

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

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

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Township Manager Walsh, Deputy 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, 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. Meridian Township 2022 Audit Presentation

Ally Barnes of Yeo and Yeo gave a presentation on the Meridian Township 2022 Audit.

She explained the township is the lessor of some agreements meaning a receivable of about \$1.5 million has been added in the water fund. She explained about IT subscription SPITAS being recorded as a right to use asset coming into effect in 2023. She overviewed general fund revenues and explained the additional \$5 million in the "all other category" as a drain assessment obligation. There is \$12 million in general government expenditures and \$14 million in public safety expenditures. She noted water fund operating expenses were greater than operating revenues in 2022. She noted sewer fund operating revenue exceeds sewer operating expenses in 2022. She noted as of 12/31/2022 the township had a net employee pension plan liability of \$600,000. The MERS plan has a net pension liability of \$20.3 million. Postemployment health benefits plan (OPED) had a net liability of \$1.5 million as of 12/31/2022. No significant deficiencies and no federal award findings.

B. MERS Annual Presentation Report

Manager Walsh gave a presentation on the MERS Annual Report.

MERS pension funding grew from 72% in 2021 to 74% in 2022. He explained the fund could be 100% funded in less than 10 years.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke about the millage for police and fire pension funding and asked if this could be 100% funded in about 12 years.

Manager Walsh replied it could be funded in 12 years, but it is market driven.

Clerk Guthrie asked if there is a way to pay this off before this millage ends.

Manager Walsh replied by the time the millage ends he hopes to see funding in the mid-80s.

Clerk Guthrie asked if this millage should come back to voters.

Manager Walsh replied if funding is in the mid-80s he would recommend the millage be cut in half and allotted to the pension fund.

5. CITIZENS ADDRESS AGENDA ITEMS AND NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Supervisor Jackson opened public comment at 6:45 PM.

Mark Santucci, 5909 Blythefield Dr., spoke in support of Recreational Marijuana and in support of allowing professional marijuana growing operations in the township. He also spoke about how well the accessible handicaps curbs were installed.

Bob Baldori, 2719 Mt. Hope Rd., spoke in support of allowing a marijuana growing license in the township.

Supervisor Jackson closed public comment at 6:51 PM.

6. TOWNSHIP MANAGER REPORT

Manager Walsh reported the building renovation is going well. The painters will be finished with the first floor of the Municipal Building by the end of the week. He's currently expecting the renovation to be complete on September 1st. The majority of roads treated with Chip and Fog have been resurfaced. A few sinkholes must be fixed before resurfacing. Celebrate Meridian is on June 24th. Roberts Rules training with Mr. Merrill will take place on June 27th and June 28th at 6 pm at central fire station. The Townships 2024 budget prep is underway. Meridian is charging Alaieton Township \$250 for ems transport on top of what the patient pays. Extensive Phishing and DEI training is coming up. Thanked Director Massie and Communications for Michigan Municipal League Achievement award program submission.

Supervisor Jackson asked for further clarification on phishing training.

Manager Walsh noted staff will receive bogus emails in an attempt to phish staff.

7. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS OF ACTIVITIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee Hendrickson

- Attended May 31st communities' leaders meeting where major concerns were traffic related

Treasurer Deschaine

- Attended May 17th CATA Board meeting
- Attended May 29th attended Memorial Service
- Special Assessment bills went out on June 1st

Trustee Wilson

- February senior center task force will present first report at next meeting

Supervisor Jackson

- Attended May 31st Communities' leaders meeting and noted communities without HOAs were not represented, she suggested leaders invite other communities to this meeting

Trustee Sundland

- Attended May 18th Transportation Commission

8. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Treasurer Deschaine moved to approve the agenda 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

9. CONSENT AGENDA

Supervisor Jackson reviewed the Consent Agenda.

Trustee Hendrickson moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Seconded by Trustee Wisinski.

Treasurer Deschaine gave a brief description of the First Quarter 2023 Investment Report.

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- May 16, 2023 Regular Township Board Meeting Minutes

Trustee Hendrickson moved to approve and ratify the minutes of the Regular Meeting of May 16th, 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.

Common Cash	\$	331,114.36
Public Works	\$	612,752.30
Trust & Agency	\$	60.00
Total Checks	\$	943,926.66
Credit Card Transactions	\$	4,233.13
04/27/2023 to 05/10/2023		
Total Purchases	\$	948,159.79
ACH Payments	\$	1,482,840.77

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. Acceptance of 2022 Audit Findings

Director Garber outlined the Acceptance of 2022 Audit Findings.

Trustee Wilson move to approve the 2022 audited financial statements as presented by Yeo & Yeo. Seconded by Trustee Hendrickson.

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of this item.

Trustee Hendrickson spoke in support of this item.

Treasurer Deschaine asked about the weakness explanation.

Director Garber explained the IT overhaul project was paid in 2022 but covered years 2023-25 causing a deficit.

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

B. Resolution in Support of Flag Day

Clerk Guthrie outlined the resolution in Support of Flag Day.

Treasurer Deschaine moved to support the resolution recognizing Flag Day. Seconded by Trustee Wisinski.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke in support of this item and Flags over Meridian.

Trustee Wisinski thanked Clerk Guthrie for this item and spoke in support of this item and Flags over Meridian.

Trustee Hendrickson thanked Clerk Guthrie for bringing this to the board and Treasurer Deschaine and Kiwanis for their work with flags over meridian.

Trustee Hendrickson offered a friendly amendment to change the preface of the resolution to read the 6th day of June at 6th PM instead of the 1st day of June.

Treasurer Deschaine accepted the friendly amendment.

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

C. Pension Board Updates

Supervisor Jackson outlined the Pension Board Updates.

Trustee Wilson moved to appoint Jim Houthoofd to the pension board for a term ending 12/31/25. Seconded by Trustee Wisinski.

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of this item.

Trustee Wisinski 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

D. Financial Advisor Consideration

Treasurer Deschaine outlined the Financial Advisor Consideration. He explained this will cost \$25,000.

Trustee Hendrickson move to approve the investment advisory agreement between the Charter Township of Meridian and Robinson Capital, effective June 7th, 2023. Seconded by Trustee Wilson.

Trustee Hendrickson spoke in support of this item.

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of this item.

Trustee Sundland spoke in support of this item and asked when the contract will end.

Treasurer Deschaine explained there is no end date but the agreement can be terminated by either party with 30 days' notice.

Trustee Wisinski spoke in support of this item and noted cost of services range from \$25,000-\$48,000.

Clerk Guthrie spoke in support of this item and asked how this service would be paid for.

Treasurer Deschaine explained it would come out of the investment balance.

Manager Walsh noted he struggles with the timing of annual investments into MERS and this company will help with that decision.

Supervisor Jackson spoke in support of this item. She asked about reasoning for an open ended contract as opposed to one with solid end date.

Treasurer Deschaine noted the freedom to terminate works well if the contractor retires, and their replacement isn't up to standards.

Supervisor Jackson asked if the rates noted in the proposal are annual rates.

Treasurer Deschaine explain these are annual rates.

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

NAYS: None

Motion carried: 7-0

13. BOARD DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Residents Listening Tour

Manager Walsh outlined the Residents Listening Tour for discussion. He noted the 22 voting precincts would be broken down into 3 or 4 groups for a listening tour with residents and staff. Two to be held in October, 2 in November and two in December.

Trustee Hendrickson spoke in support of this item. He noted he would like to move this up one month and out of December. He noted strong communication to residents before this is necessary.

Clerk Guthrie spoke in support of this item and moving it forward one month. She asked if an initial communication could go out with taxes. She asked why we use the voter roll instead of another list.

Trustee Wilson spoke in support of this item and noted the timing of the invitations is important.

Trustee Wisinski spoke in support of this item and noted research into each area would be helpful.

Manager Walsh explained a letter would be sent 4-6 weeks in advance and will move the initial listening sessions up a month.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke in support of this item.

Supervisor Jackson noted locations and dates will need to be figured out quickly.

B. Marijuana Ordinance Update

Director Schmitt outlined the Marijuana Ordinance Update. He noted Ordinance 2022-19 was slightly changed to remove the prohibition of drive through sales, per the Township Board's previous discussions. He walked through the timeline of this ordinance.

Township Attorney Kuschel further outlined the licensing ordinances for discussion. He noted the inclusion of a conditional approval process. He walked through the application of the conditional approval process. He noted under this version the board will not see the actual permit but does set the criteria. There will be a requirement for approved retailers to open within 18 months of approval with 6-month extensions available, however that could be changed.

Treasurer Deschaine asked for a legal definition of an unusual hardship, and asked about video surveillance.

Township Attorney Kuschel spoke about video surveillance related to drive through and there is a requirement to clearly record the drive through service. He noted security plans could be included in the application which will be prohibited from FOIA by state law.

Trustee Hendrickson noted contradictions between paragraph b and e on page 15.

Attorney Kuschel replied paragraph b clarifies any type of transfer of any interest must be approved by the board. Paragraph e notes that 10% transfer is the limit of transfer over the first three years.

Trustee Hendrickson asked if the township still maintains over authority of transfers after the first three years.

Township Attorney Kuschel replied that is correct.

Trustee Wilson asked about page 10 including grow operations in indoor activities.

Attorney Kuschel explain the ordinance language is over expansive and this is just standard language.

Trustee Wilson asked if the ordinance prohibits grow operations.

Attorney Kuschel replied that it does.

Trustee Wisinski asked about indoors activities and how it relates to curbside, drive through, and transport.

Attorney Kuschel explained this is where more specific language could be offered to override the general language.

Trustee Wisinski asked about background check language being vague.

Attorney Kuschel noted there is no specific criteria at this time, but the board could review the criteria.

Trustee Wisinski asked about page 12 section 3c appeals with hearing officer.

Township Attorney Kuschel noted someone on the board could not make that decision, but they could create a pool of people to review appeals.

Trustee Wisinski asked about online ordering and how it relates to curbside and delivery.

Township Attorney Kuschel replied the broad goal is to avoid out of state purchasers. He noted someone could make purchases over the phone, and that online orders could be added for delivery and curbside.

Trustee Wisinski noted section 8 goes against the sign ordinance.

Director Schmitt replied that is does, but as this is a federally controlled substance the township is still in the clear.

Trustee Wisinski noted the timeline notes a dispensary will likely not open until 2023-2024.

Director Schmitt replied this is just laying out realistic expectations, however one could open sooner.

Trustee Wisinski asked if other board members would like to discuss grow operations.

Treasurer Deschaine explained the growing operations are the point of focus for complaints.

Trustee Wisinski explained the ordinance covers smell and location. She further noted the medical ordinance allowed other establishments in overlays.

Township Attorney Kuschel noted there is no fundamental problem with allowing grow operations. He also noted there were no applications for the dawn avenue overlay.

Trustee Hendrickson noted applicants will go through the current SUP process. He asked if there is language about odor in the SUP process.

Director Schmitt replied there is language prohibiting an applicant from impacting neighboring areas.

Trustee Hendrickson asked if a grow op were allowed and it smelled what would happen.

Director Schmitt replied it would go to code enforcement and the offender would be fined. After a second offence in a six month period the permit could be revoked.

Clerk Guthrie noted a grow op would not be a part of the ordinance. She noted if grow ops were to be considered it should be a different discussion. She spoke about difficulties with enforcing code on facilities with noticeable odors. She spoke in support of providing definitions of unusual hardship. She asked for further information on online sales, and

ordering over the phone. She further noted that when we designate a person in ordinance or policy his/her should be stricken and not used in the future.

Treasurer Deschaine spoke against allowing grow operations.

Trustee Wisinski noted only half grow ops are allowed under the medical ordinance.

Treasurer Deschaine noted if a grow op is allowed it must be in an industrial zone.

Trustee Wisinski noted the proposed area is rural next to a land preserve and is not residential.

Trustee Wilson asked for the parcel number of the potential grow site.

Trustee Wisinski noted there is filtration to eliminate odors.

Trustee Hendrickson suggested observing the effects of the ordinance after it's been passed and that prolonging this ordinance would be a poor decision.

Trustee Sundland asked if it's feasible to have a grow operation in the same building as a dispensary.

Director Schmitt explained it's feasible, but a developer would not build until they knew how much they could do.

Trustee Wilson explained that introducing grow operation at this point is too late.

Supervisor Jackson explained the ordinance is written to prohibit the escape of odor. She noted she would like to see a definition of marijuana establishment. She noted the township can always go back and make adjustments as needed. Supervisor Jackson asked if there are there separate permits for both medical and recreational.

Township Attorney Kuschel replied there are.

Trustee Wisinski noted that moving forward with the work that's been done is the best option.

Trustee Hendrickson noted he could discuss grow at any time but to push the entire ordinance back 2-3 months would be a poor decision.

14. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Supervisor Jackson opened public remarks at 9:04 pm.

Bob Baldori 2719 Mt. Hope spoke in support of the marijuana ordinance.

Supervisor Jackson closed public remarks at 9:08 pm.

15. OTHER MATTERS AND BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Trustee Hendrickson spoke about how frequently the marijuana ordinance has been before the board and how he believes the board will soon come to an agreement supported by the community.

Clerk Guthrie thanked Zachary Lemaster for his service to the township.

16. ADJOURNMENT

Trustee Wisinski moved to adjourn. 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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 pm.

PATRICIA H. JACKSON,
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

DEBORAH GUTHRIE
TOWNSHIP CLERK