

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
REGULAR MEETING TOWNSHIP BOARD 2023 - APPROVED  
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198 517.853.4000,  
Township Hall Room  
TUESDAY, June 20th, 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, Township Attorney John Brennan

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor Jackson called the meeting to order at 6:01 pm.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/INTRODUCTIONS

Supervisor Jackson led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLLCALL

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

4. PRESENTATION

A. AED Program for Businesses - This presentation was withdrawn.

5. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Supervisor Jackson opened public comment at 6:03 PM.

Marc Santucci (5909 Blythefield Drive, East Lansing, MI 48823) spoke on marijuana.

Bob Baldori (2719 Mt. Hope Road, Okemos, MI 48864) spoke on marijuana. Marcus

Baldori (2719 Mt. Hope Road, Okemos, MI 48864) spoke on marijuana. Supervisor

Jackson closed public comment at 6:09 PM.

6. TOWNSHIP MANAGER REPORT

Township Manager Frank Walsh spoke on:

- Six upcoming township board listening sessions
- The local road program, and gave kudos to Dan Opsommer.
- Robert's Rules training sessions
- Celebrate Meridian
- Meridian Pride
- Municipal building renovation project
- Award application for Meridian Cares
- Continued work with CATA
- The Woodward Way affordable housing project
- Juneteenth Freedom Fest
- Michigan Municipal Executives (MME)
- Police Awards 2023

## 7. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS OF ACTIVITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee Hendrickson

- Spoke on the Police Award Ceremony

Treasurer Deschaine

- Discussed the move towards a new banking partner to better protect the township from future cyber-attacks.
- Summer tax bills will start being sent out next week, and should arrive by July 1<sup>st</sup> to residents.
- Attended the Community Resource Fair
- Spoke on the Police Award Ceremony

Trustee Wisinski

- Spoke on the Environmental Commission's previous meeting where they discussed the environment sustainability plan.
- Attended Lansing Pride and spoke highly of it. She also gave kudos to Senior Planner Brian Shorkey for his work during the event.

Supervisor Jackson

- Thanked Police Chief Plaga for his leadership.
- Attended the Freedom Fest Event and spoke highly of it.

## 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

10. QUESTIONS FOR THE ATTORNEY

A. NONE

11. HEARINGS

Supervisor Jackson opened the public hearing at 6:24 pm.

A. Sierra Ridge Final Preliminary Plat Extension

Community Planning and Development Director Schmitt outlined the Public Hearing for the Board.

Applicant Representative Jerry Fedewa (5570 Okemos Road & 6099 Lake Drive, Okemos, MI 48864) outlined his case to the Board. He made particular note of the wetland areas behind any future home extensions, thus increasing costs for any stub street or construction to the east.

David Pierson (1142 South Washington Avenue Lansing, Michigan 48910) noted that there have been previous requests for a plat extensions to the south and to the east and they have objected to each of them. He further noted that the state statute for subdivisions has stated that when you develop a subdivision that you must provide suitable access to said subdivision. The township subdivision ordinance also calls for continuity of roads. He stated that in 2003, there were other options for access roads to the north, however, the Township took ownership first in the form of Towner Road Park

& the Township Preserve. Consumer's Energy also took a portion of land via a cell tower placement. He stated that, given the previous points, it compels the conclusion that there is only one suitable access available, which is through Sierra Ridge.

Mark Clouse (300 S Washington Square Suite 400, Lansing, MI 48933) noted that there have been multiple stub streets built by his organization, and he reiterated the township's goals of connectivity between neighborhoods.

Applicant Representative Jerry Fedewa stated that the engineer that the EYDE Company hired for this case was specifically brought on to back up their claim that the only suitable access available was through Sierra Ridge. He further stated that he wasn't aware that this would be an avenue for the lawyers to discuss the case to the "jury" of the Township Board. He further noted that they do want to go through with the development and asked if there were any new conditions for this plat.

Supervisor Jackson asked Director Schmitt of the actual purpose of this hearing.

Director Schmitt deferred the question to Township Attorney John Brennan.

Township Attorney John Brennan (4151 Okemos Rd, Okemos, MI 48864) mirrored Director Schmitt's comments from the start of the case hearing. He noted that this plat was originally approved in 2003 as a cul de sac, with no requirement of a stub road. During the first renewal, the Township Attorney at the time suggested "kicking the can" down the line, thus leaving the issue unresolved. He further noted that this case is not to determine *where* a connection can be done, but *if* a connection could be done on the property to the east. If approved, the location would be decided by the applicant and the Township staff. He stated that he and his team disagree to some extent with both parties, however, he further states that they recommend that they should approve this, given that it will dry up the reasoning behind the litigation.

Hearing closed at 7:08pm.

## 12. ACTION ITEMS

### A. Sierra Ridge Final Preliminary Plat Extension

Director Schmitt outlined the Sierra Ridge Final Preliminary Plat Extension for action. He noted that on the Resolution, the 6<sup>th</sup> whereas should read 2007, not 2005.

Trustee Hendrickson moved to adopt the resolution to extending preliminary plat approval for Sierra Ridge Estates to July 1, 2025 subject to a connection point meeting local ordinance and land division act requirements being provided to the property to the east with the following amendment in the sixth whereas updating 2005 to 2007. Supported by Clerk Guthrie.

Trustee Hendrickson spoke on the preliminary plat extension.

Treasurer Deschaine questioned whether Applicant Representative Fedewa was contesting the extension before the board.

Applicant Representative Fedewa stated that he doesn't want to jeopardize his current ongoing housing project, and in short, no he is not contesting this.

Treasurer Deschaine inquired if Mr. Fedewa understood the importance of having neighborhoods connected to each other, of which Mr. Fedewa stated that he agreed and understood.

Applicant Representative Fedewa expressed dissatisfaction on how mediation with the EYDE company has gone. He further stated that he believes that this land will ultimately be sold after the stub road is put in.

Trustee Wilson gave thanks to Township Attorney Brennan for making this issue legally clear to the Board, and stated support for the motion.

Township Manager Walsh suggested a vote, as he doesn't believe it would be productive to continue the dialogue during this meeting.

Trustee Wisinski also gave thanks to Township Attorney Brennan, and gave support for this motion.

Supervisor Jackson reiterated the case and called for a rollcall vote.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

RECESS START 7:20PM

RECESS END 7:28PM

B. Ordinance 2022-19: Marijuana Zoning Ordinance Updates – Introduction

Community Planning and Development Director Schmitt outlined the update for the Board.

Trustee Hendrickson moved to adopt the resolution approving for introduction zoning amendment 2022-19 in ordinance to amend the zoning ordinance of the Charter Township of Meridian to update the standards for marijuana related businesses in the township and reduce the areas in which they are permitted. Supported by Trustee Wilson.

Trustee Hendrickson spoke on marijuana overlays.

Trustee Wilson spoke on recreational marijuana & marijuana overlays.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke on recreational marijuana & marijuana overlays.

Supervisor Jackson reiterated the case and called for a rollcall vote.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

**C. Ordinance 2023-02: Recreational Marijuana Licensing – Introduction**

Community Planning and Development Director Schmitt outlined the case for the Board. He highlighted three changes to the ordinance that came at the Board's request.

Trustee Wisinski moved to adopt the resolution approving for introduction text amendment 2023-02, an ordinance amending the code of the Charter Township of Meridian Ingham County, to rename chapter 40, repeal article 3 of chapter 40 and adding article 4 to chapter 40, which authorizes and permits recreational marijuana establishments. Supported by Trustee Hendrickson.

Trustee Wisinski spoke in support of this item.

Trustee Hendrickson spoke in support of this item and gave kudos to the staff involved.

Clerk Guthrie inquired about the spelling of marijuana – was it with an “H” or a “J”.

Director Schmitt stated that they are interchangeable, and that legally you see it spelt with an “H” more frequently.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke appreciation paragraph 22, which discusses unusual hardships.

**ROLL CALL VOTE:**

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

D. Ordinance 2023-03: Marijuana Licensing Update – Introduction

Community Planning and Development Director Schmitt outlined the case for the Board.

Treasurer Deschaine moved to adopt the resolution approving for introduction text amendment 2023-03, an ordinance amending the code of the Charter Township of Meridian Ingham County, to amend chapter 40 article 2 commercial medical marijuana facilities. Supported by Trustee Wisinski.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke in support of the resolution.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

E. Zoning Board of Appeals Appointment

Supervisor Jackson offered Anthony Bennett for alternate of Zoning Board of Appeals.

Treasurer Deschaine moved to approve the appointment of Anthony Bennett as an alternate to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a term ending in 12/31/2024. Supported by Trustee Wilson.

VOICE VOTE:

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

F. Nancy Moore Park Accessibility Improvements – SPARK Grant Application

Township Manager Walsh presented the case to the Board in lieu of Parks and Recreation Director Maisner.

Trustee Wilson moved to support the attached resolution of support to submit an application to the federal SPARK grant program, administered by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for playground replacement and construction of an accessible paved loop trail in Nancy Moore Park in the amount of \$800,000. There is no local match required for this program. Supported by Trustee Hendrickson.

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of this application.

Trustee Hendrickson spoke in support of this application.

Supervisor Jackson spoke in support of this application.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

G. Approval of Deficit Elimination Plan Resolution

Finance Director Garber presented the plan to the Board.

Trustee Wilson moved to approve the deficit elimination plan resolution. Supported by Treasurer Deschaine.

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of this application.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke in support of this application.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

H. BWL Board of Commissioners Appointment

Supervisor Jackson presented the case to the Board.

Trustee Wisinski moved to appoint Brian Pilar to the Board of Water and Light Board of Commissioners for the term July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Seconded by Trustee Sunderland.

Trustee Wisinski thanked all of those who sit on the boards and commissions within Meridian Township.

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. Redevelopment Ready Communities Recertification Updates

Director Schmitt outlined the recertification updates for discussion. He highlighted the housing diversity update, noting that it doesn't matter as much *how* we do it, just *that* we do it. He further stated that his department believes that it is time to remove minimum housing requirements, as it would help future development on small plots of land. He noted that his team is still working on a draft for the ordinance due to the issue of accessory dwelling units/multi-generational housing on the same plot of land.

Treasurer Deschaine reflected on what Director Schmitt stated, and he expressed excitement for more affordable housing units to come to Meridian Township.

Trustee Wilson mirrored Treasurer Deschaine's comments and indicated support.

Trustee Wisinski inquired on the accessory dwelling units, whether those are permanent or not.

Director Schmitt stated that yes, they are permanent.

Trustee Hendrickson noted support, and looks forward to the future of this project.

Clerk Guthrie inquired on how "tiny-houses" would fit into this plan.

Director Schmitt stated that they would be permitted by this plan, however, it is still a very rare occurrence/question.

Clerk Guthrie further inquired on rental properties, and how they would fit in this plan.

Director Schmitt stated that with this plan, there cannot be two rental properties on the same plot of land, as the owner of the property would have to live in one unit.

#### B. Community/Senior Center Task Force Report

Trustee Wilson outlined the report for the Board. The location the task force has put focus on is between the Okemos Post Office and the Central Fire Station. The estimated cost is estimated to be between \$10 and \$12 million. One budget option would be reevaluating millage options when the current millage items expire in a few years.

#### C. 2017 & 2019 Millage Audits

Township Manager Walsh outlined the 2017 & 2019 millage audits to the Board. He noted that the auditor would not be from our office, but from an outside source. He further stated that this audit is recommended to have a small delay due to Finance Director Garber's departure from the Township.

Trustee Wisinski inquired about why this audit was important.

Township Manager Walsh stated that there were specific promises made in 2017 and 2019 by himself and the Board and he would like to have a report for the Township to show how accurate those promises turned out to be.

Clerk Guthrie inquired if the current auditor could complete this task.

Township Manager Walsh stated no, this couldn't be done by Township auditors. He stated that it would be cost prohibited to utilize the current auditors. He further stated that they did submit the Finance Director job posting on multiple platforms, with the salary range being \$104,000 to \$122,000.

Supervisor Jackson inquired about the Deputy Clerk/Election Administrator position that is currently posted.

Township Manager Walsh stated that the position has been updated to include a higher pay range to bring it in line with other related positions in the area.

Supervisor Jackson inquired about the timeline of the 2017 & 2019 audit, specifically why it's being brought up now as opposed to a few years ago.

Township Manager Walsh stated that it occurred to him while reflecting on the previous projects the Township has completed.

14. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Supervisor Jackson opened public remarks at 8:58 pm.

NONE

Supervisor Jackson closed public remarks at 8:58 pm.

15. OTHER MATTERS AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

A. NONE

16. ADJOURNMENT

Supervisor Jackson moved to adjourn at 8:58pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 pm.



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PATRICIA JACKSON  
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

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DEBORAH GUTHRIE  
TOWNSHIP CLERK