CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
REGULAR MEETING TOWNSHIP BOARD 2023 **-APPROVED-**
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198
517.853.4000, Township Hall Room
TUESDAY, March 21, 2023 **6:00 pm**

PRESENT: Supervisor Jackson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Hendrickson, Sundland, Wilson, Wisinski

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Director of Public Works and Deputy Township Manager Opsommer, Community Planning and Development Director Schmitt, IT Director Gebes, Communications Manager Diehl, Finance Director Garber, Chief of Police Plaga, Fire Chief Hamel, Economic Developer Director Clark, Deputy Clerk Lemaster, Township Attorney Matthew Kuschel

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor Jackson called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS

Supervisor Jackson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLLCALL

Deputy Clerk Lemaster called the roll of the Board. All board members are present.

4. PRESENTATION

A. 2023 Barn of the Year Award – Brad Brogren, Friends of Historic Meridian

Brad Brogren presented the 2023 Barn of the Year Award given this year to Unruh Family Barn in the Meridian Township Historic Village.

B. Police Re-Accreditation

Chief Plaga Introduced Michigan Association of Police Chiefs Executive Director Robert Stevenson and Deputy Director Ronald Wiles.

Director Stevenson awarded a certificate of re-accreditation to Meridian Township Police Department. He explained that out of 600 police agencies in Michigan, Meridian is the 17th police department in the state to be awarded re-accreditation.

Mr. Wiles explained a Police Department must complete over 800 tasks to achieve this accreditation.

Director Stevenson presented the Accreditation certificate to Chief Plaga.

Chief Plaga thanked his staff for their work in meeting the criteria to attain this re-accreditation.

C. Train Derailment – Crisis Management

Chief Plaga started the presentation on Train Derailment Crisis Management. He spoke of the Township Everbridge Emergency System and how law enforcement plays a role in this system.

Chief Hamel gave a presentation on Train Derailment and Crisis Management and spoke about the Fire Departments role in these situations. He gave statistics on train derailments and the different reasons for them. He explained the different potential hazards of train derailments based on the cargo and the appropriate response to each. He detailed the local emergency response given different scenarios. And spoke of the statewide emergency system that can be utilized. He also gave tips on how to prevent train accidents.

Clerk Guthrie asked if the fire department is training for these situations.

Chief Hamel replied they are.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke about the derailment at East Palestine and thanked chief Hamel for the presentation

5. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Supervisor Jackson opened public comment at 6:41 PM.

NONE

Supervisor Jackson closed public comment at 6:41 PM.

6. TOWNSHIP MANAGER REPORT

Deputy Manager Opsommer reported a new emergency siren will be installed on Van Atta Rd. in the next week or two, with full siren coverage of the Township being reached in the next three years. He reported 8 miles of road were treated with chip and fog treatment, and unfortunately some of the treatment has been undone due to snow plows, there will be a community meeting on April 6th at 6pm with residents near the roads that have been treated. Many residents have seen a 5% increase in taxable value of their homes due to the rising cost of housing. Juneteenth events will be announced this week. Township Welcome and Wayfinding Sign Project has seen its first sign installed at the Marketplace on the Green. The 2023 Municipal Building maintenance project is underway, information on township services during construction will be mailed out to residents. Okemos Bridge should see southbound traffic returning this week. A Request for Proposal is out for the 2024 local road program, bids are due by March 30th. Flashlight Easter Hunt will be on April 8th and Nancy Moore Park.

Trustee Hendrickson asked if the Chip and Fog Treatment will have any effect on the 2023 Local Road Program.

Deputy Manager Opsommer replied he is not sure at this time.

7. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS OF ACTIVITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee Wilson

- Attended March 8th Community Resource Meeting
- Attended Senior Center Task Force Meeting last week
- Gun Safety event "Meridian Cares About You: Health and Safety Expo" will be held on May 10th at Market Place on Green which will be hosting many different public safety bodies

Treasurer Deschaine

- Attended March 15th Zoning Board of Appeals
- Attended March 15th CATA Board of Directors Meeting
- Thanked Brad Brogren for his help with historic barn

Clerk Guthrie

- Thanked Brad Brogren for his help with the Unruh Barn
- Attended second year of MAMC last week

Trustee Hendrickson

- The "Meridian Cares About You: Health and Safety Expo" is being partnered with Okemos and Haslett public schools

Trustee Wisinski

- Diversity Equity and Inclusion committee is focusing on the first Meridian Township Pride event
- Attended local St. Patrick's Day parade with Supervisor Jackson

Supervisor Jackson

- Attended March 15th Corridor Improvement Authority Meeting which now has the authority to create a TIF district

8. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Treasurer Deschaine moved to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Trustee Wisinski.

VOICE VOTE: YEAS: Supervisor Jackson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Hendrickson, Sundland, Wilson, Wisinski

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

9. CONSENT AGENDA

Supervisor Jackson reviewed the Consent Agenda.

Trustee Hendrickson moved to approve the Consent Agenda with one Amendment to the minutes. Seconded by Trustee Wilson.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Supervisor Jackson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Hendrickson, Sundland, Wilson, Wisinski

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

A. Communications

Trustee Hendrickson moved that the communications not already assigned for disposition be referred to the Township Manager or Supervisor for follow-up. Seconded by Trustee Wilson.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Supervisor Jackson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Hendrickson, Sundland, Wilson, Wisinski

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

B. Minutes- March 7, 2023 Regular Township Board Meeting Minutes

Trustee Hendrickson moved to approve and ratify the minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 7th, 2023 as amended. Seconded by Trustee Wilson.

Trustee Hendrickson noted the following correction on page seven under item 12.C.

"Trustee Hendrickson asked for the LOCC meeting minutes to be posted in the Municipal Building Vestibule." Should read, "Trustee Hendrickson asked for the LOCC meeting minutes to be posted on the Township Website."

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Supervisor Jackson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Hendrickson, Sundland, Wilson, Wisinski

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

C. Bills

Trustee Hendrickson moved to approve that the Township Board approve the Manager's Bills as follows: Seconded by Trustee Wilson.

Common Cash		**$**	**719,672.38**
Public Works		**$**	**652,797.60**
Trust & Agency		**$**	**268,334.48**
	Total Checks	**$**	**1,640,804.46**
Credit Card Transactions 03/02/2023 to 03/15/2023		**$**	**9,696.74**
	Total Purchases	**$**	**1,650,501.20**
ACH Payments		**$**	**730,551.93**

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Supervisor Jackson, Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Hendrickson, Sundland, Wilson, Wisinski

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

10. QUESTIONS FOR THE ATTORNEY–NONE

11. HEARINGS-NONE

12. ACTION ITEMS

A. Okemos Schools Delegation of Authority for Building Permitting and Inspection

Director Schmitt outlined the Okemos Schools Delegation of Authority for Building Permitting and Inspection for action.

Trustee Wisinski moved to authorize the Township Manager to sign and submit the request to the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs for delegation of school plan review and inspection authority for the Okemos School District to the Charter Township of Meridian Building Department. Seconded by Clerk Guthrie.

Trustee Wisinski spoke in support of this item.

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Hendrickson, Sundland, Wilson, Wisinski, Supervisor Jackson

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

B. Resolution in Support of the FY 2024 CPF Application for the Village of Okemos

Deputy Manager Opsommer outlined the resolution in support of the FY 2024 CPF Application for the Village of Okemos for action.

Treasurer Deschaine moved to adopt the Resolution in support of the Fiscal Year 2024 CPF Application for the Village of Okemos Project. Seconded by Clerk Guthrie.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke in support of this item.

Clerk Guthrie spoke in support of this item.

Trustee Hendrickson spoke in support of this item.

VOICE VOTE: YEAS: Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Hendrickson, Sundland, Wilson, Wisinski, Supervisor Jackson

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

C. Resolution in Support of the FY 2024 CPF Application for the Meridian Township Senior Community Center

Trustee Wilson moved to adopt the resolution in support of the Fiscal Year 2024 CPF application for the Meridian Township Senior & Community Center. Seconded by Trustee Hendrickson.

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of this item.

Trustee Hendrickson spoke in support of this item.

VOICE VOTE: YEAS: Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Hendrickson, Sundland, Wilson, Wisinski, Supervisor Jackson

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

13. BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Purchasing Policy Update

Director Garber outlined the Purchasing Policy Update for discussion.

Trustee Wisinski asked how comfortable Director Garber is with the lack of approval supervisor approval prior to making a purchase.

Director Garber replied that staff can make purchases on township credit cards in similar fashion.

Trustee Wisinski asked if you would need approval to enter purchase orders or if any staff can make a purchase order.

Director Garber replied any staff can make a purchase order.

Trustee Wilson asked if the number of credit card holders have been reduced.

Director Garber replied it has.

Trustee Hendrickson noted his concern with allowing anyone making a purchase without any approval.

Clerk Guthrie thanked director Garber for her work on this. She noted staff currently must sign a personnel policy stating they will use township money ethically. She further noted she does not want to include extra steps for the current purchase order process.

Treasurer Deschaine asked how the framework of this policy was created.

Director Garber replied it's based on staff feedback and previous places she has worked.

Treasurer Deschaine noted it is unlikely that that a staff member would make a purchase without first alerting their supervisor.

Trustee Wisinski asked if one level of preapproval from the manager could be implemented and would support a basic preapproval process.

Clerk Guthrie noted there is an approval process already in place.

Supervisor Jackson asked if this is for credit card purchases and invoiced purchases for less than $1000.

Director Garber replied it is.

Supervisor Jackson asked if it the purchaser's choice whether to use a credit card or invoice a purchase order.

Director Garber replied it is the purchaser's choice the majority of the time.

Supervisor Jackson asked if these policies were in place during the recent credit card audit.

Director Garber replied they were.

Supervisor Jackson noted there was no issues found during the audit, and that there was only one small change suggested.

Supervisor Jackson asked if the system appeared to work well.

Director Garber replied she is trying to make the purchase order process consistent with the credit card policy.

Supervisor Jackson spoke in support of this item.

Trustee Hendrickson reiterated that he would like supervisor approval before making a purchase to avoid mistakes.

Treasurer Deschaine noted employees don't make purchases without prior approval.

Deputy Manager Opsommer brought up his experience with the current purchase order system and noted each director is signing off on purchases before they are made.

Trustee Wilson asked if any others helped put this policy together.

Director Garber replied much of this policy already existed, but that she did work on it with other Directors.

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of this item.

Supervisor Jackson noted this item should come back in the next meeting for action.

B. Travel Policy Update

Director Garber outlined the Travel Policy Update for discussion. She explained this covers meal rates.

Clerk Guthrie thanked Director Garber for her work on this and asked if the Township Supervisor currently provides travel reimbursements.

Treasurer Deschaine explained as the board answers to the supervisor it makes sense for her to approve the board's reimbursements.

Clerk Guthrie noted that she is not aware if this happens currently.

Clerk Guthrie noted she would like to see meal reimbursements match the federal rates, or the maximum Per Diem of $59.

Supervisor Jackson asked if there is a reason for the difference in standards between meals and mileage.

Director Garber replied she would investigate.

Trustee Wisinski noted she would like to see meal reimbursements meet the federal guidelines.

Supervisor Jackson stated she would like to see additional information on the meal standards.

The board recessed at 7:50 pm.

The board resumed at 7:58 pm.

C. Ordinance 2022-16 – Sign Ordinance update

Director Schmitt outlined Ordinance 2022-16 Sign Ordinance update for discussion. He noted changes in Professional office district where the allowable size of freestanding signs has gone from 25 to 32 square feet and the allowable size of wall signs has increased from 20 to 30 square feet. In commercial districts any business with street frontage may now have a wall sign and the size of free standing signs has been changed to 38 square feet. Off premise and on premise signs will have different regulation standards. Standards have been added to Section 23 regarding electronic message signs. The last change mentioned is to Section 26 and allows the board to grant a waiver of some sign requirements during construction projects.

Trustee Wisinski thanked Director Schmitt for his work on this ordinance. She asked about the board allowing temp signs during construction.

Director Schmitt replied these waivers would start with planning staff and be brought to the board for approval.

Trustee Wilson asked if there is any regulation over content.

Director Schmitt replied he is doing his best to avoid content regulations.

Trustee Wilson asked about neon signs.

Director Schmitt replied if the sign meets illumination standards it will be allowed.

Treasurer Deschaine asked if the changes to electronic signs allows a non-scrolling message that can only change once every 24 hours for safety purposes.

Director Schmitt replied that is correct.

Treasurer Deschaine asked about murals being allowed to cover an entire side wall of the property and noted his concerns with advertising through a mural.

Supervisor Jackson noted that there are restrictions that do not allow a mural to be used as a business tool.

Attorney Kuschel replied the distinction is between commercial and non-commercial use. He further noted he can look at the mural to make the distinction if it's a painting or an advertisement.

Treasurer Deschaine asked if the wall sign allowance of one square foot of signage per square footage of frontage is still used in this ordinance.

Director Schmitt replied it is.

Treasurer Deschaine asked how wall signs would work in a shared office building.

Director Schmitt replied the business wishing to display a wall sign would have to prove their frontage.

Treasurer Deschaine asked about multi-level frontage.

Director Schmitt replied there is a maximum limit of up to 30 square feet.

Treasurer Deschaine asked if four tenants shared one building and had a free standing sign would they all share the single sign.

Director Schmitt replied that is correct.

Trustee Hendrickson noted the maximum time for temporary signs to be in place is 60 days, he asked what recourse a citizen has against a temporary sign that has exceeded that time limit.

Director Schmitt replied you would first need to alert the Community and Planning Department. Once the department is aware of the sign the 60 day clock would start.

Trustee Hendrickson spoke about candidates handing out signs to supporters during a primary election and leaving them up until the general election leading to a large number of temporary signs being in place for the better part of nine months.

Director Schmitt replied he would have to change the ordinance to address that issue should it happen.

Trustee Hendrickson asked how to identify a sign as a farm stand sign.

Attorney Kuschel replied that would be interpretive work.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke about "We Believe" signs and asked if they would be illegal after being in place for 61 days.

Director Schmitt replied those could be interpreted as an on premise sign which are allowed for longer than 60 days.

Supervisor Jackson asked about residential flags being installed without a building permit.

Director Schmitt replied anything being installed with a footing generally requires a building permit.

Supervisor Jackson asked about commercial zones not allowing signs on the rear of a building.

Director Schmitt replied that is correct. If you do not have frontage you do not get a wall sign, however they may use a freestanding sign.

Trustee Sundland asked if a business has both a front and back entrance, could they have a rear wall sign.

Director Schmitt replied that question may need to be revisited.

Deputy Manager Opsommer noted the Zoning Board of Appeals will generally make an exception if the situation calls for it.

Clerk Guthrie asked if there are requirements for a business to take down their sign if they leave the property.

Director Schmitt replied there is no requirement for a sign be removed with the business.

Clerk Guthrie noted she would like to see language that requires a business remove its sign when it leaves.

Supervisor Jackson asked why section 12(5) doesn't address Clerk Guthrie's previous question.

Attorney Kuschel replied that section only covers non-conforming signs.

Clerk Guthrie asked why the size of a wall sign has been increased from 20 to 30 square feet and freestanding signs have been increase from 25 to 32 square feet.

Director Schmitt replied it's to cover commonly seen variances.

Clerk Guthrie asked why the maximum height of a freestanding sign has been dropped from 16 feet to 6 feet.

Director Schmitt replied office tenants generally don't use 16 foot free standing signs.

Treasurer Deschaine asked if a home based business is permitted a sign.

Director Schmitt replied a home-based business is permitted a non-illuminated of 2 square feet.

Clerk Guthrie asked about garden flags.

Director Schmitt replied garden flags are not currently covered under the ordinance.

Supervisor Jackson noted she is ready for a clean copy of this ordinance.

14. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Supervisor Jackson opened public remarks at 8:47 pm.

NONE

Supervisor Jackson closed public remarks at 8:47 pm.

15. OTHER MATTERS AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS-NONE

16. ADJOURNMENT

Treasurer Deschaine moved to adjourn. Seconded by Trustee Wisinski.

VOICE VOTE: YEAS: Clerk Guthrie, Treasurer Deschaine, Trustees Hendrickson, Sundland, Wilson, Wisinski, Supervisor Jackson

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 pm.

PATRICIA H. JACKSON,
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

DEBORAH GUTHRIE
TOWNSHIP CLERK