



CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 5151 MARSH RD, OKEMOS  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4 2019 7:00 PM

**PRESENT:** Chair, Bill McConnell; Vice Chair, Ned Jackson; Commissioner, John Sarver; Commissioner, Susan Masten; Commissioner, Jim Kielbaso; Commissioner Kirk Lapham; Commissioner, Aparna Krishnamurthy, Dave Premoe, Planning Commission

**STAFF:** Justin Quagliata, Assistant Planner; Phil Deschaine, Treasurer

**Green Theme Presentation:** Aparna Krishnamurthy described her work with Action, National Honor Society, and the Environmental Commission. Ms. Krishnamurthy also described what Okemos High School is doing related to composting, waste reduction, recycling, energy, education, and a greenhouse. She also discussed the possibility of a community garden. A current focus is a table at the Farmers Market and the Fall Recycling Event.

**Minutes:** Please send corrections to LeRoy (use "track changes" and edit in Word, Acrobat Pro, etc.)

**Public Comments:** None

**New Business:**

**Tree Planting Project:** Phil Deschaine, Twp Treasurer, discussed tree planting project and provided an update on the Township Budget. There is interest funding more solar panels and a green infrastructure demonstration project. Phil talked about his personal interest in trees and environmental projects. He suggests a significant project... like planting 2020 trees in 2020... or 20,000... to help mitigate climate change. This would be a small but positive step (a trillion may be needed globally) that could involve all segments of our community – youth, service clubs, neighborhood groups, land preservation, etc. He suggests a committee to develop the idea.

Masten mentioned lawn practices and lawn ordinances and how we might encourage more purposeful, ecological landscapes. Deschaine mentioned that as long as we can distinguish between neglect and intentional eco-scaping, there may be support.

Commissioner Kielbaso, who has 30 years teaching urban forestry, mentioned issues related to equitable distribution of trees, the importance of street trees (shading, cooling the environment, etc.).

Deschaine also mentioned using the Township newsletter to share information about pruning, proper care, tree selection, etc. We could work with neighborhood groups to purchase and distribute. Sarver mentioned that tree selection could be important, given climate change. Deschaine reinforced the notion of diversity to avoid challenges from disease that affect a monoculture (ash, elm, etc.). Lapham also mentioned oak wilt and the importance of proper pruning. Justin Quagliata, Assistant Planner, mentioned tree planting with new developments. McConnell also mentioned that Form-Based Code might also relate to this topic. Kielbaso described the Land Preservation efforts to preserve over 1000 acres in the township. One effort in Towar Woods includes removal of buckhorn and replant with native species. The blue tubes and fencing protect against deer. Lake Lansing North and the Davis Foster Farm are other areas where tree planting and a native prairie restoration are underway.

Jackson also mentioned the importance of remaining mindful of broader climate change initiatives. Deschaine suggests that the Environmental Commission might make recommendations to the Board.

McConnell mentioned that the Energy Team might update the Climate Sustainability Plan and move to initiative beyond Township operations.

Deschaine mentioned that Green Infrastructure or tree-planting workshops might be offered, similar to the Solar Meridian Workshop Series that were held last year.

**Climate Emergency Resolution:** Sarver provided an overview of this draft resolution which is being circulated by the League of Women Voters. McConnell suggests we take this resolution a step further, beyond the scope of internal operations. Sarver offered to make edits. Masten mentioned that there may be some ordinance-related changes and education that could be done related to energy and waste reduction beyond just the “feel good” stuff. Sarver mentions that we also invite the other groups and commissions (transportation, land preservation, etc.)

## Old Business:

**Wetland Banking:** Lapham provided an overview of the wetland banking discussion. The thought is creating a more significant larger wetland than a bunch of smaller, less effective mitigation projects. The Land Preservation Board has not met since the joint meeting last month. A question is “How much wetland is left?” McConnell mentions that we could look at the wetland map and overlay developable land.

## Reports:

**Staff Report:** Quagliata mentioned that Harvey’s staff report was included in the packet. Quagliata also commented that the number of wetland permits does not necessarily mean that mitigation occurred. Some permits include draining in to an existing wetland.

**Land Preservation:** Kielbaso mentions that Land Preservation Board will be meeting in a week. A recent tour of the Davis Farm to discuss the future of the barn and surrounding vegetation. There will be a Stewardship Work Day on Sep 7 at the end of Sylvan Glen. 38 parks will be included in the deer management program (Oct 1 – Jan 1). It is done with bow hunters.

**Energy Team:** Sep 26 will be a LWV Climate Change Forum from 7-9pm at All Saints Episcopal Church with Jeff Andresen and Christian Smith Gaia and Missy Stults, the Sustainability Manager with the City of Ann Arbor. Oct 5 is the National Home Tour. Three sites will be in Meridian with various ground and roof-mounted systems, including the first condo association. A table at the Meridian Market which will include a “Solar Smart Flower” demo, information on the Tour, and the Recycling Event. Jackson asked about the potential ordinances, homeowners association regulations, etc. which might impact (height and setback). Quagliata mentioned that solar systems are treated as accessory structures and that there is a 15’ height limit, unless a variance is granted.

**Brownfield ReDevelopment Authority:** Jackson reports that there was discussion about how brownfield claims are validated. McConnell mentioned that there is a lot of complexity in how the regulations enforced. They also discussed the Downtown Okemos project. The 2360 Jolly was approved and the Okemos Point Project Amendment and expansion was approved.

**Green Team:** Krishnamurthy mentioned that the 9/28 event and apartment recycling was discussed.

**Meeting Adjourned:** 8:37 pm.

**Next Meeting: Oct 2 at 7pm** (send agenda items to [harvey@meridian.mi.us](mailto:harvey@meridian.mi.us))