

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
REGULAR MEETING TOWNSHIP BOARD 2023 -APPROVED-  
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198  
517.853.4000, Township Hall Room  
TUESDAY, April 04, 2023 6:00 pm

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

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Township Manager Walsh, 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, Assessor Winstead, Parks and Recreation Director Maisner, Director of Operations Massie

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. March Board of Review Update

Assessor Winstead gave a presentation on the March Board of Review. She noted this was a record year of inflation, but the Board of Review still went well. First time since 1994 the state inflation cap was reached. 72 people attended the March Board of review compared to last year's 42. 57 appeals this year. Assessed value for the township is about 2.5 billion taxable value is roughly 2.1 billion. 15,549 parcels, 14,000 are real property.

Trustee Hendrickson asked how many appeals were successful.

Assessor Winstead replied roughly 20%.

Treasurer Deschaine commented the Board of Review is a very pleasant process. He noted the difference between assessed value and taxable value is about 15%. He noted the time those values are the most similar is right after purchasing a home.

B. Township Emergency Siren Update

Fire Chief Hamel gave a presentation on the Township Emergency Sirens. He noted a siren has recently been installed on Van Atta Rd., and the next three should be installed in 2026.

Treasurer Deschaine noted a coverage gap south of Grand River Rd. by The Ponds.

Chief Hamel replied that gap will be adjusted.

Supervisor Jackson asked about siren testing.

Chief Hamel replied there is a silent test every Saturday. The first Saturday every month a 15 second, loud test, is performed. They are also checked annually.

Supervisor Jackson asked about what should be done if you hear a siren.

Chief Hamel replied always check the radio, and the weather service. If the weather emergency is in fact happening go to a basement or a room with no windows.

#### C. Government Finance Officers Association Recognition

Director Garber gave a presentation on the Government Finance Officers Association recognition and noted the township achieved the Certificate of Achievement of Financial Recording. This is the 25<sup>th</sup> consecutive year the township has received this award.

#### D. 2022-2023 Deer Management Summary

Emma Campbell, Land Stewardship Coordinator, gave a presentation on the 2022-2023 Deer Management program. 356 deer harvested in this year's harvest. Over 7964 pounds of venison have been donated to 16 different local food banks. She noted a decrease in car accidents since 2011 when the deer cull was started. The goal is to reduce to annual deer car collisions to 100 which should take about 300 deer culled per year.

Trustee Sundland thanked Ms. Campbell for the program update and noted she has seen the results herself firsthand.

Clerk Guthrie asked if only doe are harvested.

Ms. Campbell replied only antlerless deer are harvested, including bucks with small antlers.

Clerk Guthrie asked if the deer cull is brought to the board for approval.

Director Maisner replied Parks and Recreation comes to the board regularly about the deer cull.

Trustee Wilson noted over 1100 pounds of venison was delivered to food pantry she is involved in.

Trustee Wisinski asked why vehicle and deer collisions is the metric used to track deer populations.

Ms. Campbell replied it's hard to choose a metric based on population, but this metric tells them the population is being managed.

Treasurer Deschaine asked what would be a good number of a deer per square mile.

Ms. Campbell replied it's hard to say.

Treasurer Deschaine asked if there are alternatives to using firearms.

Ms. Campbell replied there are alternatives however there are financial and moral questions involved with those alternatives.

Supervisor Jackson asked about the safety of the program.

Ms. Campbell replied there have been no major accidents in the program at this time.

5. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Supervisor Jackson opened public comment at 6:40 PM.

Heather Goddard, 5690 Babitt St., Haslett spoke about excessive vehicle speed on Haslett Rd. She asked to place a stop sign on Ridgeway Dr. She also spoke about heavy traffic on Babitt St. and the lack of sidewalks.

Supervisor Jackson closed public comment at 6:44 PM.

6. TOWNSHIP MANAGER REPORT

Manager Walsh spoke about the state of the finance department a year ago and how important the award they received for 2022 is. Next week is the 58<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Palm Sunday Tornados. Thursday night is the community meeting concerning the Chip and Fog Road Treatments. The new township signs are being installed. The building renovation has begun and will be in full effect April 21<sup>st</sup>, each resident has been sent a letter containing info on where they may locate different township services. Celebrate Meridian will be on June 24. The Juneteenth events will be held June 16-18<sup>th</sup>. The first Meridian Pride Event will be held on August 26<sup>th</sup>. Public Safety building improvements are underway. The Village of Okemos Project developers will meet with township officials via zoom tomorrow to discuss the community conversation scheduled on May 9<sup>th</sup>. The township will be handling all of the Okemos Schools construction permits to bring in roughly \$788,000 of revenue into the township. The Five-Year Master Plan is moving forward. Director Maisner and Manager Diehl are working on the latest "Family Fun Guide". The first hearing of the lawsuit with "The Ponds" is on April 13<sup>th</sup>. Woodward Way is nearly complete. The senior center work is continuing.

Trustee Hendrickson asked about updates on local road program.

Manager Walsh replied that construction debris is currently being cleaned up from the last project. The 2023 local road program bids are in and the program will be presented at the next meeting. Bayshore Dr., Wardcliff Dr., and Wellington Dr. are being added to the Road Program Schedule.

Clerk Guthrie noted the Okemos Bridge still has cones in the middle of it and asked if there is a plan for the middle of the bridge.

Manager Walsh replied there will be a left-hand turn lane, and there will be some green space included sometime in the future.

## 7. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS OF ACTIVITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee Wilson

- Meridian Cares about You: Health and Safety Expo will take place May 10<sup>th</sup> 5-8pm.
- Continuing work with the Community Senior Center Task Force

Trustee Wisinski

- Attended Wetland Education Team meeting today
- An educational mailer is going out to residents adjacent to wetlands
- Environmental Commission will be tomorrow, five applications are in for Green Grants

Clerk Guthrie

- The Clerk's office will be located in the building next to 2/42 Church during renovations
- Voting Records are being maintained and election training is taking place during the off year
- Working with the Fire Department to develop Continuity of Operations Plans
- Announced the Friends of Historic Meridian are holding an informational meeting tomorrow for any who wish to volunteer
- Congratulated Okemos's own Robyn Fralick who will be the new MSU women's basketball coach

Treasurer Deschaine

- Poverty Exemptions for any families of four making at or below \$30,000 a year you are eligible for 100% tax abatement while a family of four making at or below \$45,000 a year is eligible for a 50% tax abatement. If you are at or below those limits please contact the Treasurer's office at (517)853-4140 or the Assessor's office at (517)853-4400

## 8. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

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 as presented. Seconded by Trustee Wisinski.**

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 21, 2023 Regular Township Board Meeting Minutes

**Trustee Hendrickson moved to approve and ratify the minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023 as presented. 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

C. Bills

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

<b>Common Cash</b>	\$	<b>288,676.14</b>
<b>Public Works</b>	\$	<b>186,067.26</b>
<b>Trust &amp; Agency</b>	\$	<b>1.47</b>
<b>Total Checks</b>	\$	<b>474,744.87</b>
<b>Credit Card Transactions</b>	\$	<b>9,204.78</b>
<b>03/16/2023 to 03/29/2023</b>		
<b>Total Purchases</b>	\$	<b>483,949.65</b>
<b>ACH Payments</b>	\$	<b>963,833.25</b>

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

D. Disposal of Surplus Vehicles

**Trustee Hendrickson moved to authorize the disposal of the 2013 Ford Expedition EL Multipurpose Vehicle (MPV), VIN # 1FMJK1G56DEF40124, and the 1999 Pierce Model Tilt Cab Truck, VIN #4P1CT02S7XA001399. 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

10. QUESTIONS FOR THE ATTORNEY-NONE

11. HEARINGS-NONE

12. ACTION ITEMS

A. Ordinance 2022-16-Sign Ordinance Update-Introduction

Director Schmitt outlined Ordinance 2022-16 for introduction. He noted definition for abandoned signs and how to address those signs are the only changes since last review.

**Trustee Hendrickson moved to adopt the resolution approving for introduction Zoning Amendment 2022-16 to amend Article VII of the Zoning Ordinance of the Charter Township of Meridian to update the sign regulations for the Township. Seconded by Clerk Guthrie.**

Trustee Hendrickson spoke in support of this item and thanked all involved for their work on this.

Clerk Guthrie spoke in support of this item and thanked all involved for their work on this.

Treasurer Deschaine asked if other communities have updated their sign ordinances.

Director Schmitt is not aware of how many have made these updates but they are happening steadily.

Treasurer Deschaine asked if any of these jurisdictions have faced any challenges to the Ordinance.

Clerk Guthrie asked about a business that may be allowed to place a sign that previously was not allowed will be contacted.

Director Schmitt replied he will not contact them directly but they will inevitably call.

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

#### B. Purchasing Policy Update

Director Garber outlined the Purchasing Policy Update for action.

#### **Clerk Guthrie moved to approve the updated Meridian Township Purchasing Policy. Seconded by Treasurer Deschaine.**

Clerk Guthrie spoke in support of this item.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke in support of this item.

Trustee Hendrickson asked how one would buy a good without a purchasing card.

Director Garber replied the employee would talk to their supervisor or director and ask if they could purchase this item, once approved they would purchase the item and enter it into the accounts payable program.

Trustee Hendrickson asked why the written policy does not include director or supervisor approval prior to purchase of goods and services.

Director Garber replied it's more an informal conversation with a director.

Trustee Hendrickson asked that he would like to see adding the three words prior to purchase after required to approvals.

Trustee Wisinski noted that she would like to see supervisor or director approval written into the policy as well, even if it's just by email.

**Trustee Hendrickson moved to amend Clerk Guthrie's motion to update the purchasing policy on page six, required approvals, to read as follows: all small purchases shall be approved by the departmental supervisor and department director prior to purchase.**

Manager Walsh noted that he believes the language is diminishing the role of their team and noted if this policy is abused employees would be terminated.

Treasurer Deschaine noted we are a policy governance board and to get too involved in township processes would be overstepping.

Trustee Wisinski noted she is comfortable with the policy as presented.

**Trustee Hendrickson withdrew his previous motion.**

Supervisor Jackson noted it should be made clear that Departmental Supervisor is who is being referred to not the Township Supervisor.

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

NAYS: Trustee Hendrickson

Motion carried: 6-1

#### C. Travel Policy Update

Director Garber outlined the Travel Policy Update for action.

**Trustee Wilson moved to approve the updated Meridian Township Travel and Expense Policy. Seconded by Trustee Wisinski.**

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of this item.

Trustee Wisinski asked why Mileage Reimbursement uses the IRS reimbursable rate and why we don't use the same for meal reimbursement.

Director Garber replied IRS meal reimbursement rates vary based on geographical location.

Clerk Guthrie noted the federal guideline is \$59 per day, while this policy allowance is \$51. She noted if the federal guidelines are followed it should cut down on admin work. She further noted the Township Manager should be signing off on requests and not the Supervisor.

Treasurer Deschaine stated that having the Township Manager approve reimbursements could be a conflict of interest.

Manager Walsh noted that approving expenses through the Supervisor can be difficult if the Supervisor travels a lot. He noted all expenses for travel should come through him. He noted the meal reimbursement per diem can be abused during conferences that provide food.

Trustee Wilson asked if the numbers in the policy are based on state rates.

Manager Walsh replied these numbers were very low until roughly a year ago. The numbers before the board now are a rough average from multiple communities in the state.

Clerk Guthrie stated she believes the daily maximum meal rate of \$51 should be changed to \$59.

**Clerk Guthrie moved to amend the meal reimbursement to \$14 for breakfast \$16 for lunch \$29 for dinner with a daily maximum of \$59 based off of the average GSA across the state. Seconded by Trustee Hendrickson.**

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

**Trustee Hendrickson moved to recess for 10 minutes. Seconded by Clerk Guthrie.**

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

**Trustee Wilson moved to amend the Official's Business section by removing the third and fourth sentences, while the 5<sup>th</sup> sentence should read "The Township Manager and or Finance Director shall approve the reimbursable expenses of Township Board, Commissions, and employees." Trustee Hendrickson.**

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

D. Resolution in Support of the Meridian Cares About You: Health and Safety Expo

**Trustee Wilson moved to adopt the resolution in support of the "Meridian Cares About You: Health and Safety Expo". Seconded by Trustee Hendrickson.**

Trustee Wilson spoke about the unfortunate events recently in the community and noted that she and Trustee Hendrickson came together to hold this event with the local schools. She noted food will be available, as well as performances by local talent.

Trustee Hendrickson spoke in support of this item and thanked those who helped create this event.

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

E. Corridor Improvement Authority Reappointment

**Supervisor Jackson moved to reappoint Barry Goetz to the corridor improvement authority for a 4 year term ending 12/31/2027. Seconded by Treasurer Deschaine.**

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

F. Downtown Development Authority Appointment

**Treasurer Deschaine moved to appoint Don Romain to the Downtown Development authority for a term ending 12/31/25. Seconded by Clerk Guthrie.**

Treasurer Deschaine spoke in support of this item.

Clerk Guthrie spoke in support of this item.

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

G. Resolution in Support of the FY 2024 CPF Application for the Village of Okemos Workforce Housing Mixed Use Development

Director Clark outlined Resolution in support of the FY 2024 CPF Application. She explained the only change to the project is the name.

**Trustee Wilson moved to adopt the resolution in support of the Fiscal Year 2024 CPF application for the Village of Okemos Workforce Housing and Mixed-Use Redevelopment Project. Seconded by Trustee Wisinski.**

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of this item.

Trustee Wisinski spoke in support of this item.

Supervisor Jackson asked why fiscal year 2024 is significant to this motion.

Director Clark replied the funds must be appropriated by fiscal year 2024.

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

13. BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Ordinance 2023-04 – rezone 5677 Cade Street – PO to RB

Director Schmitt outlined Ordinance 2023-04 Rezone 5677 Cade Street PO to RB. He explained the Planning Commission and staff fully support the rezoning.

Treasurer Deschaine asked if this was one time a residential parcel that was rezoned to professional office.

Director Schmitt replied not that he could tell based on our research.

Clerk Guthrie asked if the barn is part of this property.

Director Schmitt replied it is not.

Trustee Wilson asked if this is at the back of a property that fronts on a residential home.

Director Schmitt replied it is.

Trustee Sundland asked if the applicant only wants to change the parcels zoning back to residential.

Director Schmitt replied that is the case.

Trustee Wilson asked if the applicant will require variances to build an addition on the property.

Director Schmitt replied she should not.

Trustee Hendrickson spoke in support of this item.

14. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Supervisor Jackson opened public remarks at 8:44 pm.

NONE

Supervisor Jackson closed public remarks at 8:44 pm.

15. OTHER MATTERS AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS-NONE

16. CLOSED SESSION -**Motion to go into closed session to discuss a written confidential legal opinion from the township attorney regarding recreational marijuana**

**Trustee Hendrickson moved to go into closed session to discuss a written confidential legal opinion from the township attorney regarding recreational marijuana. Seconded by Trustee Wisinski.**

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

The board entered into closed session at 8:45 pm.

The board returned to open session at 10:09 pm.

17. ADJOURNMENT

**Trustee Hendrickson moved to adjourn. Seconded by Treasurer Deschaine.**

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

**The meeting was adjourned at 10:09 pm.**

  
PATRICIA H. JACKSON,  
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

  
DEBORAH GUTHRIE  
TOWNSHIP CLERK