



Charter Township of Meridian
Meridian Economic Development Corporation
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864
Thursday, October 8, 2021- Minutes -DRAFT

Members

Present: Chair Kim Thompson, Vice Chair Brenda Chapman, Manager Frank Walsh, Dave Ledebuhr, Adam Carlson, Joel Conn, Treasurer Phil Deschaine, Trustee Kathy Sundland

Members

Absent: Tom Conway, Henry Kwok

Others

Present: Neighborhoods & Economic Development Director Amber Clark, and Trustee Patricia Herring Jackson

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Vice Chair chapman called the meeting to order at 7:31 am and read the mission statement.

2. **MISSION:** Set the standard in creating an entrepreneurial culture, be the example for revitalization of our business districts, and be the leaders in building sustainable public/private partnerships.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

MOTION BY MEMBER DUNHAM TO APPROVE THE AGENDA. SUPPORTED BY MEMBER LEDEBUHR. MOTION PASSES 8-0.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Minutes-August 5, 2021
- b. Financial Report
- c. Development Projects

MOTION BY MEMBER DUNHAM TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA. SUPPORTED BY MEMBER CARLSON. MOTION PASSES 8-0.

5. PUBLIC REMARKS

None.

6. OLD BUSINESS

- a. Celebrate Meridian Motor Days-Meridian Cares
Director Clark provided the recap of the Meridian Motorfest hosted by High Caliber Karting and Cars & Coffee Organization in the Lansing region. The event generated \$1583 that went directly to Meridian Cares. Over 175 cars and 200 participants at the event on September 4th. The event was so great the High Caliber group is already planning items for next year, 2022.
- b. Director Clark began review of the item by clarifying, Village of Okemos LLC will be the formal entity title and moving forward Tru North is no longer associated with the project. Will Randle previously represented Tru North and they are no longer affiliated with the project. Village of Okemos LLC team's memo requests for the Township to commit financial support of the project. The memo indicates that the Village of Okemos development will create about \$8.5 Million dollars in tax increase to be used by the Township or developer for public improvements. The developer is requesting the use of \$2.5 Million for infrastructure work on Ardmore, Clinton and Hamilton roads. The developer also requests an additional \$2.3 Million from the Meridian Redevelopment Fund to support additional street infrastructure for the project. The funds from the redevelopment fund will be reimbursed by the DDA TIF funding over time.

Manager Walsh spoke to the EDC members to remind them of the long history of working with this development team. Years ago the same team for the Village of Okemos, came to the Township with a concept for what is the Elevation Apartments project. That is great project that supports employees for Delta Dental and Jackson National Life; almost fully occupied market rate residential development. The same group promised a grocery market in the south of town where the old Value Tire store sits. Before the Elevation project was complete the market concept was removed from the project. Some in the community feel like it is a bait and switch tactic to build residential with higher density and withdraw the commercial elements. The Township has designated the four corners area with the ability to build as dense and as high as feasibly necessary. The development team came in July with a request to reduce the commercial nonresidential space and the Township board would not support the request. The Township has come very far and is committed to assisting a developer with creating a new downtown as long as the intended vision of commercial corridor on Okemos road is met.

Vice Chair Chapman raised the question regarding the amount of commercial space in the project an appropriate amount to desire considering the lack of lending from commercial bankers for development. Other members agreed that the concern for the Township is whether supporting the project for about \$5 Million dollars is a feasible request and is the right vision for the community. The concern falls to whether the commercial spaces will be successful or remain empty for extended periods of time.

Vice Chair Chapman requests the developer include more information in the future with requests for financial assistance so the EDC members can have a better understanding of what the public improvements will be and their estimated costs.

7. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Meridian Economic Development Strategy/Market Study

Director Clark discussed that a new Economic Development Strategy is a requirement to be maintained as a part of the Redevelopment Ready Communities certification. The current ED plan was adopted in 2018. Director Clark proposed having a market study issued for the Township to better develop the current strategy and adopt a new plan for 2022. Commissioners voiced agreement to make updates to the current ED plan however did not wish to spend money on a market study due to the volatility of the market due to COVID-19. Members expressed interest for a market study when the economic environments stabilize. Members voted to create a subcommittee to work on a new economic development plan without the pursuit of a market study. Members of that subcommittee are: Treasurer Deschaine, Dave Ledebuhr, Brenda Chapman, and Kim Thompson. Staff will plan meetings for the subcommittee to work on a new plan and present it by early first quarter of 2022.

8. TOWNSHIP REPORTS

a. Township Board

Treasurer Sundland reported the following:

- Approved the rezoning at Jolly and Kansas for Sparrow.
- Approved the Township Budget
- Working on the Sign Ordinance with the Planning Commission
- MUPUD amendments are under discussion with the Township Board
- The Township will come up with a process to spend the ARP funding

b. Township Manager

Manager Walsh reported the following:

- Silverleaf/Silverstone and Copper Creek Developments underway
- New Assessor and she is working from level 3 to level 4 with State of Michigan
- Proud to report a healthy fund balance for the Township
- The Township will receive \$4.5 million in American Rescue Plan funds and the board rather than discuss what it will pay for, will first determine what the process will be to spend the funds.
- Pine Village has their building permit.
- Board approved the substantial increase to the Redevelopment fund by \$2 Million
- Working with the Village of Okemos to secure the needed funding for the project
- Neighborhood meeting with neighbors on Lagoon Drive.

c. Planning Commission

- MUPUD is at the Township Board level for approval
- Working on Sign ordinance as legal judgement ruled in favor of only enforcing the size, location, height etc. of the sign and not what it says. Limits free speech.
- Our current sign ordinance is outdated with many sections not seeing an update since 1970. A proposal to start the entire ordinance over is being presented.

d. Chair
None.

e. Staff

Director Clark reported the following:

- DDA is working on programs that could enhance DDA businesses.

- The libraries are working on a volunteer fair.
- Haslett Marathon construction is underway.
- Joe's on Jolly is also underway.
- A new bakery is coming to the Township.
- Working on potential Mall development
- Preparing work for RRC and presenting steps to the Township Board

9. COMMUNITY REPORTS

a. Meridian Mall

Member Dunham reported that shoppers are back in action and reports of cellphone usage show the numbers are getting back to regular. New businesses coming to the Mall as well as seasonal operators. 24% current vacancy rate and about 400,000 visits over the course of the summer. Staffing shortages are the biggest trends for operators.

b. MABA

Director Clark reported that MABA is meeting in hybrid form at the MSUFCU Farm Lane location.

10. OPEN DISCUSSION/BOARD COMMENTS

None

11. PUBLIC REMARKS

None.

12. NEXT MEETING DATE

- November 4, 2021 at 7:30am

13. ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no objection, Chair Thompson adjourned the meeting at 8:59am.