

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
REGULAR MEETING TOWNSHIP BOARD 2023 -APPROVED5151
Marsh Road, Okemos MI 48864-1198
517.853.4000, Township Hall Room
TUESDAY, July 11th, 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, Parks and Recreation Director Maisner, Chief of Police Plaga, Fire Chief Hamel, Human Resource Director Tithof, Land Stewardship Coordinator Campbell, Administrative Assistant to the Clerk Spurlock

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

Administrative Assistant to the Clerk Spurlock called the roll of the Board. All board members present.

4. PRESENTATION

- A. Moment of Silence – Retired Police Chief Dave Hall
- B. Introduction of New Full-Time Firefighter/EMT: Justin Jones
- C. Introduction of New Police Officers: Larry Vandermolen and Hayden Kling

5. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Supervisor Jackson opened public comment at 6:07 PM.

NONE

Supervisor Jackson closed public comment at 6:07 PM.

6. TOWNSHIP MANAGER REPORT

Township Manager Frank Walsh spoke on:

- Township Hall renovation project
- Township "Welcome" signs

7. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS OF ACTIVITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee Wilson

- Spoke on the Senior/Community Center Project

Treasurer Deschaine

- Spoke in remembrance of township citizen Carolyn Such
- Spoke on Celebrate Meridian
- Spoke on Woodward Way ribbon cutting
- Spoke on the open house for American House Meridian at Haslett Square

8. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Trustee Wilson 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 friendly amendments. Seconded by Clerk Guthrie.

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

A. NONE

12. ACTION ITEMS

A. Ordinance 2022-19 – Marijuana Zoning Ordinance Updates – Final Adoption

Director Schmitt outlined the final adoption of Ordinance 2022-19 for action.

Trustee Wilson moved to adopt the resolution approving zoning amendment 2022-19 to amend the zoning ordinance of the Charter Township of Meridian to update the zoning standards for marijuana related businesses. Supported by Clerk Guthrie.

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of the ordinance.

Treasurer Deschaine inquired if there were any questions from the public since the notice had been published..

Director Schmitt stated that there were none.

Supervisor Jackson reiterated the case and called for a roll call vote.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

B. Ordinance 2023-02 - Recreational Marijuana Licensing – Final Adoption

Director Schmitt outlined the final adoption of Ordinance 2022-02 for action.

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

Trustee Hendrickson spoke on the work that has gone into this ordinance.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

C. Ordinance 2023-03 – Medical Marijuana Licensing Update – Final Adoption

Director Schmitt outlined the final adoption of Ordinance 2023-03 for action.

Treasurer Deschaine moved to adopt 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 Clerk Guthrie.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke on the unity of the Board on this topic.

Clerk Guthrie mirrored Treasurer Deschaine’s remarks. She inquired if passed, will these ordinances be published and made legal, and will there be an appeal timing process.

Director Schmitt stated they are published and are effective immediately upon review. He also noted that in theory there is an appeal process, but for text amendments the Board typically has authority to change that.

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

Supervisor Jackson reiterated the case and called for a roll call vote.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

D. Redevelopment Ready Communities Recertification – Housing Updates

Community Planning and Development Director Schmitt outlined the Redevelopment Ready Communities Recertification information for the Board.

Trustee Wilson moved to refer the topic of housing ordinance changes related to the Redevelopment Ready Communities recertification to the Planning Commission for input and public hearing on the draft zoning ordinance amendment. Supported by Trustee Wisinski.

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of the Redevelopment Ready Communities recertification.

Trustee Wisinski spoke in support of the Redevelopment Ready Communities recertification.

Trustee Hendrickson inquired if this provision would allow for a second-floor only, or if it would be second-floor or higher. He further spoke in support of the redevelopment ready community recertification.

Director Schmitt answered that this provision would be only for the second-floor, higher projects would go under the MUPUD process.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke in support of the Redevelopment Ready Communities recertification.

Clerk Guthrie spoke in support of smaller homes being accessible. She inquired how large the ADU can be on the lot.

Director Schmitt noted that these additions would have to meet underlying requirements of existing zoning ordinances, and they would be limited to 600 sq. ft. in the proposed ordinance.

Supervisor Jackson noted that it's important to highlight that the setbacks and distances between dwellings have to follow existing zoning standards. She further spoke in support of the Redevelopment Ready Communities recertification.

VOICE VOTE:

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

E. Land Preservation Acquisition – Cornel/Sweetwood

Director Maisner introduced Land Stewardship Coordinator Emma Campbell. Land Stewardship Coordinator Campbell outlined the proposed acquisition to the board via a presentation.

Trustee Wisinski moved to approve the attached resolution to acquire parcel #26-202-001 consisting of 2.71 acres of environmentally valuable land for the land preservation program in the amount of \$62,000 plus or minus from the trust of Michael and Lisa Allen and authorize Township Manager Walsh and Clerk Guthrie to execute the purchase agreement on behalf of the township. Supported by Trustee Wilson.

Trustee Wisinski spoke in support of this acquisition.

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of this acquisition.

Treasurer Deschaine inquired whether there would be new trees planted on this site.

Land Stewardship Coordinator Campbell stated that there isn't a need to plant new saplings on this site as long as it is regulated properly.

Trustee Hendrickson inquired about the land preservation fund's current status.

Land Stewardship Coordinator Campbell stated that she believes that the fund is increasing. She further noted that they are contracting out more than ever before to assist with preservation.

Director Maisner noted that there is a \$4,000,000 fund specifically for acquisition that will be utilized instead of cutting into the annual fees of \$180,000.

Trustee Hendrickson stated he was inquiring about the fund's current status from an auditor's viewpoint, that if the mileage stopped immediately, there would still be funds available for preservation for years to come. He further noted that he understands that a large percentage of the current fund is set aside for acquisition, and not just preservation.

Clerk Guthrie spoke in support of this acquisition. She inquired if there would still be an acquisition request for the desired property connecting to parcel #26-202-001.

Land Stewardship Coordinator Campbell stated that they would be interested in reaching out again for this connecting parcel of land.

Treasurer Deschaine clarified the drop in mileage already for the preservation fund, going from 4/10^{ths} of a mil to 1/10th of a mil.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

F. Recommended 2024 Budget Schedule

Township Manager Walsh presented the budget schedule to the board.

Trustee Wilson moved to approve the 2024 township budget schedule as presented. Supported by Treasure Deschaine.

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of this item.

Treasurer Deschaine inquired, given the staffing issue of losing the previous Finance Director, if this aggressive budget schedule could be met.

Township Manager Walsh stated that yes, this can be met.

Trustee Hendrickson inquired on the special meeting of September 26th, 2023. This date conflicted with one of the board's scheduled listening sessions.

Township Manager Walsh stated that this wouldn't be an issue as that special meeting has rarely been needed, and he was confident that would be the case this year as well.

Clerk Guthrie spoke in support of the staff and process for the 2024 budget proposal.

VOICE VOTE:

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

Township Manager Walsh introduced the new Finance Director, Dante Ianni.

G. Maisner Retirement Consulting Agreement

Township Manager Walsh outlined the proposed agreement to the board.

Director Maisner spoke on the proposed agreement and gave her retirement speech.

Treasurer Deschaine moved to approve the proposed Maisner retirement consulting agreement between Meridian Township and Parks and Recreation Director Luann Maisner and authorize the township manager to sign the agreement. Supported by Trustee Wisinski.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke in support of this consulting agreement. He invited Parks Commissioner Amanda Lick to speak on Luann's retirement.

Trustee Sundland spoke in support of this consulting agreement and thanked Director Maisner for her service.

Trustee Hendrickson spoke in support of this consulting agreement and thanked Director Maisner for her service.

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of this consulting agreement and thanked Director Maisner for her service.

Trustee Wisinski spoke in support of this consulting agreement and thanked Director Maisner for her service.

Clerk Guthrie spoke in support of this consulting agreement and thanked Director Maisner for her service.

Supervisor Jackson spoke in support of this consulting agreement and thanked Director Maisner for her service.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

13. BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS) Defied Contribution Administration

Human Resource Director Abigail Tithof outlined the potential change in the township's retirement savings plan. She also introduced MERS Representative Leah Behnke.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke in support of the change.

Trustee Hendrickson inquired when we started our current plan administrator, and did that go out to bid.

Township Manager Walsh stated that it's been roughly three decades that we've had this plan.

Human Resource Director Tithof stated that this has not gone out to bid, as MERS is being used in other departments in the township.

MERS Representative Behnke further outlined the benefits of using MERS.

Treasurer Deschaine inquired on their fiduciary responsibilities.

MERS Representative Behnke answered that MERS is a private company, but they operate as a not-for-profit. They also go through a board, similar to the township board, and must always follow what's best for their investors, and their employees.

Clerk Guthrie requested more information on the current plan vs the proposed change before making a decision on this topic.

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of this change.

Township Manager Walsh responded to Clerk Guthrie's request by stating that he believes this is one of the few instances that it's an urgent enough topic to push forward.

Trustee Wisinski mirrored Trustee Hendrickson's comments, and thanked Trustee Wilson and Clerk Guthrie for their input.

Human Resource Director Tithof further explained why she believed that this was the right move for the township.

Trustee Sundland supported a bid for this issue.

Trustee Hendrickson further stated why he believes this should go to bid.

Township Manager Walsh stated that in his opinion, bidding this out will not get the township anywhere in this case, as there have been harmful results from the current plan that have directly impacted employees.

Clerk Guthrie reiterated her need for more information.

Township Manager Walsh stated that this will go to discussion and they will have more information during that time,

Treasurer Deschaine stated that while a bid would be nice, it can take multiple months to get to a final decision.

Trustee Wisinski inquired on the risks for funds from the current plan transferring to the new plan.

MERS Representative Benhke stated that that would be a seamless part of the process, and that they currently have a lot of plans transferring without issue.

Trustee Wilson supported making a decision now instead of making a bid.

14. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Supervisor Jackson opened public remarks at 8:14 pm.

NONE

Supervisor Jackson closed public remarks at 8:14 pm.

15. OTHER MATTERS AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

- A. Trustee Hendrickson spoke on the distribution of board packets, and inquired if this could be changed to give the board more time to review the packet.

Clerk Guthrie stated that most of the time, the Clerk's Office is waiting on other departments and/or businesses to submit their packet pieces. She also stated that there are times that pieces come in after the deadline that cause the packet to go through multiple revisions.

Treasurer Deschaine noted that if we move the packet to Wednesday, it would be 6 days old by the time it would hit the meeting. He further stated that the board has Monday and most of Tuesday are set for questions on the packet.

Trustee Wisinski stated that they could make a hard deadline for material to be turned in for the packet, and anything submitted after would go to the next meeting.

Clerk Guthrie noted the statutory requirements for packet pieces that are turned in either on time or late.

IT Director Stephen Gebes stated that it has been done differently in the past, specifically there was a time when packets were put together on Tuesdays and sent out on Wednesdays, but there were issues involving comments coming in later than Wednesday that had to be added.

- B. Trustee Wisinski spoke on the upcoming Meridian Pride Festival on August 26th, 2023.
- C. Supervisor Jackson spoke on an internet high-speed tour that will be having a meeting on August 1st at the Okemos Event Center.

She also noted that the Tri-County Housing Summit is having a meeting on July 20th, 2023.

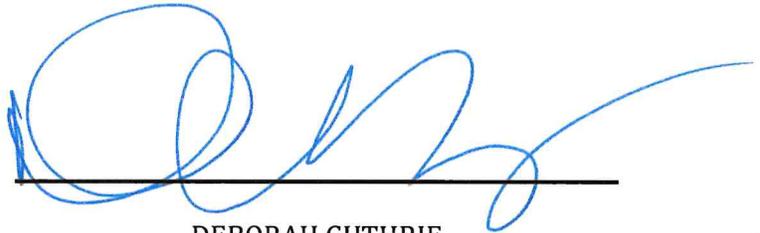
16. ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Wisinski moved to adjourn at 8:30pm. Supported by Trustee Wilson.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.



PATRICIA JACKSON
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR



DEBORAH GUTHRIE
TOWNSHIP CLERK