned identifying experts and resource people. L. Wisinski agrees with the plan but also that students have their hands full. Participants affirmed support of the general direction described.

**Staff Report:** Harvey mentioned an upcoming media campaign. He'd like input and assistance. Guest John Esser shared a sound clip that could be used to promote proper disposal of dog poop. Harvey also reported an upcoming presentation to the Township Board on the Tree Planting Initiative, discussions about a spring recycling event, and consideration for improvements at the Meridian Recycling Center. Deschaine invited others to join in at the Board Meeting.

### **Workgroup Reports:**

**Environmental Justice:** Vadnais mentioned a few conversation with C. Wisinski about multi-family recycling as a potential issue. McConnell mentioned that risks of flooding are in older subdivisions on higher value properties. Sarver also consulted the wetland layer map which was informative. <https://www.meridian.mi.us/government/at-your-fingertips/gis-mapping>

**Tree Team:** Vadnais mentioned talking to Cathy DeShambo about E.Lansing's Tree City Designation and hopes to continue these discussions and progress. Kielbaso mentioned a potential barrier if we're required to care for street trees currently controlled by Ingham County.

### **Commission, Committee, and Trustee Reports:**

**Township Board:** C. Wisinski mentioned that she'll be with Meridian for another 4 years! The Board is working on Downtown Okemos development and demolition. There will be some environmental clean up at the old Haslett Village Square.

**Brownfield Development:** Jackson mentioned his excitement tweaking brownfield development agreements at a recent meeting ;-).

**Energy Team:** Sarver mentioned the on-line Solar Home Tour in October. There has been a 70% increase in viewing individual home videos. Sarver reported that the Energy has had discussions about solar installations in 2021. Rob Kaecher has helped evaluate several sites/buildings

**Green Team:** Harvey mentioned the spring recycling event possibility and invited people to contact him if interested in helping. The events require 100 volunteers to implement.

**Land Preservation Advisory Board:** Kielbaso reported that the committee is meeting later in November (18<sup>th</sup>). There is discussion about the East Lansing South Preserve (on both sides of Carlton) and potential improvements. LPAB also discussed the Okemos/Grand River improvements to reduce flooding and potential use of the Central Okemos Uplands for wetland mitigation. Lake Lansing North has a portion that is part of a land preserve. The County is interested in improving existing trails (including bridges) and applying for a State grant. There have been 85 deer harvested to date – there were 83 harvested last year over the entire season. Emma Campbell (our Land Preservation Specialist) is having workshops with the Meridian Conservation Corp including a leaf raking effort at Lake Lansing North from 9:30am – noon at the warming center. In the afternoon at the SW Uplands Preserve, there will be invasive removal. Another invasive species removal at the Tihart Preserve.

**Michigan Township Association:** Frazier reports that the main focus has been on the election. State Proposal #1 (Natural Resource Trust Fund) passed. It provides 25% of the revenue to development and redevelopment projects (such as the project Kielbaso mentioned at Lake Lansing Park).

**Planning Commission:** McConnell reports that he looks forward to sharing a memo and discussing the GSI Audit with the Planning Commission as their agenda allows.

**Transportation Commission:** McConnell mentioned that the MDOT project on M-43 from Playmakers to Okemos Rd. includes diverting water in to the river. He reiterated the importance of reducing run-off on other development projects to reduce flooding.

**Public Comments:** John Esser mentioned attention to jingles that draw attention environmental topics. Masten asked about MTDL water testing (E. Coli) and whether it might track impact of developments like the Lodges with “lots” of impermeable surface. Kielbaso asked if there was an election happened yesterday and if so, if the Land preservation millage was approved ☺. Deschaine reported that it passed by a wide margin. C. Wisinski mentioned that the County Clerk has all the election information on [www.ingham.org](http://www.ingham.org). McConnell voiced appreciation for the amount of volunteer participation in the recent elections and the tree planting day.

**Meeting Adjourned:** Kielbaso moved to adjourn. Supported by Sarver. Motion carried unanimously at 8:44 PM.

## PROTECTING THE WETLANDS

Presentation by Kendra Thelen Grasseschi, MSW,  
LMSW, ACSW Meeting November 4, 2020

Good evening. My name is Kendra Thelen Grasseschi. Along with my husband Mike, we appear before you as (unintended) advocates for the wetlands.

Professionally, I am Clinical Social Worker with 25 years of experience providing psychotherapy.

Often in my practice, clients are asking me help solve their problems. They want me to tell them the action steps of exactly what to do to make things better for them. Sometimes it makes sense for me to directly give them those answers. Other times it is more helpful to ask thoughtful questions to help them find the answers themselves.

Tonight I am going to do both with you, as our identified problem is the need to **Protect the Wetlands!**

Did you know that...?

1. 25% of the township is wetlands.
2. There are local, state, and federal laws mandating that we protect the wetlands.
3. The township board has declared goals to protect the wetlands.

<https://ecode360.com/28776358>

Preservation of the remaining Township wetlands in a natural condition shall be and is necessary to maintain hydrological, economic, recreational, and aesthetic natural resource values for existing and future residents of the Township, and, therefore, the Township Board declares a policy of no net loss of wetlands. Furthermore, the Township Board declares a long-term goal of net gain of wetlands to be accomplished through review of degraded or destroyed wetlands in the Township and, through cooperative work with landowners, using incentives and voluntary agreements to restore wetlands.

4. There is township code already on the books to protect the wetlands and natural vegetation strip. But that code can be hard to understand.

Let's please take the opportunity to educate the Meridian Township on protecting the wetlands. Most people want to do the right thing. They just don't know what that is.

Here are the action steps to protect the wetlands.

1. Let's help them notice the wetlands. Help them understand the importance of the wetlands to them as individuals and as a community. Basically, what is in it for them to care about the wetlands?

2. Let's tell them directly what is okay to do and what it is not okay to do. The easy simple do's and don'ts. Please see the brochure.
3. Repeat those dos and don'ts multiple times and in multiple ways to all ages. This helps for buy in and behavior change.

People for the most part want to do the right thing. They just don't know what to do. Let's help them know what to do.

Let's take advantage of people being stuck in their homes because of COVID. This is an opportunity for people to rediscover nature and the importance of it, especially as we have to be distanced from one another. This is an opportunity to notice what they ordinarily overlook.

I have been encouraging people to go outside & and explore the environment. Take the challenge yourself. Notice how many Wetlands there are in this Township.

As over 25% of the township is wetlands, we have an obligation to protect them. Especially as local, state, and federal laws say that we need to.

So please let's share the do's and don'ts through community outreach & education.

Simple action steps repeated over & over in different mediums.

**Mailed brochures, emails, social media outreach, elementary & secondary science homework, some fun challenge between Okemos and Haslett students and/or residents. Signage for people to notice the wetlands.** These are a few brainstormed ideas shared during LeRoy's Green dialogue.

**The brochure should be mailed to everyone who lives on a wetland. Also given to those who purchase homes/property on a wetland, along with builders and contractors.**

People are overwhelmed with information that's thrown at them. Therefore it needs to be repeated and simple.

Repeated messages are needed for it sink in, as there is too much to distract people.

Likely many of you sitting in front of us are way more intelligent than me about scientific things. But please know that I know about the psychology of people, how to get people to get by in and make needed behavioral changes.

I know you plant to spend time defining terminology during Phase I your Green Infrastructure audit.

But please co-currently educate residents, staff, and contractors on what to do and not do.

We have a real opportunity right now esp. as people need something to focus on other than COVID and the political climate.

Let's unite together to protect the environment.

Let's somehow make it a fun challenge to do so. Simple action steps, fun engaging competition.

Please put energy & resources into community education. That is Part 1 of problem solving, giving you some of the answers.

Part 2 of problem solving is asking yourself...

1. Given that 25% of the township is wetlands, does that help you think differently about the need to protect them? Especially as we have mandated laws, along with township board declared goals to protect the wetlands.
2. How does the township currently fulfill that obligation? And how well are the employees doing their job regarding the wetlands?  
(FYI, we would not be sitting in front of you today if things were going smoothly)
3. How do you plan to educate in Meridian Township on protecting and saving the wetlands?
4. How do you plan to educate and support township employees to do their job to protect the wetlands? How can you support them differently especially as they likely overwhelmed with competing job tasks and demands?
5. How are you going to put into action the suggestions in Part 1 of this presentation?

Most people want to do the right thing. Especially if they know how it benefits them.

**Please educate them repeatedly. The dos and don'ts with simple action steps.**

And if that doesn't work, **please enforce the laws and code already on the books.**

Please Protect the Wetlands! Thank you!

## Environmental Commission Communications

### Kendra Grasseshi writes - 11/6/2020

Good morning Trustee Courtney Wisinski, Treasurer Phil Deschaine, LeRoy Harvey, John Saver, Ned Jackson, J. James Kielbaso, Tom Frazier, Susan Masten, Rose Vadnais, and Luca Wisinski:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about the need to protect the wetlands. Thank you especially to Courtney and LeRoy. I appreciate the discussion and your support!

I also appreciate LeRoy, Emma, and Cliff's help on the brochure, as community education is needed! For the brochure, we worked on it from a positive perspective. To educate the community in order to help them do the right thing with these goals in mind.

1. Helping everyone understand why it is important to protect the wetlands. How it helps them and the community. (clean water, protecting wildlife/ecosystem, reducing flooding, keeping the township beautiful and green!)
2. Helping them know how they can help. The action plan with the simple dos and don'ts.

Parts of our discussion focused on yard waste and that is important to address.

However please know that in our situation (because of our location), we witnessed the wetland ecosystem being destroyed with the removal of trees & stumps, roots, and plants. We also witnessed "fill material" (particularly dirt & pea stone) along with grass seed to extend their lawn into the wetlands. The township wetland consultant advised that 100 native plants be planted to correct the damage.

How often are residents/builders/contractors destroying the wetland ecosystem when there is no one there to see it happening?

Another example, we needed to get our yard graded and a contractor literally said he could put the removed dirt into the wetland. He also said he would do the job if we didn't want a soil erosion permit, but would not if we wanted the permit. We had to tell him all of that was not okay to do!

During our discussion, we talked about how there are laws to protect the wetlands. And if everyone knew that they could face large fines for not following the dos and don'ts, they would comply. Laws for not complying can be up to \$10,000 each day after harming a wetland, until the damage is repaired!

As discussed, that information likely needs to be added on the brochure. If you can get buy in, then maybe a deterrent.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to turn my lemons into lemonade. To help educate the community on the importance of the wetlands, with the simple dos and don'ts. Attached please see the content of my presentation.

Thank you,  
Kendra Grasseschi

## 11/9/2020 Kendra Grasseschi writes...

*We were looking at the code again as our neighbors again broke the rules and mowed in the 20 foot setback yesterday. We found this in the wetland code. Is the environmental commission aware of this? Please let me know. Thanks!*

<https://ecode360.com/28776358>

### 22-123Duties of the environmental commission.

[Code 1974, § 105-16; Ord. No. 2002-07, 8-20-2002; Ord. No. 2011-04, 3-15-2011]

The environmental commission created pursuant to Chapter **2**, Article **VI**, Division 3, shall perform the following duties with regard to this article:

- (1)** Advise the Township Board, Planning Commission, and Director of Community Planning and Development, as necessary, on wetland use permits, appeals of wetland use permits, and mitigation plans.
- (2)** Serve in an advisory role in setting policy guidelines on wetland issues in the Township.
- (3)** Identify conflicts and propose solutions to resolve conflicts regarding wetland protection by present Township ordinances, Township operating procedures, and Township activities.
- (4)** Identify and propose solutions to problems associated with wetland management.
- (5)** Provide recommendations to the Director of Community Planning and Development on map administration.
- (6)** Assist landowners who are interested in the voluntary protection of wetlands.
- (7)** Promote wetland education at all levels. Develop education programs for the public and for Township schools. The program should promote the values of wetlands and awareness of the hazards and threats to wetlands. The program should be particularly targeted to landowners with wetlands and emphasize how best to protect wetland values on their property.
- (8)** Coordinate a voluntary wetland stewardship program. Develop an adopt-a-wetland program for interested citizens to participate more directly in preservation of specific wetlands

## **Cliff Walls writes: 11/17/20**

I've been doing some research into model ordinances for the next phase of the Meridian project and the eventual regional effort (hopefully). Came across Superior, WI who completed the same Audit Toolkit.

Here's how they handles to native vs nuisance grass issue in their ordinance: "Native garden" or "native lawn area", as used in this section, shall mean the planting of species of grass and wild flowers native to North America which are purposely cultivated to exceed 8 inches in height from the ground in a clearly delimited area of a parcel. Specifically excluded from this definition are noxious grasses and weeds specifically mentioned in Wis. Stats. § 66.0407(1), in Wis. NR 40, and turf grass which are non-native to the region.

No area of vegetation that results from neglect, or other failure to maintain, shall constitute a "native garden" or "native lawn area."

More info here: <http://www.ci.superior.wi.us/908/Native-Lawns-and-Gardens>



## Green Infrastructure Grants for Schools

### Background

The Meridian Township Board of Trustees has allocated \$10,000 for green infrastructure projects to be done in 2021. The Board has asked the Environmental Commission to develop a program and the Commission has decided that there are a variety of green infrastructure projects that could and should be done and that partnering with Okemos and Haslett schools would be a good approach for this type of program. The Commission has decided to offer \$5,000 each to Okemos and Haslett schools to develop a student-led, green infrastructure project. The school team would include students, a teacher, and possibly a volunteer “expert” identified by the Environmental Commission. The volunteer “expert” resource person is an option and not a requirement.

### Green Infrastructure Project Ideas

The Environmental Commission has brainstormed some possible project ideas, but is open to ideas from a school teams or elsewhere.

- Rain gardens
- Green roofs
- Permeable pavement
- Other ideas

### Proposals

A mini-proposal from the schools would be required and would have to be approved by a review committee from the Environmental Commission. The mini-proposal will need to cover:

1. Description of project
2. Team members
3. Outreach plan to inform the community
4. Operations and maintenance plan
5. Project schedule
6. Project budget

### Timetable

January 15 – Schools send a letter or email to LeRoy Harvey ([Harvey@meridian.mi.us](mailto:Harvey@meridian.mi.us)) expressing interest in doing a project

February 15 – School teams formed and begin discussions

March 15 – Mini-proposal submitted to Meridian Township

March 30 – Meridian Township completes review of mini-proposals

April 15 – School teams begin projects

July 1 – School teams send status report to LeRoy Harvey

November 30 – Projects completed

### Questions

We’ll try to keep this process as simple as possible from an administrative perspective. We’ve tried to have this grant solicitation be thorough but brief, but we know you may have questions. If you do, please contact LeRoy Harvey, Environmental Programs Coordinator at [Harvey@meridian.mi.us](mailto:Harvey@meridian.mi.us) or any member of the Environmental Commission.