



**AGENDA**  
CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN  
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
April 5, 2023 7 pm

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Town Hall Meeting Room, 5151 Marsh Rd, Okemos

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER
2. PUBLIC REMARKS – Visitors are welcome to introduce themselves.
3. CHANGES TO/APPROVAL OF AGENDA
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
5. NEW BUSINESS

Green Grant Recommendations (Memo)

Nominee for Environmental Stewardship Award

Other

6. OLD BUSINESS

Climate Sustainability Plan

Draft at <https://sites.google.com/view/climate-sustainability-plan/home>)

Other

7. REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Committees, teams, Okemos Earth Club, staff, and Liaisons invited to share brief updates.  
(See a staff update here: <https://bit.ly/update-leroy>)

8. PUBLIC REMARKS
9. ADJOURNMENT

Providing a safe and welcoming, sustainable, prime community.



A PRIME COMMUNITY  
[meridian.mi.us](http://meridian.mi.us)

## **Environmental Commission Meeting: March 1, 2023**

### **PARTICIPANTS**

Commissioners Present: Bill McConnell, John Sarver, Ned Jackson, Tom Frazier, Anna Colby, LeRoy Harvey, Emma Andrechek, Amelia Saffron, and Graham Diedrich. Luca Wisinski, Courtney Wisinski, and Kendra Grasseschi absent.

Guests: Deborah Guthrie, Pat Jackson, Frank Walsh, and Mr. Saffron.

### **SUMMARY**

Township staff took comments of how they can support the Commission's goals and updates were provided on the Climate Sustainability Plan.

### **AGENDA & MINUTES**

Agenda and minutes approved with suggestion that future minutes include participants.

### **HOW ADMINISTRATION CAN HELP**

Frank Walsh began by discussing the desire for enhanced communication between township groups. He also talked about setting high goals for the township and ways to continue to improve. He explained the aspects that set Meridian Township above others mentioning the solar initiative, build back the buffer, green team, energy team, recycling initiatives, and more. Walsh asked the commission how the township can help the environmental commission be successful other than increased communications.

McConnell mentioned that having a full-time environmental coordinator has been extremely important. He also included other township staff like those in communication are essential for the environmental commission's goals. The green grant program was also talked about as an important aspect of their mission in how it helps with education and recycling programs. Fraizer talked about how having Courtney Wisinski as a liaison to the commission has been very helpful. Sarver and Ned Jackson seconded this point. Sarver pointed out that with so much to do and so many possibilities, it would be helpful to have some direction from the township board as to if they are missing anything that they would like to do. Diedrich seconded that it would be helpful to understand where there are opportunities for more engagement. Walsh encouraged commission members to sign up for Meridian Happenings to stay up to date with township news. Ned Jackson talked about how quick communication has helped in many ways across the township.

McConnell brought up the energy section of the Climate Sustainability Plan. He wondered about the township's energy efficiency when it comes to water pumping and treatment. He brought up that having an intern in public works that could be trained to find these types of information that could communicate with the commission would be helpful. McConnell also discussed how planning could potentially help with the commission's mission through managing stormwater in permitting and inspections. An incentive program for property owners to accommodate stormwater was also suggested as an option for the township to help with the sustainability goals.

Walsh added that a summer intern was just hired that could take on a project like working with the environmental commission.

Ned Jackson talked more about communication not just within the township but also with other jurisdictions like the drain commission, schools, county road department, department of transportation, and more. He wondered about the possibility of meeting more consistently with all these entities for exchange of information.

Pat Jackson suggested that the environmental commission minutes should be shared with the board.

## **CLIMATE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN**

### **Land Preservation Plan and Water**

- Focus on climate change impacts
- Wetlands and climate change on the outdoors and Municipal water usage/disposal
- Not concerns on overwhelming sewage treatment plants due to stormwater, but there are energy consumption concerns
- Encourage rain barrels in case of droughts
- McConnell points out that water treatment is the highest energy consumption in the community

Diedrich asked about how much water is wasted in the systems. McConnell mentions that although the specific amount is not known, there are many repairs and improvements being made. Ned Jackson expressed the desire for a liaison between the commission and water treatment plants along with arranging a tour of the water treatment facility.

Sarver suggested using the new intern to gather statistics and information on township systems. Colby also talked about possibilities for the intern to look into grant opportunities.

McConnell expressed interest in benchmarking water consumption and disposal to identify areas for improvement. Ned Jackson questioned how this could be done. McConnell suggested that the water treatment personnel have information for water consumption. Colby mentioned that general knowledge of what uses the most water could provide ideas for improvement without a need for specific data. Emma adds that the high school has begun education for limiting water consumption, so habits could be on track to change in the future.

LeRoy talked about Green Dialogs. Every Wednesday at 9:00 A.M. over zoom. May will have the director of the waste water treatment plant, and the first April meeting will include a guest speaker that has knowledge on water.

### **Foods and Organics**

- Composting and methods for reducing organic waste
- Gleaning (Food waste/Local food production)

Food group has been working on determining food wastes at schools. Commercial entities are major contributors to food waste, so there are opportunities with them to consider ways to minimize this.

Sarver wondered what is considered a local food producer. Colby mentioned this is not defined in this section yet since there are many ways to define local but that is a detail that could be added.

Diedrich asked where he could provide assistance on the Climate Sustainability Plan and McConnell mentioned there are many opportunities within the food section.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Deborah Guthrie spoke on the Climate Sustainability Plan with public comments. She talked about the personal impacts the recycling initiative had on her. She mentioned her appreciation to the commission for its attempts to protect the environment. She mentioned even small incentives can work for encouraging people to make small lifestyle changes.

## **STUDENT ALTERNATE POSITION**

Amelia is appointed as the alternate student commissioner which is approved unanimously.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS/ UPDATES**

- More wetland education flyers will continue to go out in the future, but tax information was removed due to it being confusing
- Discussion about starting small pilot food rescue program
- Green team events include March 18<sup>th</sup> which is the beginning of farmer's market events and April 22<sup>nd</sup> recycling event at Chippewa Middle School
- Green Team working with Okemos Earth Club to sell upcycled clothes along with educational activities
- The Earth Club also has a new website with upcoming projects
- Energy Team updated the energy sections to include updated data on renewable energy and efficiency
- Four meetings are planned for solarize Meridian
- Transportation Commission has begun reviewing the transportation section of the Climate Sustainability Plan

**ADJORNED 9:00 P.M.**

Minutes Draft prepared by Lauren Falzarano



**To: Environmental Commission**

**From: Green Grant Committee (Sarver, C. Wisinski, Harvey)**

**Date: March 31, 2023**

**Re: Green Grant Recommendations for 2023 (draft)**

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The Green Grant Committee suggests the following awards for 2023. We recommend proceeding with four projects and holding on Evergreen Vet Clinic (no budget provided, potential additional proposals, etc.)

Cornell Woods	Tree Planting Project in Common Areas	\$3000
Okemos Presbyterian	Native Landscape Enhancement Plan	\$2000
Radmoor Montessori*	Beehive Meadow, Batbox Meadow, and/or Campus Native Plantings	\$3000
Meridian Garden Club/Schools	Matching grants for gardens at two local schools (\$500 ea.)	\$1000 (assuming school full match)
Evergreen Vet Clinic	Landscaping improvements	Up to \$1000 (pending)

\* remove meadow area(s), reduce native plantings, and or find supplemental \$.

You may review the grants further here: <https://sites.google.com/view/leroyssitedirectory/green-grants-2023> including the scoring.



**ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AWARDS  
Nomination Form**

The purpose of the Environmental Stewardship Awards is to recognize and honor residents who have significantly contributed to the conservation of natural resources and the protection of the environment within Meridian Charter Township.

**CATEGORIES (check all that apply)**

- Education
- Business
- Public Sector/Non-Profit
- Private Individuals/Groups/Service Clubs

Nominee(s): Steve Thomas

Reasons:

\* Typed up in email!

**CRITERIA:**

Nominees should exhibit some or all of the following:

- Educational value
- Potential for stimulating other environmental efforts
- Innovation or unique character
- Actual improvement or benefit to the environment
- Environmental leadership or initiative
- Sustainability or permanence

Please return to: Meridian Township Environmental Commission: c/o LeRoy Harvey, Meridian Township, 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864 (517) 853-4466 or to [harvey@meridian.mi.us](mailto:harvey@meridian.mi.us).

**All nominations are due by February 28. Awards will be announced at the April E.C. meeting.**

Nominators Name (optional) Emma Campbell Phone/email: ecampbell@meridian.mi.us

Hey LeRoy,

I am sending in a nomination form for the Environmental Stewardship Awards, for Steve Thomas. I am going to type out what I wrote for the reason below instead of on the sheet of paper. 😊

Reason for nominating Steve Thomas:

Steve Thomas has been a resident of Meridian for over 15 years and has not once stopped stewarding both public Township land and private. He has been on the Land Preservation Advisory Board since 2020 and has made huge contributions to our board from a land management and preservation perspective. He has personally stewarded Sower Woods Preserve for over a decade, planting native species and removing invasives. Before my employment in 2020, he was attending Stewardship Saturdays and helping guide land management. His career as a landscape ecologist has been a huge help to our stewardship efforts. He spends countless hours gathering rare native seeds from all over the Township to preserve native plants that are disappearing at a fast rate. His passion for rare species conservation and restoring ecosystems is a gift to our Township lands. He attends about 80% of Meridian Conservation Corps events, and stays after to discuss important initiatives we should be pursuing to advance our natural areas. He takes endless time with volunteers, who are always amazed by the names of plants he can rattle off! But mostly I have observed him changing the perspective that volunteers have of the land they are there to care for. I can see the change as he explains everything on a huge time scale, a view that most people have trouble grasping. I consider him a mentor and have advanced my career and knowledge due to his patience and teachings. If we didn't have someone like Steve Thomas in the Township, our natural areas would be further in decline. We would not have the hope that I currently hold for the future of conservation. He is truly a hero of conservation and deserves recognition for his hard work and countless hours he has given to our Township.

**Emma Campbell**

Land Stewardship Coordinator

Parks and Recreation

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From: Valerie Lafferty <[laffertypllc@gmail.com](mailto:laffertypllc@gmail.com)>

**Update for April EC Meeting &/or Green Gazette - Good Food to Smart Composting (GFSC)**

1. Gleaning at the market will start on May 13th for the Saturday morning/afternoon market and June 7th for the Wednesday afternoon/evening market. Added this season: visitors will be given the opportunity to donate money or food/baked goods to the several non-profits served by this gleaning effort.
2. Kerrin O'Brien provided a slide show of the changes/goals of the new Michigan material management laws that just went into effect at the March 3rd Zoom meeting to GFSC and an extended group of interested staff/volunteer individuals in our area. The meeting was recorded & shared with all who couldn't make the meeting - as usual.
3. The April monthly zoom meeting will be on Thursday 6th with John Krohn, Garden Manager of the Greater Lansing Land Bank (GLLB) to discuss community gardens and composting. The owner of Eastside Composting was also invited (not yet confirmed) who leases land from GLLB for their food scrap collection which is interestingly done via bicycle pick-up and then composted right on their lease land in Lansing (between Kalamazoo & I-496 west of I-127).
4. GFSC's May 5th speaker will be retired professor John Biernbaum (Horticulture Science) who focused on educational programs for small scale organic farmers, compost production and organic soil management. The possibility of a Community Composting operation in our area will be included in the discussion.
5. Lindsey Walker from Emmet County was asked to be a future speaker to share their successful county food scrap collection and composting operation (located in Harbor Springs).
6. GFSC just concluded its second tour of Hammond Farms' composting operation. We are attempting to set up tours at both MSU (their vermiculture operation & more) + MSU's anaerobic digester within the next few months.
7. Two members are now taking the Institute for Self Reliant Communities' Composting 101 sequence of online classes.
8. The GFSC Facebook page continues to be helpful to share information and promote events.
9. Michigan Recycling Coalition will host programs on composting (& food recovery?) at their annual conference in May. The regional chapter of the Michigan Good Food Council will be holding its first meeting (after an organizational meeting last month) since COVID.
10. NextCycle (EGLE) is hosting an April 20 showcase of pitches from entrepreneurs focused on material sustainability in organics.