



# 2023

## Annual Report

Charter Township of Meridian



### Meridian Township

5151 Marsh Road  
Okemos, MI  
48864  
517.853.4000



[meridian.mi.us](http://meridian.mi.us)

# TOWNSHIP BOARD MEMBERS

**Patricia Herring Jackson, Supervisor**

**Deborah Guthrie, Clerk**

**Phil Deschaine, Treasurer**

**Scott Hendrickson, Trustee**

**Kathy Ann Sundland, Trustee**

**Marna Wilson, Trustee**

**Courtney Wisinski, Trustee**



Back Row, Left to Right: Treasurer Phil Deschaine; Trustee Courtney Wisinski;  
Trustee Scott Hendrickson; Trustee Kathy Ann Sundland  
Front Row, Left to Right: Clerk Deborah Guthrie; Supervisor Patricia Herring Jackson;  
Trustee Marna Wilson



**To: Board Members**

**From: Frank L. Walsh, Township Manager**

**Date: February 6, 2024**

**Re: 2023 Annual Report**

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The Meridian Township Board, and Management Team, are pleased to present the community with the Township's 2023 Annual Report. The enclosed report of departmental activities is meant to satisfy the requirements of the Charter Township Act and provide our residents with a complete overview of 2023 operations. This report is a compilation of activities provided by each department.

A copy of this report will be on file in the Clerk's Office, both libraries and posted on the Township's website at [www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us).

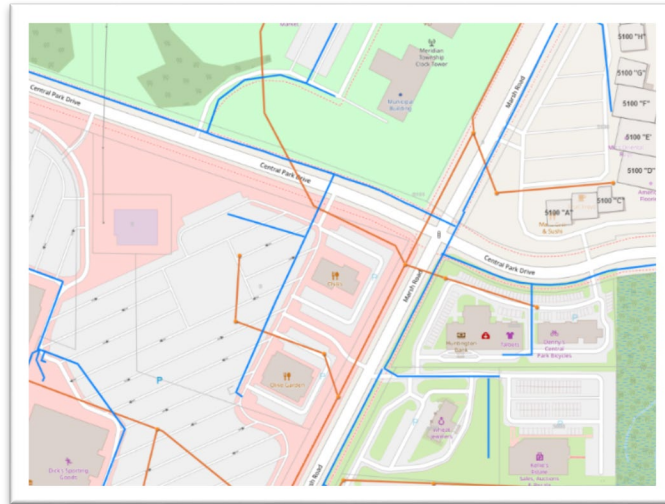
Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions regarding this report. We will continue our efforts in 2024 to work as a team united in spirit for the betterment of our 45,000 Township residents.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>2023 GOALS ACTION PLAN</b> .....              | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>ACCOUNTING and BUDGETING</b> .....            | <b>23</b> |
| <b>ADMINISTRATION</b> .....                      | <b>25</b> |
| <b>ASSESSING</b> .....                           | <b>27</b> |
| <b>CLERK’S OFFICE</b> .....                      | <b>29</b> |
| <b>COMMUNICATIONS</b> .....                      | <b>32</b> |
| <b>COMMUNITY PLANNING and DEVELOPMENT</b> .....  | <b>36</b> |
| <b>ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</b> .....                | <b>40</b> |
| <b>FIRE/EMS</b> .....                            | <b>43</b> |
| <b>MERIDIAN CARES</b> .....                      | <b>52</b> |
| <b>HUMAN RESOURCES</b> .....                     | <b>53</b> |
| <b>INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY</b> .....              | <b>55</b> |
| <b>PARKS and RECREATION</b> .....                | <b>58</b> |
| <b>POLICE</b> .....                              | <b>64</b> |
| <b>PROJECT MANAGEMENT &amp; OPERATIONS</b> ..... | <b>75</b> |
| <b>PUBLIC WORKS</b> .....                        | <b>76</b> |
| <b>TREASURER’S OFFICE</b> .....                  | <b>84</b> |

**A. INFRASTRUCTURE ENHANCEMENTS**

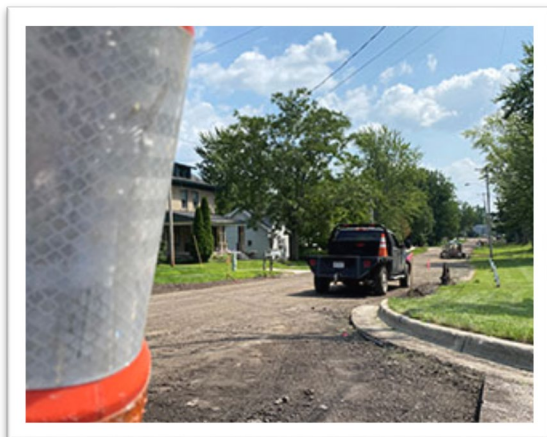
Install new valves on Grand River Ave to minimize how many businesses and residents would be without water in the event of a water main break on Grand River Ave.



**This project was postponed until 2025 as we only received one bid and it came in far higher than our engineering estimate. We put this out to bid in hopes of performing this work in 2023, but that required going to bid in the summer months when contractors are extremely busy. We believe we can obtain lower pricing by putting this back out to bid in November of 2024, for 2025 construction. The RFP is ready to go back out to bid.**

**Additionally, we have experienced three main breaks over a three-month period on the water main that serves Chili’s and Olive Garden. Therefore, we are going to invest these funds into the replacement of this water main in early 2024. We are currently working on a contract modification to add this water main work to our 2023 Timberlane Water Main Contract. Our goal is to replace this water main over the winter months or early spring.**

Complete year four of the Meridian Township Local Road Improvement Plan. Our PASER rating at the end of 2023 shall be a minimum of 5.98.



The fourth year of the 10-year, voter-approved program is complete. The goal of the program is to raise the average Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) of our 153-mile local road system to a “good” condition (8/10 on the PASER rating).

In 2019, when we proposed the new road millage, our average PASER rating was 4.48. At the end of 2023, our average PASER rating is now 5.423, over a 21% increase in the first four years of the 10-year local road program.

We completed all 8.86 miles of reconstruction with the lone exception of Timberlane St, Linden St, and the neighborhood on the north side of Lake Lansing. We had the contractor capacity to complete the reconstruction of the roads on the north side of Lake Lansing; however, we only received one bid on the sanitary sewer work that needs to precede the road work. The lone bid was exceedingly high (\$1.8 million). Therefore, we postponed the road work to May of 2024 so we could put this sanitary sewer RFP back out to bid in November of 2023 when contractors will have more time to submit bids. We just put the 2023 County Park West Sewer Replacement RFP back out to bid on November 13, 2023. The sanitary sewer work will be completed by April 12. The road work will then begin in May when asphalt plants reopen.

In addition to the nearly 8.86 miles of reconstruction, we completed 7.3 miles of overlay preventive maintenance paving on the 2022 “chip and fog” roads. This overlay paving completed a Texas Underseal treatment to these roads.

Thanks to the Board’s generous support with \$2 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding, we were able to:

1. Add Wellington Estates (1.03 miles) to our 2022 contract. Construction occurred in June and July of 2023 at 2022 contract rates.
2. Prevent eliminating any of the 2022 roads after our asphalt prices increased by 55% due to the inflation caused by all of the one-time federal infrastructure funding.
3. Fund a significant portion of the 7.3 miles of “chip & fog” overlay paving.
4. Add a portion of Northview Drive immediately south of Grand River Avenue that was going to be left in poor condition based on the scope of the Drain Commissioner’s Daniels Drain project. This crush and shape paving project on Northview Dr was completed in November of 2023.

### 2023 Preventative Maintenance Road Projects

We completed all 3.95 miles of crack seal work and 14.27 miles of asphalt rejuvenator treatments to extend the life of the roads in fair, good, and excellent condition.

By the end of 2023, we will have reconstructed 32 miles of our poorest condition roads and will have completed over 47 miles of preventative maintenance road work.

Funding for the 2023 Local Road Program is provided by four main sources: the 2019 road bond proceeds (\$5,468,000), a transfer from the general fund (\$280,000), contribution from Ingham County (\$335,000), and American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding (\$700,000).

### 2024 Local Road Program Projects

We are currently reviewing the engineering plans for the Township’s 2024 local road program, which includes 6.32 miles of reconstruction, 3-5 miles of crack sealing, and 14 miles of asphalt rejuvenator treatments. We will be putting the 2024 roads out to bid in

**January and February of 2024. The final 2024 local road program list will be announced in March.**

Work with MDOT to complete the impacts of the Grand River Ave Enhancement Project and work to inform the community of the work that still needs to be completed in 2023.



**After two years of intensive construction, we have successfully rebuilt the Grand River Avenue corridor from the CN Railroad Bridge just east of Park Lake Road to Oak Pointe Court, which included work on the Okemos Consolidated Drain, the Township’s water mains, the Township’s sanitary sewer system, and other underground utilities.**

**The work that occurred in 2022 to raise Grand River Avenue approximately 2 feet and to take a compensating cut from behind the Central Fire Station on Township-owned property proved successful as Grand River Avenue did not have to be closed due to flooding in the spring of 2023.**

**We were also successful in coordinating the construction schedule to allow for the closure of Central Park Drive for the 2023 Celebrate Meridian event. This is the first time we were able to close Central Park Drive for Celebrate Meridian since 2019.**

## **B. DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION**

Continue to work with Michigan State University, and the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, to foster a workplace that adheres to the highest standards of diversity, equity and inclusion.

**Continue working with our constituents and colleagues to maintain an active engagement in programs, operations, events, policies and practices in order to demonstrate our commitment to inclusion, diversity, and equity.**

Continue to offer quarterly DEI training opportunities across the organization on a regular basis.

**Though an all-employee training had to be postponed due to multiple large-scale Township projects affecting employees’ ability to participate as a collective, Lansing Community College’s Business & Community Institute (BCI) looks forward to providing the planned program training.**

Develop a new cultural event to expand diverse opportunities throughout the community.

Through the Township DEI Committee, we held the inaugural Meridian Pride Event on Saturday, August 26 from 4:00 pm to 10:00 pm at the Marketplace on the Green pavilion. The event brought LGBTQ+ members, allies and organizations together to celebrate diversity and inclusion in the Meridian community. It was a huge success and included a 5K run/walk, dog parade, music, food, beer garden, vendors and entertainment.



### C. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Provide quality leadership, support and management of the redevelopment of Okemos PICA. Assist with implementation of the Meridian Redevelopment Fund, Brownfield TIF and DDA TIF for vertical construction.

**The focus of this goal was to maintain a relationship with the property owners, external stakeholders, and the community as we navigate the difficult challenges of this redevelopment. The project will take several years to produce a return on investment to the community. Without the investment, the site will remain contaminated and underutilized. Recommendations to get the project underway continue to be proposed as changes to the economic landscape and legislation fluctuate. The Economic Development Department, within the first quarter of 2024, will be able to provide the community an in-depth update of where the project will head.**

Seek alternative funding support mechanisms to strengthen the Meridian Redevelopment Fund to support PICA development and community development.

**The Meridian Economic Development Corporation (EDC) is authorized to support, engage, buy, sell, convey, promote, and fund a myriad of activities in support of economic development. This year, EDC members received training to assist with prioritizing focus of how to begin supporting or enhancing retention, attraction and sustainable business in our community. Several State and Federal grant programs require an entity to first establish themselves as a subject matter expert before offering program funding. The EDC has begun engaging organizations of Meridian Township to offer their supporting services to create a localized small business program. The efforts may extend to industries from agriculture to retail. The EDC's 2024 goals include the creation of a crowd source fund for a public amenity the overall community would enjoy.**

Manage the recertification of Meridian Township's Redevelopment Ready status with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. Assist with the implementation of the required policy or procedural changes.





**The Economic Development Department manages the RRC program with the support of the Community Planning Director, Department Heads, and MEDC staff. The program is an ongoing account of activities that support the best practices of development in any community. Consistency and efficiency of process are time savers and money makers for development. With this program, we remain attractive to developers and capable of promotion at the State level. The opportunities through this program have increased, as communities that are RRC certified receive additional funding in design/planning support and consideration in grant funding. With the Master Plan soon to be completed, we are hoping to enact the data study reports, to better plan for development and development goals of the future, in early 2024.**

Work cooperatively with the several Meridian Township Boards and Commissions, CBL Property Management team, Meridian Mall property owners and the Ingham County Drain office to implement development goals, in support of redevelopment of the Meridian Mall.

**The parties involved to redevelop Meridian Mall will be; Meridian Township, The Ingham County Drain Office, CBL Properties, MDOT, Ingham County Road Department, and the developer(s). Depending on the concept plan, there are opportunities for entities like MEDC or MSHDA to be involved. The complications for this site will continue as discoveries are made about the current infrastructure. A portion of the building was built in the 1960's with several extensions added later. Changes in building standards will impact any project feasibility. To date, we have had three meetings with CBL this year about the property's potential. Discussion surrounds the Township's efforts to adopt a Tax Increment Financing Plan to assist in redevelopment.**

Support the small business owners negatively impacted by the reconstruction of Grand River M-43 in 2023.

**The planned reconstruction of Grand River Avenue addressed flooding issues of the Okemos/Grand River intersection. The heavily trafficked area started to see two and three flooding events annually. The 18- month construction was a necessary hurdle that many businesses endured after COVID-19. Our position in Economic Development is enhancement and support. The project was facilitated by MDOT. Through strong partnerships with the community, we were able to address issues on demand during construction. Business owners received regular updates on the activities of the construction until the closure of the project.**

#### **D. COMMUNITY PLANNING**

With the support of the Planning Commission, Township Board, and residents, complete the Township's update to the 2017 Master Plan.

**With the support of the Planning Commission and input from residents throughout the Township, Staff was able to present a draft Master Plan update to the Planning Commission on August 28th, which the Planning Commission authorized for distribution,**

pursuant to State enabling legislation. After the mandated 63-day review period, the Planning Commission held the required public hearing on November 13th. The Planning Commission is expected to make a recommendation at their December 11th meeting on adoption of the Plan, which will be forwarded to the Township Board for final approval.

Investigate a structure to increase affordable housing within the Township.

**Affordable housing is quickly becoming the main planning topic in most communities, as housing values continue to rise and interest rates make homeownership increasingly difficult. The challenging part of the problem in Meridian Township is that it is both a supply side problem (not enough units) and a demand side problem (people want to live here). To tackle this in a meaningful way, we need to address both sides of the equation. From a supply side problem, Staff has worked with developers to begin bringing new multiple-family units online, at different price points and catering to different ages. This helps loosen up the single-family market by increasing the potential for housing churn, where people want to sell their existing home, but stay in the community. Additionally, we've made ordinance changes to allow additional, targeted density options, most notably accessory dwelling units and second floor units in commercial districts. Over an extended period of time, and combined with potential dedicated low income project, this approach to the supply side should benefit the community.**

**On the demand side problem, the main thing that needs to be addressed in the long term is providing for persons of all levels of income to move into the community. This problem will require financial resources, likely from the State of Michigan or a Countywide initiative, as the Township alone cannot solve this problem. The recent CHILL grant that Staff applied for through MSHDA is one angle to address this problem, as it improves the housing stock, therefore making it more feasible to sell and attract a family at a lower price point than the majority of housing in the community. Some communities have moved towards land trust style models to help affordability. Additionally, Staff has been taking part in the development of the Statewide housing plan, aimed at increasing affordability throughout the State.**

**The addition of the new housing tax increment financing law passed by the State several months ago may provide for an opening to improve affordability. If the Township were to tie use of that incentive to long term affordability (under 120% AMI, under 30% of income going to housing), then we may be able to substantially improve affordability going forward. Staff is still researching the program to determine its usability, but the creation of a formal incentive/affordable housing policy may be on the horizon.**

Analyze the pros/cons of creating a Tax Increment Financing Plan (TIF) along the Grand River Corridor.

**The Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA) hit several hurdles after establishment of the committee. Most of the hurdles were equated with the lack of funding to take on a project or make investments in the community. This year, the Township Board focused efforts on the feasibility of a CIA TIF. Without a funding mechanism, the CIA would have difficulty executing the vision and plans. After discussion with the Township Board, CIA members, and Planning Staff a proposal for a CIA TIF plan was made. In order to begin the discussion around TIF, the Township Board needed to amend the resolution establishing the Corridor. The steps to gain approval for a TIF plan are currently in the works. The Township Board, at their November 9th meeting, approved the adoption of the proposed 20- year plan.**

## **E. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

Continue to improve the service drive to the Recycling Center on Lake Drive and apply for the EGLE grant to construct a new Recycling Center behind the Service Center.

**Although our 2023 EGLE grant application was not successful, we made significant improvements to the design of the facility in 2023. We are hopeful that we will be successful in securing this grant in a future year. We will continue to reapply each year as the reason that we did not get the grant in 2023 was due to fact that there was less funding for this grant than most years. 2024 is also going to be a low funding year, but we are optimistic that we will obtain this grant at some point in the future.**

**Township staff met with EGLE in early September to discuss our 2023 application and received very positive feedback. The challenge that we have is that we are not in a recycle center desert, meaning we do have recycling centers in the Greater Lansing Region. The rural areas of the state are capturing all of the grant funding right now due to the low funding level and the points that are awarded based on the closest existing recycling centers.**



**This grant would fund 80% of the construction cost of the new recycling center located behind the Township Service Center.**



**We completed spring maintenance of the recycling center in April. Many years ago, the**

**Township would receive a significant number of complaints because of the poor condition of the service drive for the Recycling Center. As a result of our new maintenance program, we no longer receive any complaints about the condition of the service drive.**

With the support of the Environmental Commission, develop a plan for the Township to achieve its goal of 100% renewable energy by 2035.

**Township staff, along with help from Absolute Solar, the Energy Team and the Environmental Commission, have developed a renewable energy plan in accordance with this goal. This plan, if constructed, would result in 100% of the energy use being supplied by Township-owned solar arrays for our nine facilities that have the highest energy consumption:**

- 1. Municipal Building (partially powered by renewable energy)**
- 2. Public Safety Building (partially powered by renewable energy)**
- 3. Service Center (already powered by renewable energy at 100%)**
- 4. North Fire Station**
- 5. Central Fire Station**
- 6. South Fire Station (partially powered by renewable energy)**
- 7. Historical Village**
- 8. Harris Nature Center**
- 9. Main Lift Station (our largest sanitary sewer lift station)**

**The renewable energy plan focuses on these seven facilities:**

- 1. Central Fire Station**
- 2. North Fire Station**
- 3. Municipal Building**
- 4. Public Safety Building**
- 5. Historical Village**
- 6. Harris Nature Center (Options A and B)**
- 7. Main Lift Station Some additional work will be necessary in the future to develop a plan for our smaller Township facilities (predominantly park restroom facilities).**

With the support of the Environmental Commission, develop a plan for the Township to construct and install its first electric vehicle charging stations.

**This project is in design and we hope to have it completed in the spring of 2024. We have experienced delays in obtaining data and information that we need from Consumers Energy before we can design the electric vehicle charging system for the Municipal Complex.**

Work with the Environmental Commission to continue educating the community on the importance of protecting our wetlands, natural resources and the Township's wetland protection ordinance.

**The wetland education mailing was mailed to all property owners with wetlands and/or wetland buffers, 2,505 property owners in total, in May.**

**Township Staff have also developed new signage to help increase wetland protection and educate residents. The installation of these signs will be focused around Lake Lansing where we frequently receive complaints of dumping.**

- These signs will be implemented throughout the Township, in 2023-24, at roadside wetlands, land preserves, and park areas where we experience dumping.**
- Fifty 15" x 12" reflective signs were purchased for placement**

- **Figure 1 shows the area on Lake Drive that will receive signage due to observed dumping into wetlands.**
- **Figure 2 shows the ordered signage citing the Wetland Protection Ordinance for dumping.**

Figure 1

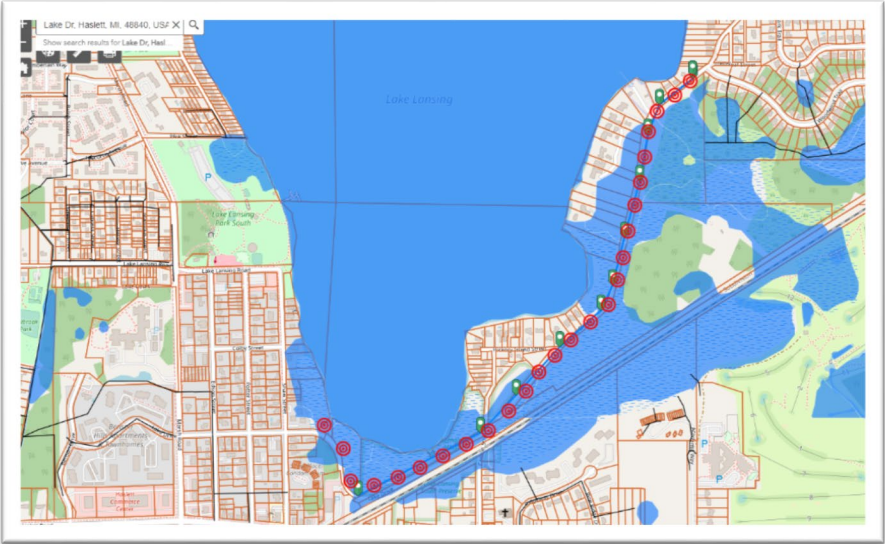


Figure 2



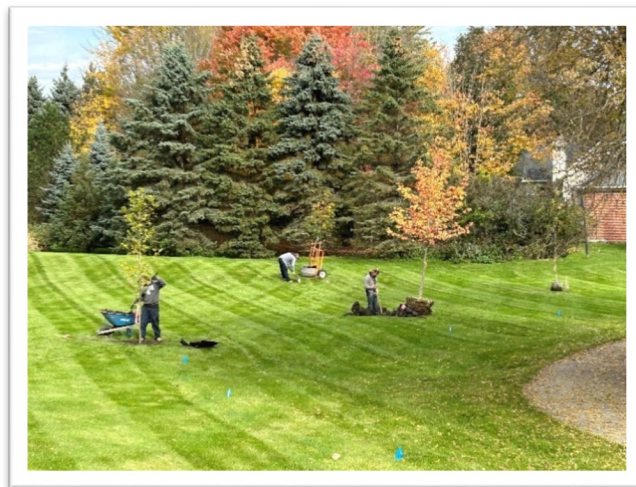
**Wetland Education Signage**

- **Interpretive signage has been developed to place at wetland areas, such as the Nancy Moore wetland bridge, to educate residents about the importance of wetlands and associated flora and fauna.**
- **Bids are currently being developed to purchase signage. Priority areas are wetlands at parks in the Township. Land Preserve wetlands will also receive signage utilizing the preservation budget. Once quotes are obtained, signage will be ordered and installed.**



Oversee and administer the 2023 Green Grants Initiative.

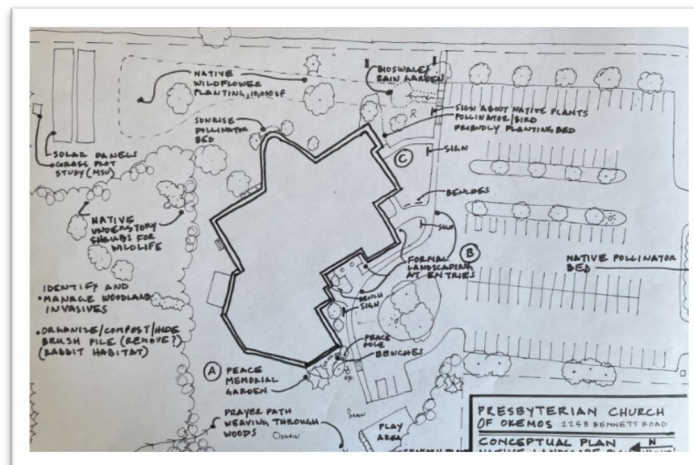
**Tree Planting at Cornell Woods:** This Green Grant supported tree planting in common areas in the Cornell Woods Subdivision, including a pond area and an open field. In addition to the environmental benefits (reduce run-off, enhanced biodiversity, natural habitat, etc.), the trees will also enhance the beauty of the area and serve as an outdoor classroom.



**Montessori Radmoor Meadow:** This Green Grant supported creation of meadows and campus-wide native plantings to enhance the biodiversity of Radmoor's living classroom and provide educational planting and plant care opportunities for students.



**Presbyterian Church Native Landscape Enhancement Plan: This Green Grant supported creation of an overall landscaping plan to support both humans and wildlife and provide a cohesive, sustainable, and healthy landscape.**



**Publication and Distribution for Mud Lake: This Green Grant supports printing and other costs related to a book about Wildlife Lake, formerly known as Mud Lake. The book, written by a former Haslett resident includes true local stories that reflect the importance of natural areas, outdoor adventures, and an understanding of our relationships with nature and climate adaptation.**

**Ralya Pollinator Garden: This Green Grant supports creation of a pollinator garden at Ralya Elementary School in Haslett. This is a collaborative effort with students, the Meridian Garden Club and a fifth grade teacher.**



## **F. FACILITIES, PARKS AND GROUNDS**

Construct Phases I and II of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail.



**Meridian Township recently opened Phase I of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail on Friday, December 8 at 1 p.m. We held a ribbon cutting ceremony at noon on Friday, December 8 to celebrate the accomplishment of opening this regional asset that will serve our residents for decades to come.**

**Construction of Phase I began in December of 2022. Construction of Phase II began in late August. We currently anticipate that Phase II construction will be completed by June of 2024.**

**After many years of hard work to acquire the land, secure the necessary funding, and design the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail, we are very excited to announce the opening of Phase I. Once Phase II is complete in June of 2024, users will have an easy, safe, and enjoyable option for non-motorized travel between the MSU Campus and Lake Lansing Park South, along approximately five miles of connected pathways and trails.**

**Phase I is approximately one mile long and starts on the north side of the Hagadorn Road and Shaw Lane intersection and concludes at the Grand River Avenue and Park Lake Road intersection. Phase I includes a bridge that will take pedestrians and bicyclists over the Red Cedar River behind the MSU Community Music School. The trail will then take users**



along the banks of the Red Cedar River to the north side of the CN Railroad tracks.

The estimated cost of construction for Phase I is \$3.7 million. Meridian Township successfully obtained a \$1.7 million federal TAP grant for Phase I. The remaining portion of the project will be funded by the Ingham County Trails and Parks Millage and the Township Pathway Millage.

Phase II is 1.2 miles long and begins near the Grand River Avenue and Campus Hill Drive intersection and concludes near the Okemos Road and Gaylord C Smith Ct. intersection. Pedestrians and bicyclists will use the Township's existing pathway system to get from the Grand River Avenue and Park Lake Road intersection, where Phase I ends, to the Grand River Avenue and Campus Hill Drive intersection, where Phase II begins.

The estimated cost of construction for Phase II is \$730,000. This phase is funded by the Ingham County Trails and Parks Millage and the Township Pathway Millage.

From the northern end of Phase II on Okemos Road, users will be able to use the existing 10-foot-wide pathway on the east side of Okemos Road to the inter-urban pathway. The Township widened this half-mile stretch of the Okemos Road pathway for the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail in 2021. Users can then take the existing 1.1-mile inter-urban trail from Okemos Road to Marsh Road.

The Township hopes to complete the design and engineering of Phase III in 2024, which would allow for construction in 2025. Phase III is the final phase of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail. Phase III will provide a trail route from Marsh Road, just south of Haslett Road, all the way to Green Road in the northeast corner of the Township.

Once all three phases are completed, the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail will provide residents with approximately 6.75 miles of trail system, which will enhance the region's trail network by connecting to the MSU and Lansing River Trails. We can't wait to celebrate the opening of Phases I and II with the community.

We will also be focusing on design of these pathway and trail projects in 2024:

1. Okemos Road bridge pathway and park connections to Wonch and Ferguson Park
2. Schultz Vet Clinic pathway gap on Bennett Road
3. Northern Tier Trail (west side of Towar Avenue) easement acquisition (design is complete)
4. Carlton Street pathway design and easement acquisition
5. Haslett Road pathway gap from Okemos Road to Park Lake Road

Complete the construction and installation of the Township's new welcome, wayfinding and park signage. This project includes 18 new signs across the Township, with welcome signs at each gateway into Meridian Township, new wayfinding signs at the Municipal Building and select park signs.

We are now at 56 total signs under the contract, with a total contact amount of \$700,079. The average cost per sign is \$12,501.41.

In 2023, we constructed 15 facility and welcome signs and 13 park signs.

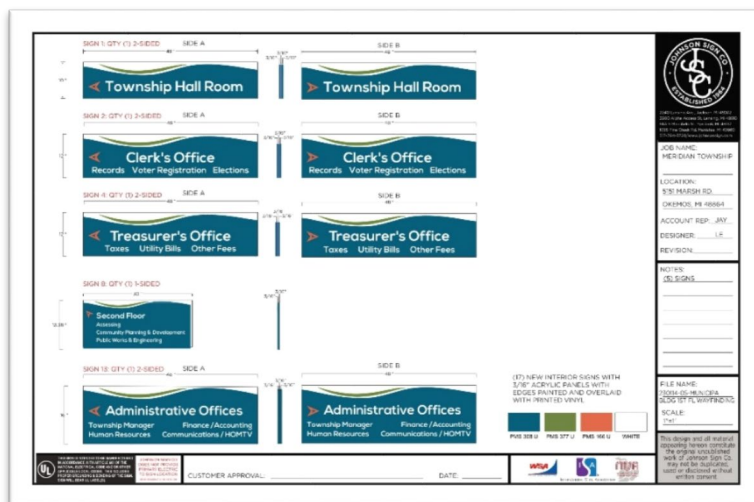
In 2024, we will construct 27 more Park signs.

The Parks Department has now invested \$375,700 to update all 39 of their signs (some are new signs for parks that did not have a sign). The average cost per park sign is \$9,633.33.

**We are now at 56 total signs under the contract, with a total contact amount of \$700,079. The average cost per sign is \$12,501.41.**



Modernize the signage in the Municipal Building and Service Center. Take inventory and establish a plan to modernize the signage in the Public Safety Building and the north and south fire stations.



**We are going through the final proofs of these signs for the Municipal Building and the Service Center. The new signs will be printed and installed in the Municipal Building and Service Center in 2024. We will work on internal sign plans for the North and South Fire Stations in 2024.**

Gather quotes and data needed to put a renovation project out to bid for the Municipal Building. Potential renovations would include new carpet, new office furniture and painting the walls.

**Renovations to the Service Center began in April. The front entry and hallway at the Service Center received new carpet and newly painted walls. A new countertop was installed at the front counter and we lowered a section of the front counter to make it ADA compliant.**

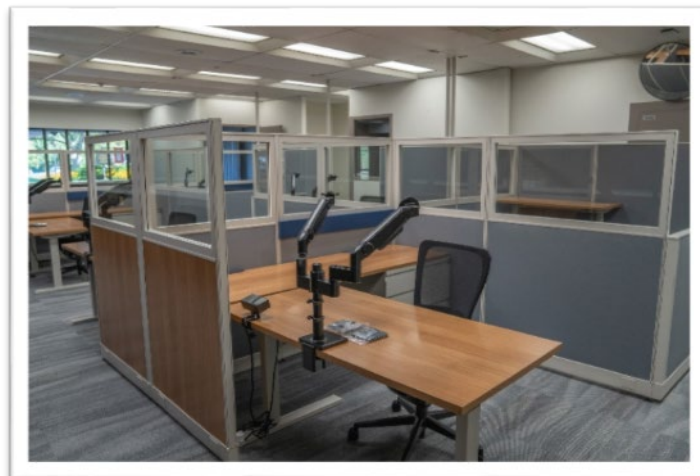
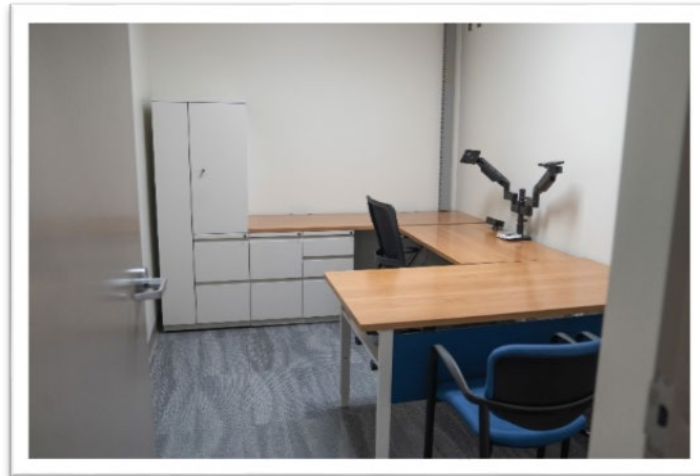
**Perpetration for this project began in December of 2022. Renovations to the Municipal Building began in April after we had relocated all of our 55-60 team members who work in this facility.**

**The renovations included removal of all wallpaper, extensive drywall repairs, painting the walls and trim, installing new flooring, and new office furniture.**

**The front counter in the lobby was also given a new façade, including dropping a portion of the counter to become ADA compliant. This project also included replacing the four banks of doors that comprise our front entrance.**

**The project was originally scheduled to be completed in October but was finished in early September.**

**The Public Safety locker rooms have been updated with new lockers. We began replacing flooring throughout the Public Safety Building in November. This project will be completed over the next 3-4 months as we are strategically phasing the work to keep the Public Safety Building open and operating during the renovations.**



Work with community stakeholders to evaluate the need to develop plans for a new Meridian Township Senior & Community Center. The committee shall consider location, amenities and funding options. The expectation is to bring a recommendation to the Township Board by July 1, 2023.

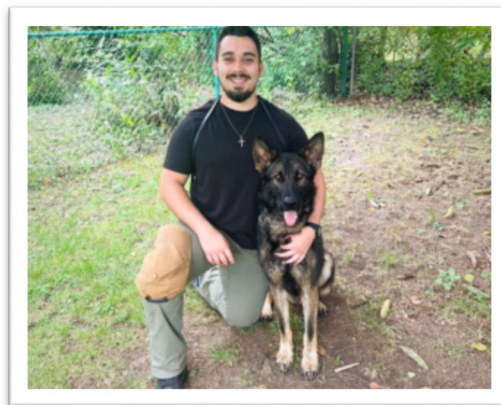
**The Community/Senior Center Task Force met multiple times in 2023 to discuss and determine options for creating a Recreation Center for our community. Topics discussed included costs, funding, amenities, and location. Task Force Chair, Trustee Wilson drafted a report highlighting the findings. The project received funding in the amount of \$5,000,000 toward the effort which will assist in jumpstarting a fundraising effort. At this time, a consultant has been secured to assist with pre-planning design and developing a color rendering for fundraising purposes.**

### **G. PUBLIC SAFETY**

Continuing with our commitment to recruit and retain the most highly qualified candidates to serve our township, the Police Department will update our briefing room to make a more functional, efficient, and technologically advanced space.

**A new table, eight new chairs, and new cabinets were purchased and brought into the briefing room. Additionally, two new 50” televisions will be installed soon. The televisions will be used as electronic message boards to better communicate with our personnel. The briefing room will soon be painted and the entire police department, including the briefing room, will receive new flooring by the end of the year.**

Train a new canine Police Officer and purchase a new canine.



**Officer Trevino was chosen as the next canine handler and our newest canine, a German Shepard named Reno, was purchased. They attended training together in September and are currently assigned to road patrol. Our canine team now features two duos, Ofc. Anderson and Ares and Ofc. Trevino and Reno. This team enables us to have a canine scheduled to be on duty every day.**

**During 2023, the K9 vehicle was replaced by a new Ford Police Interceptor. The new vehicle has much needed upgrades from the prior vehicle, including a larger and safer internal K9 containment system, as well as several safety systems for the handlers and their K9 partners.**

Obtain reaccreditation through the Michigan Association of Police Chiefs.



**An onsite assessment was held in December of 2022 and Meridian Township Police Department received full re-accreditation from the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police on February 6, 2023.**

Purchase new Fire Department Power Cots – Stryker Power Load Pro2

**The Fire Department continued to work toward eliminating old and worn out equipment with a strong replacement schedule reinforcing our commitment to protect residents with state of the art equipment. This year to support our EMS operation and protect firefighters from the daily wear and tear of constant lifting and lowering of patients on and off the cots, we entered into a contract with Stryker to purchase four new Stryker Power Load Pro2 Power Cots. These power cots raise and lower patients with the push of a button. This prevents our firefighters from lifting and lowering each patient manually which can lead to injury. We also received new 12-lead EKG monitors, AEDs, and Lucas CPR machines with the agreement.**



## **H. TOWNSHIP FINANCES**

Maintain a fund balance in the General Fund of at least 25% of annual General Fund expenditures.

**On December 31, 2023, our projected 2023 ending general fund balance is \$8,326,678 which is approximately 25% of our appropriated expenditures for 2023 of \$33,645,655.**

**On December 31, 2024, our projected 2024 ending general fund balance is \$8,441,048 which is approximately 31% of our appropriated expenditures for 2024 of \$27,111,490.**

Continue our 2017 pledge to voters by investing an additional \$1,500,000 into MERS to help reduce our underfunded pension liability.

**We have made an additional \$300,000 payment on our unfunded pension liability to date in 2023, and we are preparing to make additional payments this year to fulfill our pledge. These payments will help to reduce the Township's unfunded pension liability, improve the health of the retirement system for our retirees, and reduce future financial obligations for taxpayers.**

## **I. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Work with the senior community to determine how to evolve the senior center programming and operations to meet modern needs.

**The Community/Senior Center Task Force has been meeting consistently to determine the feasibility, location, funding, etc. of developing a Community/Senior Center for the community. The Task Force will now meet first with the Senior Center Advisory Board to discuss the findings and to hear directly from them on their concerns and desires that will**

**best fit their needs. The Township Board also conducted listening sessions throughout the community where they received feedback, as well.**

Increase the Meridian Township website's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 levels and fix issues that make it difficult for people with disabilities to use the website. Achieve Level A (minimal compliance) and Level AA (acceptable compliance).

**Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level A (minimal compliance) has been met as of November 2023. The goal of reaching Level AA (acceptable compliance) will need to be carried over into 2024. The current plan with Monsido, the website's accessibility software, only scans 5,000 pages on the website. There are over 9,000 pages on the website, and in order to reach Level AA (acceptable compliance), the plan will need to be increased to scan all pages. The plan for 2024 has been increased to allow for a complete scan of all website pages.**

Create a new video segment for Manager Frank Walsh to provide the community with updates in Meridian Township.

**On November 21, 2023, the first episode of Good Morning, Meridian was released. This monthly program will feature updates about the various projects, news, and events happening in Meridian Township. The show is hosted by Manager Walsh and includes interviews with various staff and Board members. Good Morning, Meridian is produced by the Communications Department.**



## **J. RETENTION, RECRUITMENT AND WELL-BEING**

Focus on implementing the 2022 Township Retention and Recruitment Program.

**We have demonstrated our desire to recruit, retain, and preserve the well-being of our exceptional staff through improved wages, celebratory events for staff, providing regular recognition of jobs well done and providing excellent, often long-term, service to the Township. The Township put additional pay increases into place, above what was already stated in our collective bargaining agreements..**

In an effort to foster teamwork, continue to offer programs and events such as team picnics, holiday parties and Lugnuts games.

**We actively promote connection and set the stage as often as possible for staff to get to know and celebrate our fellow workers by offering annual events, such as our Lugnuts**

**sporting events, annual holiday party, providing Township gear that can be worn to work, and the Archie Virtue Award. The award recognizes exemplary employees who continue to go above and beyond in their Township work. In addition this year, we enjoyed the Fun Friday program a trivia lunch hour program intended to step away from the office for an hour of comradery and goodwill.**

Continue to offer team incentives such as casual wear, flex time and fully paid health care premiums.

**In an effort to achieve balance in our work experience, we have offered flexible work hours through recruitment and retention programs, keeping in mind the importance of taking time to rest and recharge.**

# ACCOUNTING AND BUDGETING



The Department of Accounting and Budgeting is responsible for all aspects of the Township's accounting system. The Department maintains the general ledger, processes outgoing payments through the accounts payable system, approves purchase orders, processes utility billing transactions, prepares and monitors the budget, coordinates the pension board meeting, coordinates grant accounting, and is the coordinating department for the annual financial audit.

## 2023 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **2022 Township Audit**

The annual audit was completed by Yeo & Yeo CPA's & Business Consultants. The audit was given a clean review. With the 2022 audit, we implemented GASB Statement No. 87, *Leases*. A single audit was also performed for the 2022 fiscal year and the Township received an unmodified opinion for our federal grants.

The Township submitted its 2022 audited financial reports to the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and was awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 2022 audit.

### **2024 Budget**

The 2024 budget was presented to the Township Board on September 5, 2023 and approved at the September 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. The budget is showing a surplus of \$114,370 to the General Fund and the Township will have a strong expected fund balance of \$10.1 million. The projected fund balance is approximately 37% of our annual budgeted expenditures of \$27,111,490.

### **\$1.5 Million MERS Payment**

We made our \$1.5 million additional MERS payment in 2023 to help pay down our pension liability, improve our long-term financial position, and fulfill our promise to our voters and retirees.

### **Invoice Cloud**

We worked with the Treasurer's office to help integrate additional financial services into invoice cloud. Utility Billing payments have been integrated and we are expanding into permitting and other revenue collections.

### **Data Portal for Public Works**

We are integrating an IT system, Neptune 360, and are exploring ways that we may be able to pull reads more quickly to give residents quicker notifications of high-water usage.



**Implement a Paperless Accounts Payable and Approval Process**

Paperless approvals have been completed using the accounts payable module in BS&A. This has reduced work for staff and has created a better electronic record keeping system to support approval for our expenditures.

**Evaluate a New Credit Card (Purchasing Card) Company**

An RFP was issued 11/20/2023 and posted for public bid on Meridian Township’s website. Finance staff worked as a team to create an RFP that would deliver high value to the Township, while limiting our risk. We will evaluate proposals in 2024. Proposals are due to the Township by January 31, 2024.

**TEAM MEMBERS**

- Dante Ianni, Director
- Bernie Blonde, Accountant
- Christina Weber, Bookkeeper
- Korissa Freier, Bookkeeper
- Kimberly Graham, Account Payable Clerk

# ADMINISTRATION



The Township Manager works directly with the Township Board and the various departments of Meridian Township. The Manager is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Township, budget preparation and administration, human resources, public service, public safety, public works, parks and recreation, and community relations. The Department Directors report directly to the Township Manager.

Numerous activities and projects were accomplished in 2023 under the leadership of the Township Manager's office:

- Coordinated the 2024 Goals and Objectives process.
- Continued to seek opportunities to reduce overall operating costs.
- Development and oversight of the Township's 2024 Budget.
- Conducted six listening sessions with the Board in the community.
- We were fortunate to select Dante Ianni as our new Finance Director.
- With the retirement of LuAnn Maisner, Parks & Recreation Director, we were able to hire former Trustee Courtney Wisinski as the Parks & Recreation Director.
- With the retirement of Ken Plaga, Chief of Police, we were able to promote Rick Grillo as Chief of Police.
- Developed Public Safety recruitment and retention program.
- Attended the monthly meetings of the Okemos Downtown Development Authority and the Economic Development Corporation.
- Continued our collective efforts to foster an environment that is welcoming, diverse and inclusive.
- Developed a committee to consider a location for a Meridian Community/Senior Center.
- Installed our fourth Solar Array.
- Reconstruction and resurfacing of 8.86 miles of local roads and 7.3 miles of preventative maintenance.
- Completed Municipal Building, Police Building and Service Center Building renovations.
- Installed 12<sup>th</sup> Outdoor Warning Siren.
- Conducted 14 2023 performance reviews.
- Coordinated Trustee recruitment process.
- Developed Good Morning Meridian telecast.
- Conducted retirement parties for Chief Plaga and Director Maisner.

- Chaired the State's Manager Member Success Committee.
- Developed plan to honor Gayelord Mankowski.
- Responded to over 120 citizen inquires.
- Managed the reorganization of 53 team members during the renovation project.
- Focused on retention and recruitment of team with flex time, casual wear, Lugnuts, Fun Fridays, holiday party, and Archie Virtue Excellence awards.
- Co-chaired Rotary Golf Outing.
- Active membership in the Haslett-Okemos Rotary Club.
- Built relationships with MSU leadership.
- Keynote moderator at State conference.
- Oversight of 2022 Audit.
- Led the solution-based project to fix the chip and fog roads.
- Raised funds for Pride Festival, Celebrate Meridian, Health & Safety Expo and Township Annual Holiday Party.
- Solicited funds for police department improvements.
- Continue to build great rapport with the Meridian Garden Club.

### **TEAM MEMBERS**

Frank L. Walsh, Township Manager  
Dan Opsommer, Deputy Township Manager/Director of Public Works & Engineering  
Michelle Prinz, Executive Assistant

# ASSESSING

The Assessing Department is responsible for establishing assessments of taxable property for the equitable distribution of the property tax burden in accordance with Michigan's General Property Tax Act and other applicable statutes. The Assessing Department's responsibilities include creating the annual assessment roll, maintaining ownership records and property descriptions for taxing purposes, processing Personal Property Statements and personal property exemption requests, and inspecting existing property and new construction for property tax purposes. Taxable values established by the Assessing Department annually are used by the Township Treasurer to produce property tax bills for property within the Township.

## 2023 TOP TEN TAXPAYERS

| 2023 TOP TEN TAXPAYERS (BY TAXABLE VALUE) |                                  |               |                             |                                 |                     |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| RANK                                      | TAXPAYER                         | PROPERTY TYPE | REAL PROPERTY TAXABLE VALUE | PERSONAL PROPERTY TAXABLE VALUE | TOTAL TAXABLE VALUE |
| 1   | CONSUMERS ENERGY COMPANY         | UTILITY       | \$2,035,064                 | \$32,576,300                    | \$34,611,364        |
| 2   | C150 2929 HANNAH LOFTS, LLC      | APARTMENTS    | \$22,224,500                | \$290,700                       | \$22,515,200        |
| 3   | EAST LANSING I, LLC              | APARTMENTS    | \$16,169,374                | \$0                             | \$16,169,374        |
| 4   | MERIDIAN MALL, LP                | RETAIL        | \$15,252,000                | \$0                             | \$15,252,000        |
| 5   | GC CLUB MERIDIAN APARTMENTS LLC  | APARTMENTS    | \$11,218,900                | \$0                             | \$11,218,900        |
| 6   | TEG CENTRAL, LLC                 | APARTMENTS    | \$11,165,995                | \$0                             | \$11,165,995        |
| 7   | EAST LANSING ATHLETIC CLUB, INC. | HEALTH CLUB   | \$10,498,930                | \$0                             | \$10,498,930        |
| 8   | BRANDYWINE CREEK II, LLC         | APARTMENTS    | \$9,784,821                 | \$0                             | \$9,784,821         |
| 9   | ACC OP, LLC                      | APARTMENTS    | \$9,144,753                 | \$0                             | \$9,144,753         |
| 10  | OKEMOS POINTE I, LLC             | APARTMENTS    | \$8,613,659                 | \$0                             | \$8,613,659         |

## 2023 VALUE SUMMARY

| <b>PROPERTY CLASS</b> | <b>PARCEL COUNT</b> | <b>SEV</b>           | <b>TV</b>            |
|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Commercial            | 673                 | 558,340,200          | 463,009,408          |
| Industrial            | 41                  | 5,127,900            | 4,087,967            |
| Residential           | 13,230              | 1,916,124,366        | 1,606,522,078        |
| Personal              | 1,599               | 69,501,900           | 69,501,900           |
| Exempt                | 367                 | 0                    | 0                    |
| <b>TOTALS:</b>        | <b>15,919</b>       | <b>2,549,094,366</b> | <b>2,142,121,353</b> |

## 2023 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **Defend Tax Appeals with Vigor**

At the end of 2023, there were eleven parcels under appeal in the Entire Tribunal Division of the Michigan Tax Tribunal. Two appeals were resolved during 2023. The taxable value in contention for pending 2023 appeals is just 0.14 of a percent of the Township's tax base. Efforts are being made to determine which of the pending cases can be resolved without a trial and which, if any, may need to be defended at trial.

### **Conduct Annual Assessment/Re-Inspection of Taxable Properties**

The annual re-inspection program continued for 2023. The department did not utilize interns this summer due to the limited temporary office space while the municipal building was under renovation. Assessing staff reviewed and inspected the 1,746 condo units in the township. During this process record cards were reviewed for accuracy and photos were updated.

## 2023 Board of Review Members

|                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Chris Silker               | Michael Nussdorfer          |
| Xavier Durand-Hollis       | Terrance Warren (alternate) |
| Brandon Brooks (alternate) | Sonya Pentecost             |
| Deborah Federau            | Lanny Brunette              |

## TEAM MEMBERS

Ashley Winstead, Assessor  
Jennifer Flower, Appraiser II  
Angela Ryan, Appraiser II  
Danielle Hughes, Assessing Clerk

# CLERK'S OFFICE



## RESPONSIBILITIES AND 2023 ACTIVITY

The Clerk's Office responsibilities are largely set by state statute and include but are not limited to; Election Administration, Freedom of Information Coordinator, Record Retention, Township Notices, Fiduciary Responsibilities, updates to the Code of Ordinances, and maintaining official Township Cemetery records. The Clerk's Office also provides free Notary services to the public.

## BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS MEMBER LISTS

Through the collaborative efforts with Executive Assistant Michelle Prinz, the Townships Boards and Commissions list is updated and maintained for date appointed/elected to office, sworn-in, ethics statement signed, and term of service. We also collaborate with Township Supervisor Pat Jackson in processing public service applications, and Supervisor appointment recommendations.

## CODE OF ORDINANCES -CODIFICATION

The Clerk's Office is responsible for the codification and publication of Township Ordinances. This includes publishing all ordinances internally and with Municipal Code. In 2023, eight (8) of eighteen (18) codes were sent to Municipal Code for codification. Through the collaborative efforts of the Community Planning and Development and Clerk's Office staff, a shared ordinance numbering system implemented in 2022 continued to be maintained and accurately recorded in a timely fashion. 2023 saw a third less the number of codifications from the previous year.

## ELECTION ADMINISTRATION AND 2023 ELECTIONS IN MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP

The Clerk's Office is also responsible for preparation, publication and posting of all public notices pertaining to elections, performing public accuracy testing on all tabulators, logistics for all polling locations, processing ballots, and transmitting election data to the County Clerk.

In 2023, the Clerk's office election voting records included:

- 33, 121 Voters and Records maintained via data base and manual changes

- 2,633 New Voters/Records updated with Master Card printed, and Voter Information Card sent

**Qualified Voter File (QVF) Data Records in 2023**

**TOTAL- ALL: 24, 404 Record Changes.**

Each change requires one or more of the following steps per voter:

Pulling of each Individual Master Card recording manually updates required, or follow up with a "Response Card" being sent for verification of change, and return of same card must be handled, cancelling of voters, by pulling Master Card with manually updates, preparation for retention of record changes. Includes but not limited to scanning to PDF format for digital record retention.

CHANGE: 19,643

ACTIVE: 345

CANCEL: 977

REJECT: 1

CHALLENGE: 631

VERIFY: 1, 736

**Meridian Township had no Elections in 2023**

- 8,218 Permanent Mail Ballot Requests January 1, 2023 - January 1, 2024
- 25 Overseas and Military Federal Post Card Application Received in 2023 for the 2024 February 27<sup>th</sup> Presidential Primary

**MAJOR NEW ELECTION LAWS BEGAN IMPLEMENTATION**

- Permanent Mail Ballot List Requirement
- Drop Box Requirement
- Video Surveillance Requirement
- Early Voting Site Requirement
- Pre-Processing Requirement

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOIA)**

The Clerk's Office responded to 96 Freedom of Information requests filed with the Clerk's Office during 2023 with three (3) closed due to lack of payment and one (1) outstanding partial payment. This number was half the number of FOIA's received in 2022.

The Clerk's Office also implemented a new online FOIA Request system in conjunction with the IT Department and Police Department. This system allows the FOIA Coordinators, respondents, and requestors to better monitor and track FOIA requests. This has streamlined the process and reduced redundancies led by Deputy Clerk Gordon.

**LEGAL NOTICES AND POSTING OF OFFICIAL TOWNSHIP MEETINGS AND MINUTES**

The Clerk's Office is tasked with submitting legal notices to the newspaper for publication. Notices are done to meet the Open Meetings Act requirements advising members of the community of upcoming meetings, hearings, as well as, changes in resolutions and ordinances. Legal notices are submitted to the local paper, posted online and the posted in Township Lobby. In 2023, the Clerk's Office submitted 141 legal notices for publication for a total cost of \$11,014.54. In addition, the Clerk's Office began publishing legal notices in the City Pulse in addition to the LSJ in an effort to increase transparency and encourage public participation at township meetings and public hearings.

## **NOTARY SERVICES AND OATHS OF OFFICES**

During 2023, the Clerk's Office performed 80 notarial services, and 71 oaths of office and signed ethics statements for public service and police and fire appointments. The oath of office must be taken whenever an official is originally elected or appointed and reelected or reappointed. This is true for both elected officials and those appointed to fill a vacancy.

Taking the oath tends to lend credibility to the position to which a person has just been appointed or assigned. It also provides an opportunity to create a "paper trail" for the Township Board to the date of appointment and; therefore, to the expiration date of that person's appointment so the board knows when to make future appointments.

## **TOWNSHIP CEMETERY RECORD KEEPING**

Meridian Township oversees two cemeteries with Glendale cemetery being the most active. In 2023, there were 46 burials, 52 lot sales, 1 Disinterment. The recordkeeping management is handled by the Clerk's Office and the grounds maintenance is handled by the Department of Public Works. With the hiring of a new Deputy Clerk, a review of the current process of record keeping and coordination with the Department of Public Works, Staff will be making recommendations for improvements including new software and an assessment of the cemetery rates.

## **TOWNSHIP RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

With the relocation of a majority of the Township department records to the former Haslett Library site, evaluation of the Township's record keeping needs, status, priorities, retention periods, and storage options (both on paper and electronically) is an ongoing process. Emphasis has been placed on continually building efforts to permanently preserve records as well as increase the efficiency through which records may be retrieved. Clerk's staff is currently safeguarding records digitally and with backup documents on external hard drives for all of the boards, commissions and departments documents. As an example in 2022, the Clerk's Office stored 28 sets of Township Board meeting packets, minutes and agendas along with 107 resolutions, Certificates of Supervisor and Quit Claim Deeds. Staff also retained and updated 16 Ordinances passed by the Township Board which were sent to EZ Code who creates the supplements to our Code of Ordinances.

## **2023 ELECTION COMMISSION**

Clerk Deborah Guthrie  
Trustee Kathy Ann Sundland  
Trustee Courtney Wisinski

## **TEAM MEMBERS**

Deborah Guthrie, Township Clerk  
Zack Lemaster, Assistant to the Clerk/Deputy Clerk (Jan.-June)  
Zack Spurlock, Administrative Assistant II (Mar.-Sept.)  
Emily Gordon, Deputy Clerk/Election Administrator (Aug.-Dec.)  
Rebekah Kelly, Records Technician II



# COMMUNICATIONS



The highest priority of the Communications Department is to provide residents with an increased access to transparency in governance with relevant information in a timely fashion. The Department is responsible for coordinating a strategic and comprehensive effort to inform the public of the Township’s goals, plans, activities and events through various multimedia platforms including web, digital, and print.

The Department ensures that all media and communications successfully reaches their intended audience. Other main functions of the Communications Department includes serving as the Local Franchise Authority for nine Public, Educational and Governmental (PEG) Channels in Meridian Township, overseeing the operations and production for HOMTV (Government Access Channel) and CAMTV (Public Access Channel), operating a multimedia television internship training program, and providing staff support to the Township’s Communications Commission.

## 2023 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **Staffing Changes**

On May 1, Rachael Stohlin started in the position of Marketing and Public Relations Specialist, taking over for Andrea Smiley. The Marketing and Public Relations Specialist position received over 20 applications, and three in-person interviews were conducted before Manager Diehl made the final decision.

The interview panel consisted of Multimedia Production and Operations Specialist Danneisha McDole, Human Resources Director Abby Tithof, Director of Project Management and Operations Melissa Massey, and Janet Lillie, who serves as the Assistant Vice President at Michigan State University.

### **Digital Newsletters**

On March 1, the Meridian Township Parks and Recreation Department unveiled their new newsletter, “The Playbook”. The newsletter is designed and sent out by the Communications Department. This monthly newsletter highlights the latest information about sports and recreation, Meridian Conservation Corps (MCC), Harris Nature Center, Meridian Township Farmers’ Market, Meridian Historical Village, and the Meridian Senior Center. In addition to The Playbook, the Communications Department also sends out Meridian Happenings, which is a monthly newsletter, as well as the Green Gazette, another monthly newsletter.

## **Family Fun Guide Print Magazine**

In May 2023, the Communications Department designed and released the Family Fun Guide. This publication highlighted the various events and programs offered through the Parks and Recreation Department in 2023. The publication was mailed to all Meridian Township residents and was made available in digital format on the Township website.

## **Event Marketing**

The marketing and promotion of all Township events and activities is done through the Communications Department. This includes adding content to the Township website, sending press releases to media outlets, creating graphical material to be used both digitally and printed, promotional posts on the various Township social media platforms, capturing video and photos of events, and posting the photos and videos of the event on social media after they have occurred.

This work involves coordinating with multiple departments and committees to gather the information and plan how to effectively promote the events. Some of the main events that were promoted in 2023 will be listed below, but the list does not comprise all the events that were promoted in 2023:

- Meridian Cares About You: Health & Safety Expo
- Celebrate Meridian
- Meridian Freedom Fest Honoring Juneteenth
- Meridian Pride
- Summer Concert Series
- Meridian Township Farmers' Market
- Pancake Breakfast
- Christmas in the Village
- Meridian Historical Village Heritage Festival
- Memorial Day Service
- Halloween Events
  - Police Open House, Spooktacular Adventures at the Market, Howl-oween at the Small and Large Dog Parks, Treats and Tours at the Meridian Historical Village
- Fire Prevention Open House
- Spring and Fall Recycling Events
- Township Board Listening Sessions

## **Monsido Web Accessibility Software**

One of the Communication Department's goals for 2023 was to increase the Meridian Township website's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 levels and fix issues that make it difficult for people with disabilities to use the website.

This was done by partnering with Monsido, the company who provides accessibility software for the Township website. In addition to providing easier reading services for those who visit the website, the software allows Staff to fix accessibility issues on the backend of the website.

This goal will carry over into 2024. The 2023 plan with Monsido only scanned 5,000 pages of the website. There are over 9,000 pages on the website, and to reach compliance, the plan will need to be increased to scan all pages. The plan for 2024 has been increased to allow for a complete scan of all website pages.

## **ArchiveSocial Records Retention Software**

A new software the Communications Department began utilizing in August 2023 is ArchiveSocial. ArchiveSocial serves as a social media archiving tool that constantly captures real-time snapshots of 20 different Meridian Township social media accounts.

Government social media accounts are considered public records, so it is important to maintain an active, accurate record to comply with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Social networking sites

do not archive/retain records for us, so they have no obligation to maintain our records if a FOIA request is submitted. ArchiveSocial tracks all posts, comments, messages, and more relative to Township pages, including edits and deletions to this content to ensure the Township has a complete record of social media interactions.

In addition, ArchiveSocial provides “Risk Management and Analytics”, which allows Communications Staff to efficiently measure public sentiment towards the Township (positive/negative), and preserve public safety by immediately identifying threats or concerning statements made towards the Township through keyword detection.

For example, if a Facebook user sends the Township a message including the word “shooting” and deletes this message, ArchiveSocial can provide a record of the original message, as well as when it was deleted.

Staff obtained quotes from both Pagefreeze and Smarsh, the top two competitors of ArchiveSocial, but ultimately decided to go with ArchiveSocial due to their high customer rating from other government agencies.

### **Good Morning, Meridian**

In 2022, Manager Diehl and Manager Walsh discussed the possibility of having a video series that allowed Manager Walsh to provide updates to residents about what was going on in the community.

On November 21, 2023, the first episode of Good Morning, Meridian was released. It will be a monthly program that features updates about the various projects, news, and events happening in Meridian Township. The show is hosted by Manager Walsh and includes interviews with various staff and Township Board members.

The second episode aired on Tuesday, December 19, 2023 and will continue into 2024.

### **HOMTV Server Room Upgrades**

The HOMTV Server Room has seen great improvements in 2023. Engineer Brian Kusch worked with Manager Diehl to remove old equipment and cables. There were previously four racks of equipment, but due to the disposal of outdated equipment, they were able to reduce the equipment to three racks. New schematics were drawn up for the current workflow. Additional equipment was ordered and will be installed early 2024.

### **HOMTV Internship**

In 2023, HOMTV had six interns involved in the HOMTV Internship Program over the spring, summer, and fall semesters.

### **HOMTV and CAMTV Channel Issues**

In August 2023, it was reported to the Communications Department that HOMTV was without audio. A few days after the HOMTV audio issues were reported, CAMTV also experienced audio and video issues. Upon troubleshooting, Staff concluded that faulty encoders were dropping audio and video while the signals were being sent to Comcast, and that both encoders would need to be replaced.

At their September 19, 2023 regular meeting, the Township Board approved Manager Diehl’s request for an emergency purchase of two new encoders. The money for the encoders came from the previous PEG fee fund. After approval, Manager Diehl purchased two new encoders, which were installed by Comcast on October 19, 2023. After the encoders were installed, the audio and video issues for CAMTV and HOMTV were resolved.

Unfortunately, a new issue has come up with CAMTV. The playback server that allows for the scheduling and playback of videos has failed. The drives that host the video files are no longer operational, meaning no videos can be played on CAMTV. Due to this, the playback server will need to be replaced. Though

HOMTV is operational at this time, the HOMTV playback server is 11 years old and would benefit from being replaced at the same time as the CAMTV server. The Township Board approved a request for another emergency purchase for new equipment at their December 12, 2023 regular meeting. The funds for this purchase will once again come from the PEG fee fund.

Staff has narrowed it down to two companies that they would like to potentially purchase new equipment from, and equipment is expected to be ordered by the end of January 2024.

### **HOMTV National Award Winner**

The Alliance for Community Media (ACM) named HOMTV as the 2022 winner in the Overall Excellence in Government Access category for the Hometown Media Awards. Submissions were entered in March 2023 and HOMTV was honored at the ACM Hometown Media Awards in June 2023.

### **HOMTV Programming**

#### 2023 Programming Totals

- Meridian Live: 63
  - Township Board: 24
  - Planning Commission: 20
  - Environmental Commission: 8
  - Zoning Board of Appeals: 9
  - Park Commission: 2
- HOM Entertainment: 14
- Catching Up with Kenize: 3
- Women’s History Month: 5
- Meridian Makers: 2
- Good Morning, Meridian: 2
- Township Event Coverage: 20

## **MEMBERS OF THE CABLE COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION IN 2023**

Leslie Charles, Chair  
Lisa Whiting-Dobson, Vice Chair  
Vacant, Commissioner  
Vacant Commissioner  
Vacant, Commissioner  
Vacant, Alternate Commissioner  
Mike Nevells, Alternate Commissioner  
Deborah Guthrie, Township Board Liaison

## **TEAM MEMBERS**

Samantha Diehl, Communications Manager  
Rachael Stohlin, Marketing & Public Relations Specialist  
Danneisha McDole, Multimedia Production & Operations Specialist

# COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT



After the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically slowed development in 2020, the level of activity in the Township has been at a consistently high level in the following years. 2023 was no different, with permitting activity running at a similar clip 2022 and only slightly behind 2021, which was a near record year in the Township. Values on construction are up substantially, as 2023 was nearly a record value year, despite the number of permits being slightly down. Most notably, the trades permits (plumbing, mechanical, and electrical) were down noticeably, most likely due to the pent up demand from the pandemic finally being resolved and permitting levels going back to normal. Code Enforcement continues to improve the quality of the Winslow Mobile Home Park, slowly but surely. Investment is being made in the park and some of the worst structures have been removed. The biggest change in 2023 was that our rental inspection program got fully back on track from the pandemic, getting back to 2019/2020 levels for inspections. Our customer service focus continues in the Department through building permits and inspections, site plan review, public engagement and education, code enforcement, and rental housing inspections. The Department works closely with residents, businesses, property owners, and provides Staff support to the following Boards and Commissions:

- ✓ Township Board
- ✓ Planning Commission
- ✓ Zoning Board of Appeals
- ✓ Transportation Commission
- ✓ Brownfield Redevelopment Authority
- ✓ Building Board of Appeals

## 2023 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **Finish the 2023 Update to the Master Plan**

The Planning Commission finalized a Draft of the 2023 update to the Master Plan and recommended its adoption in December 2023. The Township Board has held an initial review of the Master Plan and will be going through the document at future meetings, with an eye towards adoption in the near future. Implementation is already beginning, with the adoption of Ordinance 2023-05, which updated some housing standards in the Township and permitted accessory dwelling units, both goals of the 2023 Master Plan update.

### **Modernize Vehicular Parking Standards in the Township**

This has been an ongoing goal for the Department since 2022 and will continue into 2024, as the scope of the project continues to grow as we dive into the topic further. In 2023, we developed a solid draft of the basic standards, along with an update to the lighting standards, which are intertwined with parking. But along with that, it is clear we need to update our landscape ordinance, in addition to developing low impact design standards that are needed to help alleviate flooding in many areas of the Township. Additionally, it is becoming more and more widespread to begin requiring electric car charging stations (or at least infrastructure planning for them) as part of any major parking lot construction and that needs to be evaluated in light of ongoing construction cost increases. Lastly, given that the size of cars has slowly but surely increased over the years since the dimensional standards were created in 1974, Staff needs to make sure that the standards are still relevant in today's environment.

### **Implement Paperless Permitting for Plumbing, Mechanical, and Electrical Permits and Determine Process for Building Permitting**

The system is prepared for mechanical, electrical, and plumbing permits to go fully digital. The Treasurer's Office is now able to take digital payments online, through the BS&A permitting system. Staff is preparing to start accepting permits in the coming days. Once Phase 1 is working well, Staff will begin work on the second phase of the project, the building permitting conversion to digital permitting. This phase of the project should go quicker, as it will piggyback the work that was already done on the MEP permits.

### **Improve Usability of all Ordinances and Forms**

Staff continues to make progress on this goal and at this point, it has become part of our normal course of business. On the form side, we've updated our Certificates of Occupancy to be clearer and more accurate and hope to roll that out officially in 2024. We've also updated rental forms as we utilize them throughout the year. We are currently in the process of standardizing lot split/combo forms, with support from the Assessing Department. On the Ordinance side, changes like the update to the floodplain ordinance and some of the portions of the RRC housing ordinance will help make things more usable for the average person doing business or living in the Township. We continue to move towards the ability for a homeowner to have all the regulations for their home on a single piece of paper, by reducing the number of zoning districts.

### **Analyze the Future of Single-Family Residential Zoning**

This is the topic that Staff ended up spending the most time on in 2023. Between the growing affordability crisis nationwide, the Township's Redevelopment Ready Communities recertification, and the Master Plan update, it was an excellent time to discuss the contours of single-family residential zoning going forward. While there are a growing number of communities that are eliminating these districts from their zoning ordinances, the single-family designation still has an important role in many communities. Where changes have been made and continue to need to be made in Meridian Township, is on the sheer number of regulations. Two properties that look identical can have different zoning ordinance standards, given how the Township developed in the 80s and 90s.

The main improvements that were made this year were in Ordinance 2023-05, the RRC housing update ordinance. This ordinance had several effects. One provision eliminates minimum unit sizes, which will allow for so called 'tiny houses' to be built, but also will allow for smaller lots, predominantly in Haslett, be more easily built upon, lowering the need for variances. Another provision authorizes accessory dwelling units on owner occupied residential properties. This change would slightly increase density in some residential neighborhoods, but would provide additional, more affordable housing opportunities in the community, while not fundamentally changing the character of the community. The last major change is to allow second floor residential uses, by right, in nearly all commercial areas of the City. This 'hidden' density can bring additional units to the market at a reasonable price point.

Given the nature of the American housing market in general, single-family zoning is likely to continue to be in a state of flux for years to come. Staff will continue to monitor trends and work with the Planning Commission to implement changes that make sense for Meridian Township, our current residents, and our future.

**Continue to Improve the Conditions in Winslow Mobile Home Park**

Winslow Mobile Home Park has somewhat stabilized in 2023. Staff wrote more violations, but less tickets than in years past, due in no small part to the hours spent working on the park in 2022. But there have been fewer major issues in 2023, compared to years past. The owner of the park has made some nominal investment in the park, with an eye towards selling the property. But large-scale improvement continues to be elusive. By focusing on the quality-of-life issues (junk, inoperable vehicles, unsafe work without permits), we have improved the park tangibly. This property will continue to eat up a great deal of Staff time, as we slowly move towards a universally better Winslow.

**2023 COMMISSION AND BOARD MEMBERS**

(\* indicates former member)

**PLANNING COMMISSION**

Mark Blumer, Chair

Peter Trezise, Vice-Chair

James McCurtis

Brandon Brooks

\*Jerry Richards

Alisande Shrewsbury

Bill McConnell

Christina Snyder

Milton Scales

The Planning Commission’s main accomplishment in 2023 was the work on the Master Plan update. The Commissions methodically reviewed each portion of the plan, leaving the specific drafting up to Staff, which kept the process moving forward. By December, they made a recommendation for approval to the Township Board, who will be the final adopters of the plan. There were a total of 15 development projects reviewed by the Planning Commission in 2023. Public Hearings were held and recommendations made on five rezoning requests and ten unique Special Use Permit requests, including an extremely controversial rezoning request at Park Lake and Grand River Avenue, in which the Commission recommended denial. The Planning Commission reviewed and recommended approval on three text amendments, all of which were major changes. These were updates to the marijuana regulations in the Zoning Ordinance, a series of updates to make housing easier in several situations to meet Redevelopment Ready Communities standards, and an update to the floodplain regulations in the Township.

**ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**

Alexia Mansour, Chair

Monique Field-Foster, Vice-Chair

Phil Deschaine, Township Board Representative

Peter Trezise, Planning Commission Representative

James Koenig

Anthony Bennett

The Zoning Board of Appeals heard a total of 11 different requests in 2023. They denied two of those requests, one for a lot split of a lot that met current standards and one for a wetland setback where work had begun without permits. The requests in 2022 covered exiting commercial buildings, signage, existing and proposed residential structures, and the reconstruction of the building at Knob Hill Apartments that burned down in 2022.

## TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Myron Frierson  
Kathy Sundland, Township Board Representative  
\*Bob Lovell  
\*Tim Potter

James McCurtis, Planning Commission Representative  
Joshua Robertson  
\*Karla Hudson

The Transportation Commission discussed all aspects of mobility in 2023, providing input to the Master Plan, discussing the township's nonmotorized pathway system, getting updates from CATA on redi-ride service in the community, and providing input on the Climate Sustainability Plan.

## BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Peter Tresize, Chair, Planning Commission Representative  
Jeff Theuer, Vice-Chair  
Brenda Chapman  
\*James E. Jackson, Environmental Commission Representative  
\* Brenda Chapman, Economic Development Corporation Representative

Joyce Van Coevering  
Frank L. Walsh  
John Matuszak

The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority met three times in 2023 and made three major decisions to move three separate projects forward. They approved the formal reimbursement requests for both Haslett Marathon and American House of Meridian, allowing tax capture and reimbursement to formally begin on both projects. The reimbursement agreement was put in place for the Haslett Village Square project, finalizing another portion of their capital stack, which allowed the project to begin in the latter months of 2023.

## BUILDING BOARD OF APPEALS

Pete Potterpin  
Bill Cawood

The Building Board of Appeals meets as needed on technical items relating to building construction and code interpretations. In 2023, they met and rendered a decision on the Parkwood YMCA's bathrooms in their new daycare wing.

## TEAM MEMBERS

Timothy R. Schmitt, AICP, Director of Community Planning and Development  
John Heckaman, Building Official  
Debbie Budzynski, Administrative Assistant II  
Jaime Barrows, Administrative Assistant II  
Ron Rau, Senior Building Inspector  
John Hines, Senior Building Inspector  
Frank Christmas, Rental Housing Inspector  
Joe Wade, Rental Housing Inspector  
Zachary Fenner, Senior Code Enforcement Officer  
Keith Chapman, Assistant Planner  
Brian Shorkey, AICP, Senior Planner



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## 2023 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **Potential Intensity Change Area (PICA) Redevelopment**

The Haslett PICA, designated at the intersections of Haslett and Marsh Roads has moved the needle on redevelopment progressively. The approved redevelopment at 1673 Haslett Road known as the American House Meridian Project, is working toward certificate of occupancy January 2024. The project includes 149 units for 55+ independent seniors with an approved mixed-use planned unit development for the site. Approximately 10,000 sq. ft. of non-residential space will occupy the first floor with three additional stories above the first floor for residents. The site will include a pathway connection to the interurban and other amenities to support independent living at a centralized locale.

1655 Haslett Road, referred to as Haslett Village Square 2.0, began demolition for the existing 30,000 square feet of commercial space. This included the L & L Grocery Store that serviced the Haslett area for about 30+ years. The site is owned by SP Holding LLC and is approved for a mixed residential and commercial project. About 300 rental housing and townhouse units will occupy the site. The contaminated site will require the use of Brownfield Redevelopment reimbursement, after the developer finances and cleans up the contamination. The contaminated parcels are associated with an old laundromat that was operable for a short period of time. The site will include an updated trailhead to the interurban trail, year-round restroom facility, ample parking, and bike racks are to be installed for the general public to access our trail systems. A trail system that now connects to MSU's campus system and the Lansing Trail System. This regional effort to create a non-motorized pathway system will elevate our lifestyles around our most trafficked and utilized properties in the Township. We expect one of the 20 buildings planned for this site to begin construction in 2024.

### **Corridor Improvement Authority (CIA)**

At the launch of 2023, the Township Board implemented the goal to determine the feasibility of establishing a Tax Increment Plan for the Corridor Improvement Authority. The resolution creating the CIA restricted the CIA from having a TIF Plan. A TIF Plan is a legal mechanism that allows a community to forgo the capture of increased taxes over a period of time. The "captured" funds can be placed into a separate account and used for public purposes to make development or redevelopment feasible. The CIA, created in 2017 has been restricted in their ability to discuss or consider a TIF Plan. After the Board

amended the resolution, the CIA members began on the journey to launch their TIF Plan. Created in house, the plan details the eligible expenses for potential development along the Corridor. The plan was presented to the Township Board and adopted December 27, 2023. In 2024, the CIA will begin the steps to establish an integrated development plan for the district. These activities align with the 2023 Master Plan Update that will carry Meridian Township toward our development goals through 2028.

### **New Businesses**

In 2023, Meridian Township welcomed 75 new single family residences to the community. Most of these are in the Haslett Public Schools area with Copper Creek property completions. The 49 unit development of Woodward Way on Sirhal Drive is a wonderful affordable housing development in the Township. This project is one of the most recent PILT or Payment in Lieu of Taxes, development to occur in several years.

Meridian also welcomed ten new businesses with a ribbon cutting or promotional event. These services we offer free of charge to any new or expanding business in the Township. The Greater Lansing Chamber of Commerce and Meridian Township partner well to ensure our business community members find the best ways to engage and stay connected. We encourage small business owners to seek out our services to build awareness of your business. The wonderful establishments to open in 2023 include the following:

XP League Gaming Academy opened inside Meridian Mall as a gaming academy for safe gaming for students online. XP League is brought to us by a local Lansing native with a passion for teaching, gaming, and the gaming professional world. By the hour fees are available for drop in playtime.

Kaiyo Sushi brought to Meridian Township by an established entrepreneur from Okemos. The Sushi eatery fills a hole for traditional and modern sushi style meals. The opening of this restaurant was a great relief for those missing the previous Sushi restaurant that went out of business in 2021. Meridian Township is home to great small eatery locations like Kaiyo sushi. The advantage to Meridian to include more Mom and Pop restaurants supports a resilient community from economic downturn. These establishments need the support of the community to thrive and our ribbon cuttings help in our promotion of these unique locations.

The opening of Crumbl Cookie was another exciting addition to Meridian Township. This highly sought after specialty cookie establishment is famous for their ever changing menu of cookies. The large flavorful treats can be purchased in store or order ahead of time. This gracious host allowed Township Staff a sneak peek of the store, menu options, and a taste test. As the second opening in the Greater Lansing Region for this franchise, many of the unknowns about flavors, busy times, and more are all known. This location opens a year after the west Lansing location.

Other establishments to grace Meridian Township with their services and products are: Social Sloth Café and Bakery, a Turkish bakery store that moved from Downtown Lansing to Central Park Drive. Tripp's Auto and Collision, an expansion auto service provider out of Jackson, MI. Tripp's Auto found a home on Saginaw Highway near Meridian and Company. Jackson Popcorn Depot, brings a world of sweets, treats, and more to Meridian Mall. Valley Wings was a necessary addition to round out our food establishments. Valley Wing opened their doors in mid-spring on Jolly Road near Cancun. This south of town restaurant hits the mark for great wings to go. Yello Waffle, are sweets, treats, and waffles. Looking for a new twist on the great Belgian waffle, then Yello Waffle is your place. They opened shop a week before Kaiyo Sushi and are next door in Central Park Drive.

### **New Business Events**

After about a decade the Meridian Area Business Association (MABA) was capable of revamping the MABA Business Expo, a small business exposition at Meridian Mall. Members and non-member

businesses were invited to participate in the pay-per-booth event to engage with Meridian Township residents and visitors. The event included business presentation, performances, and demonstrations. Business organizations that participated noted the increase of business to business connections made at the event. A total of 40 small business registered and participated in the event. The overall success of the event has promoted MABA members to plan for the 2024 Expo.

**DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**

Renee Korrey  
Peter Campbell, Secretary/Treasurer  
Bill Cawood  
Angela Wright, Vice-Chair  
Patricia Herring Jackson, Township Supervisor

Don Romain  
James Spanos  
Thomas Stanko, Chair

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

Kim Thompson, Chair  
Phil Deschaine, Township Treasurer, Ex-Officio  
Kathy Sundland, Township Board Liaison  
Frank L. Walsh, Township Manager/Secretary  
Shawn Dunham  
Brenda Chapman, Vice-Chair

Dave Ledebuhr  
Adam Carlson, Vice-Chair  
Tom Conway

**CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY**

Chris Nugent  
Patricia Herring Jackson, Township Supervisor  
Barry Goetz, Vice-Chair

Bruce Peffers, Chair  
Chris Rigterink

**TEAM MEMBERS**

Amber Clark, Economic Development & Neighborhoods Director  
Michelle Prinz, Executive Assistant

# FIRE/EMS



*Serving our Community with Pride, Integrity and Professionalism since 1929.*

It is my hope that as you review the Township of Meridian Fire Department's 2023 annual report you will be thoroughly impressed with examples of dedication, determination, sacrifice, selflessness, heroism, customer service, love of our community, and commitment to providing the highest level of emergency response in fire suppression, fire prevention, risk reduction, and advanced medical life support. This report reflects the tireless efforts of the firefighters, paramedics, officers, Fire Marshal, Training Chief and administrative staff that proudly represent the Township of Meridian. We are thankful to the residents, business owners, Township leadership, and elected officials for supporting our department with the staffing and resources to enable us to meet the needs of the Township.

This comprehensive report summarizes the responses, activities, training, and statistical data for the year. While 2023 had its challenges, it also saw significant opportunities and growth in our department. Our emergency response calls continued to increase in 2023 with 6307 total calls, a 3.7% increase over 2022.

The year started with continued recovery from the Knob Hill apartment fire followed by an active violence response to MSU on February 13th. This response was one of the biggest challenges in the history of the department in tasking personnel to perform under extreme hazards. This incident resulted in the death of three students and five injured students who were transported to local hospitals. Working with East Lansing Fire Department, Meridian Township transported three of the five injured students to a local hospital, and we are happy to report they have been released from the hospital. Additionally, the Fire Chief and Battalion Chief had a presence in the Unified Command Post on campus. The response by our firefighters was handled with the upmost bravery.

In 2023, we were able to maintain our staffing levels with four new hires. With two retirements and three resignations, we hired four new firefighter/paramedics. In 2022, we hired two firefighter/EMTs due to a nationwide shortage of paramedics. In January 2024, both individuals passed their National Registry Paramedic test. In 2023, the Township approved a Police and Fire Recruit and Retention Program to support our ability to recruit and hire fully trained firefighter/paramedics. With the addition of two positions to our staff in 2024, we are happy to report the positions have been filled and we are fully staffed as of January 2024.

Our community engagement in 2023 was successful as we worked with the community and local schools doing public education and smoke detector programs. This was accomplished via station tours

and fire safety programs in schools. We were also pleased that after a three-year absence we were able to hold our annual Open House in October during National Fire Prevention Month.

We continued to foster strong relationships with our neighboring fire departments through planning, training, and emergency response. Over the past year, we trained and responded with fire departments from East Lansing, Delhi Township, Mason, NIESA, Lansing Township, Bath, and Lansing. We look forward to continued cooperation with these outstanding departments as we work to make our communities safer places to work, live, and play.

As Fire Chief, I am honored to lead Meridian Township Fire Department. I would like to thank all the members of the Department for their commitment and professionalism as they serve the Meridian Township community. I would also like to thank Manager Walsh as well as the other Township staff, elected officials, and boards for their support over the year. We could not accomplish what we do without their support. We would be remiss not to acknowledge our community. We are blessed to have incredibly strong support from the community, and we do not take this support for granted.

Fire Chief Michael Hamel

## OUR MISSION

Each year the Fire Department evaluates its programs and service delivery models to ensure cost effectiveness and efficiency, but more importantly, to ensure it can meet the emergency service, prevention and risk-reduction needs of the Township.

- *Our mission* is to provide efficient, dependable and professional services to the residents of Meridian Township.
- *Our values* are to educate and provide caring, compassionate service with excellence and dignity.
- *Our vision* is to exceed the expectations of the community by proactively responding to the established priorities and needs.

The Meridian Township Fire Department (MTFD) is a full-service organization providing fire, rescue and emergency medical services to a community of 44,935 residents across 32 square miles. Three stations are strategically located to provide timely responses to residents and visitors alike. Three dual-paramedic staffed advanced life support ambulances deliver emergency medical care at the highest pre-hospital level. The Department also provides fire prevention, code enforcement, plan review and fire safety related programming. The Department is an active member of the Metro-Lansing Technical Rescue and Hazardous Materials Teams. These teams respond to high-risk, low-frequency incidents involving confined spaces, trenches, bodies of water, high/low angle rescues, chemical/gas releases and structural collapses. Each department member is committed to serving the community with excellence through the delivery of outstanding customer service.

### **Fire Prevention**

The Fire Marshal is dedicated to the goal of reducing the number and impact of fire-related incidents within the Township of Meridian. This is accomplished through a comprehensive fire inspection program, plan review, testing of new construction and fire protection systems, and investigation of all fires that occur within the Township. The Fire Marshal is also invested and involved in the fire and life safety education programs that are provided by the department.

Fire inspections are conducted in businesses on an annual basis. Scheduling is based on the risk posed by the building's occupants or operation (for example, a restaurant or theater has a greater inherent risk than a physician's office). These inspections are based on adopted codes and Township ordinances.

In 2022, we started the process of identifying buildings/occupancies and inspection schedules to develop a plan for completing inspections based on high, medium, and low risk occupancies according to national standards and best practices. This process was continued in 2023. The process consists of the following steps:

1. Use the Apartment Rental Inspection List from the Building Department as our top priority for high risk inspection scheduling. This allows us to tackle several higher concentration life safety occupancies in quick order. The number of units and buildings per complex varies greatly. For scheduling purposes, we use the inspection time estimates list and adjust as needed. In an effort to reduce the amount of time needed to complete inspections, we are working on a plan to use our operations staff who have required NFPA Inspector 1 certifications.
2. Conduct a definitive Community Risk Assessment (CRA). Conducting a CRA to identify all commercial buildings and occupancies within Meridian Township establishes our master list of buildings requiring inspections. Once that list is developed, it can then be applied to the NFPA 1730 Standard on Organization and Deployment of Fire Prevention Inspection and Code Enforcement, Plan Review, Investigation, and Public Education Operations. Through this document, these buildings can be categorized into an improved scheduling matrix for completing inspections, as well as estimate time and personnel requirements needed to keep the overall inspection schedule on target.
3. Initiate an Engine Company Inspection Program (ECIP). With the completion of the CRA, a significant portion of buildings and occupancies identified as low risk can be assigned to the ECIP for completion in their normally scheduled rotation (three years). With personnel investment it can be launched in conjunction with the other tasks as mentioned above.

### **2023 Fire Prevention Inspections**

- Total Inspections Conducted: 93
- Plan Reviews: 55
- Fire Alarm Inspections: 27
- Fire Suppression Inspections: 26
- Residential Smoke Alarm Inspections/Installations: 18
- Fire Investigations: 14

**Notable items:** Completed the International Association of Arson Investigators – Certified Fire Investigator credentialing (December 2023).

### **Training**

In 2023, Brian Pennell was promoted to Training Chief after TJ Booms returned to the Suppression Division. Chief Pennell is finalizing our annual training plan which will encompass current required training as well as new training to increase our ability to function at higher aptitudes. The department's adjunct instructors will utilize their expertise to advance our knowledge base. As a paramedic/firefighter, there is a tremendous amount of training required to maintain certifications, licensure, and job efficiency. The Training Chief is responsible for coordinating and providing this training.

All Meridian Township firefighters are state-certified Firefighter I, II and state-licensed paramedics. Paramedics must earn 45 continuing education credits and renew their licenses every three years. We require each paramedic to be certified in Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) and Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS). The initial certification courses are 24 hours each followed by eight hours of recertification every two years. Firefighters are held to state-mandated standards in highly

technical areas, each with their associated training requirements. Some areas of training include firefighting tactics and strategy, incident command, emergency driving, hazardous materials, ice and water rescue, extrication, confined space operations and medical care for the sick and injured.

Our fire officers carry Fire Officer I, II, and III certifications based on rank. These courses allow the officer to learn fire ground and day-to-day leadership skills.

In 2023, the Training Division spent many hours on live training at House to Home prior to demolition. This allowed firefighters to practice search and rescue, ventilations, hose advancement, building construction, and forcible entry. This training provided simulated fire conditions for crews to make entry and complete fire control, search and rescue of victims, and command and control of the fire scene.

Continuing to keep Meridian Township safe, in 2023, the Training Division trained parks and police staff in CPR & First Aid as well as provided continuing education. This will continue into 2024 with replacement of all Township AEDs. All Township employees will attend a one-hour training to learn how to use the new AEDs.

### **Fire Operations**

Fire Operations is composed of shift operations consisting of individual firefighting and EMS companies which perform the day-to-day public safety activities for Meridian Township. The members that comprise Operations are divided into two shifts and work a 24-hour on/24-hour off/24-hour on/72-hour off shift. A Battalion Chief fulfills the role of Shift Commander and supervises each shift. The Shift Commanders handle daily staffing issues and the scheduling of training and other activities for their shift. They also act as the liaison between the shift and Fire Administration. The Battalion Chiefs are responsible for command and control of most emergency incidents in the Township.

The Township's fire district is geographically divided into three districts each containing one fire station. The three fire stations are strategically located to support quicker response. Each station houses an ambulance, fire pumper, and one station also houses our ladder truck.

Each individual fire company is made up of a Company Officer (usually a Lieutenant) who is responsible for the supervision and safety of the company members assigned to them. The Company Officer is also responsible for all reports and communications relating to the operation of their company.

2023 demonstrated once again that Meridian Township Fire did much more than respond to emergency medical calls and residential structure fires. We are an all-hazards fire department that also responds to significant motor vehicle accidents and a variety of rescues and fires that present unusual hazards for the community. While responding to emergencies is the priority of the Operations Division, personnel also spend their time completing required training classes, conducting station tours for the public, maintaining the stations' apparatus and equipment, and performing annual inspections.

In 2023 our emergency response calls continued to increase with 6307 total calls, a 3.7% increase over 2022. Fire calls increased by 11% and EMS calls by 2.6% over 2022.

Below is a tables showing total fire and EMS incidents over a ten-year period from 2014-2023 (Fig. 1). Figures 2 and 3 show the number of fire calls (Fig. 2) and medical calls (Fig. 3) in 2023 categorized by dispatch type. The final chart compares total EMS calls by month in 2022 and 2023 (Fig. 4).

| <b>10 Year Incident Count-Fig 1</b> |                      |                     |                       |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Yea</b>                          | <b>Fire Incident</b> | <b>EMS Incident</b> | <b>Total Incident</b> |
| 2014                                | 714                  | 3,683               | 4,397                 |
| 2015                                | 623                  | 3,884               | 4,507                 |
| 2016                                | 925                  | 4,028               | 4,953                 |
| 2017                                | 1,181                | 3,988               | 5,169                 |
| 2018                                | 991                  | 4,226               | 5,217                 |
| 2019                                | 1,217                | 4,220               | 5,437                 |
| 2020                                | 875                  | 4,031               | 4,906                 |
| 2021                                | 963                  | 4,627               | 5,590                 |
| 2022                                | 795                  | 5,286               | 6,081                 |
| 2023                                | 883                  | 5,424               | 6,307                 |

| <b>Confirmed Fire Responses Dispatch Type-Fig 2</b> |     |
|---|-----|
| FALRM: Fire Alarm                                   | 334 |
| FBRUSH: Brush Fire                                  | 9   |
| FBURN: Illegal Burns                                | 48  |
| FMAJOR: Commercial Bldg. Fire                       | 5   |
| FMINOR: Car/Dumpster Fire                           | 180 |
| FSTAND: Stand By                                    | 3   |
| FSTILL: Smoke Investigation                         | 72  |
| FSTRUC: Residential Structure Fire                  | 70  |
| HAZMIN: Hazmat                                      | 9   |
| ELEVAT: Stuck in Elevator                           | 8   |
| UTILF: Utility                                      | 103 |

| <b>Medical Responses Dispatch Type-Fig 3</b> |       |
|--|-------|
| MED: Start EMD                               | 1,429 |
| MEDIC: Medical Response                      | 505   |
| MEDIC: Alpha Response                        | 792   |
| MEDICB: Bravo Response                       | 238   |
| MEDICC: Charlie Response                     | 657   |
| MEDICD: Delta Response                       | 758   |
| MEDICE: Echo Response                        | 53    |
| MUTAMB: Mutual Aid                           | 122   |
| PIACCF: Injury Accident                      | 141   |
| PINN: Extrication                            | 25    |
| SHOOTF: Assault Gun                          | 3     |
| STABF: Assault Knife                         | 2     |
| UNKACCF: Unknown Injury Accident             | 36    |
| DROWN2F: Drowning Lake/River                 | 1     |
| CITAST: Fallen and Can't Get Up              | 477   |



| EMS Calls by Month | 2022 | 2023 |
|--------------------|------|------|
| January            | 517  | 516  |
| February           | 428  | 465  |
| March              | 471  | 537  |
| April              | 513  | 520  |
| May                | 478  | 532  |
| June               | 486  | 513  |
| July               | 571  | 550  |
| August             | 473  | 577  |
| September          | 489  | 531  |
| October            | 552  | 584  |
| November           | 538  | 494  |
| December           | 538  | 488  |

Fig. 4

## 2023 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **Outdoor Warning Sirens**

In 2023, Meridian Township Fire Department continued our multiyear project to install emergency warning sirens throughout the Township to alert residents to severe weather and other emergencies. The twelfth siren was installed at 4425 Van Atta Road south of Grand River. In 2024, we will complete this project by installing the remaining four sirens within the Township.

### **Fire Department Safety Equipment**

Over the past five years, we have been diligent in replacing equipment specified in our replacement schedule. The five-year plan is updated annually and includes replacement schedules supporting NFPA 1971 and MIOSHA Part 74 requirements. In 2023, we replaced the pieces of equipment listed below that failed to function, broke, or reached their life expectancy.

- Four Gas Monitor
- Structural Fire Gear
- Saws
- Helmets
- Fire Boots
- 12 Lead EKG Monitors
- Nozzles
- AVI Plate Carriers, Plates, and Helmets
- Personal Protective Hoods (carcinogen reducing exposure)
- Gloves
- Power Cots
- AEDs
- Stair Chairs

### **Department Policies**

In 2023, a goal was set to update our outdated Standard Operating Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures. Ten operational policies were updated in 2023.

- SCBA Cleaning and Disinfecting
- Response Time Standards
- Ballistic Personal Protective Equipment
- Structural Firefighting Gear Annual Inspection
- Filling Oxygen Bottles from Cascade Fill Station
- Mental Health Petition Procedure
- Emergency Vehicle Care Response
- Response Guidelines
- Knox Box Key Systems
- Stuck Elevator

**Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)**

The Township Board approved the 2023 Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). This plan outlines each Township department's roles and responsibilities during emergencies. Meridian Township's COOP plan consists of the Basic Plan, a comprehensive 30-page document that covers the entire Township, along with the COOP Functional Annex and Support Plan for each department. In 2023, the preliminary department meetings were held prior to the Town Hall renovation. This consisted of training on the document and instructions on moving forward to implement the rest of the plan. Each department was given a copy of the COOP Functional Annex and Coop Support Plan. In 2024, these documents will be finalized which will involve training and exercise on each document.

**Grants**

In 2023, the Department received a FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant for \$265,000, which will pay for the purchase of 31 SCOTT Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), 62 cylinders, and 34 masks. SCBAs are used by firefighters to breathe clean air during any type of Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health (IDLH) atmospheric concentration of any toxic, corrosive or asphyxiate substances that pose an immediate threat to life or would cause irreversible or delayed adverse health effects to our firefighters. Our current SCBAs are at the end of life expectancy based on OSHA and NFPA standards. This grant allowed Meridian Township to save on the expense of purchasing these SCBAs.

## MTFD TEAM

### **Fire Chief**

---

Michael Hamel

### **Administration**

---

Christine Cassidy, Admin Asst. II

Tavis Millerov, Fire Marshal

Brian Pennell, Training/EMS Chief

### **Battalion Chiefs**

---

Ryan Campbell

Rudy Gonzales

### **Captains**

---

Chris Johnson

Al Diaz

Jeff Rommeck

### **Lieutenants**

---

John McDermott

TJ Booms

RJ Lewis

Eddie Dennis

Jason Hillard

Bob Caretti

Sam Weber

### **Firefighters**

---

Corey Pant

Amanda Arnett

Erik Sellen

Nate Lafayette

Benjamin Haviland

Gavin Ulman

Tyler McNalley

Dustin Farhat

Jared Gentner

Joseph Harrison

Nicholas Irving

Zach Silver

Andrew Cummins

Chuck Malesko

Emma Brown

Tony Kozlowski

Don Carr

Carson Nitz

Andrew Zaleski

Steven Garelik

Michael Weber

Steven Schott

### **Retirements**

---

Ken Phinney

Jason Everest

### **Resignations**

---

Angela Kohls

Timothy Brighton

Justin Jones

**Promotions**

---

Brian Pennell (Training Chief)  
Jeff Rommeck (Captain)

Al Diaz (Captain)  
Rudy Gonzales (Battalion Chief)

**New Firefighters**

---

FF Zach Silver  
FF Andrew Cummins  
FF Emma Brown  
FF Carson Nitz

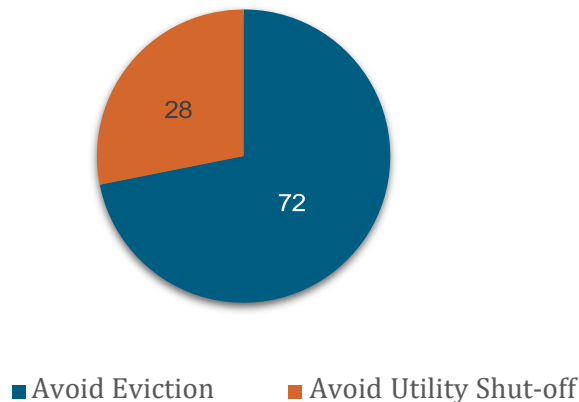
# MERIDIAN Cares Making a Difference

Meridian Cares, the Township's Human Services program, aims to strengthen the community safety net for Township residents facing financial hardship. The emergency needs fund provides one-time yearly assistance to these households and aims to prevent them from facing further crises such as eviction or utility shut-off. These households are provided with additional resources and referrals as needed. This emergency needs account is funded 100% by donations and 100% of those donations assist Meridian Township residents who are in emergency need.

In 2023, Meridian Cares assisted 96 families with a total of \$41,296.56 in emergency financial assistance, averaging \$430.00 per family. Of the 96 families, 69 were assisted with rental payments to avoid eviction and 27 were assisted to prevent electricity shut off.

207 discounted Redi-Ride passes were provided to the community. The Township receives a 40% discount on these passes from Capital Area Transportation Authority.

Meridian Cares received \$23,640.34 in donations to the emergency needs fund.



Additional ways that Human Services works with the Township's Community Resources Commission (CRC) includes:

- **Backpacks:** Meridian Cares partnered with Kiwanis of Haslett-Okemos to pack and provide 240 backpacks to lower income families in the Okemos and Haslett Public Schools.
- **Food:** Meridian cares collected information from residents and coordinated sponsorships for 262 families that requested Thanksgiving food assistance and 267 families that requested Holiday food assistance.
- **Community Events:** Coordinated community events in the Township including a Five Wishes Presentation, Sparrow Mobile Health Clinic, and Coat Drives.
- **Connecting Resources:** Continually works with residents, especially seniors, helping them navigate and apply for local, state, and federal programs.

*"Meridian Cares gives me an opportunity to support my local community with emergency needs. I am thankful that our Township has a fund like this."- Donor to Meridian Cares Needs fund.*

# HUMAN RESOURCES



## 2023 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

Our DEI Taskforce met frequently throughout 2023 in order to plan and prepare for the Township's inaugural Meridian Pride Celebration which took place at Marketplace on the Green in August 26<sup>th</sup>. It was a welcoming and joyful opportunity to acknowledge yet another terrific part of our Township's diversity. The Pride celebration was made possible by the DEI Task Force, Township employees, volunteers, sponsors, participating vendors, and all of the many residents and attendees who enjoyed the beautiful day and resoundingly successful event. The Task Force will reconvene in 2024 to evaluate its effectiveness and positive impact, set this year's annual objectives and trainings for staff, while also filling Task Force vacancies created by departures and retirements of some of its members.

### **Employee Traffic**

In 2023, the Township welcomed 60 new hires across all of our Township departments, 30 departures (including full-time and part-time staff, temporary and seasonal workers, and Township interns). We had 2 departmental job changes, 10 promotional processes, and 5 retirements. We appreciate all of our Team and glad for those who joined us in 2023, as well as, those who are currently in the process to join our dedicated workforce.

### **Recruitment And Retention**

In addition to 3% contractual increases for Township employees, the Board approved the Township's proposed Recruitment and Retention Plan for police officers and firefighters in the last quarter of 2023, and set to take effect January 1, 2024. A 10% wage scale increase for public safety was approved in order to ensure that the Township is able to attract and retain police officers and firefighters, and continue to strive for full staffing which were falling critically short. In addition to the wage increase, a Recruitment Bonus Program was put in place to acknowledge and reward any Township employee who is successful in recruiting a permanent full-time sworn officer or firefighter to join our Team.

### **Retirement Plan Migration**

The Board-approved migration from one plan administrator to the current one is now complete. Township employees who had 401(a), 457, and/or Retiree Health Savings accounts managed through Mission Square have successfully had those plans transitioned over to the Municipal Employees Retirement System (MERS). The migration was completed in the last week of November 2023, where approximately \$30 million in retirement plan funds for participating retirees and active employees were successfully moved to MERS.

## **TEAM MEMBERS**

Abigail Tithof, Human Resources Director  
Carol Hasse, Human Resources Administrator  
Michelle Prinz, Executive Assistant

# INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



In 2023, most Information Technology activities revolved around projects designed by and implemented in conjunction with our third party consultant, Brightline IT out of Brighton, MI. This included new meshed firewalls at most of our facilities, new Internet connections at most of our facilities, integration of private & commercial intra-facility connections, new wireless infrastructure across the entire organization, and implementation of new local infrastructure & cloud services that significantly enhance our business continuity posture across the entire operation.

## METHODOLOGY FOR OPERATIONAL IMPERATIVES

1. Highest priority is given to core infrastructure stability and keeping existing services and resources operating at optimum performance and availability.
2. Resolution of emergent end-user issues related to technology is an important function that all Department personnel spend a significant time addressing.
3. Training initiatives are presented in cases where staff resources are recognized to be deficient in the use of available technology or additional expertise would increase employee productivity.
4. Remaining resources are committed to replacing technology that is still functioning, but aging, and at end of useful life.

## 2023 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

The Department's primary goal continues to be to support Township Board established Goals to the greatest extent possible. While successful in this endeavor, many other new important initiatives were prominent throughout the year. These included, but were not limited to the following:

### **Technology Upgrades**

The Technology Team continued work with our third party consultant, Brightline IT to finalize plans for and begin execution of major hardware and software upgrades across the entire organization. New high-speed internet connections were installed or upgraded at all facilities. At any facility where the service was available, Township Staff worked with third party service providers to install high-availability direct intra-facilities circuits. Township staff reconfigured network switches & firewalls purchased in 2022 to simultaneously increase performance and reliability at all locations.

### **Software Defined Wide Area Network SD-WAN**

The Technology Team continued work with our third party consultant, Brightline IT to configure the new internet circuits, intra-facility telecom circuits, and private connections between our buildings to create dynamic routing that significantly increases the reliability of our network. In essence, network services at all facilities work together to route around typical service outages or cable cuts.



### **Network Firewall & Switching Infrastructure**

The Technology Team worked with Brightline IT to reconfigure new switches and firewalls to improve IT Staff tools to deal with network security events in an efficient manner. In essence, all network traffic for all individual services such as voice, video, and phone now route through their respective facility firewalls. In the event of a security breach, this significantly reduces the ability of an intruder to easily move through our digital environment.

### **Relocations & Remote Work to Support Building Renovations**

Early in 2023, the Township Board allocated funds for building renovations at the Township Hall and Public Safety Building. To support these activities, IT Staff set up new methods to connect to our resources including VPN, Remote Desktop, and Cloud hosted services. Staff also assisted with the relocation of scores of workstations to alternative locations throughout our facilities and in rented space in the south part of the Township. In many cases IT Staff had to provide completely wireless computer and phone services for the entire duration of the renovation.

### **Training Initiatives for All Employees**

Staff hired third party vendors to provide phishing training to all end users. Once completed, IT Staff has been running live test events and working with end-users to improve responses to attempts to use phishing and social engineering to get sensitive information from our users. In addition to these classes, videos, documents, staff has assigned countless hours of training for end users on topics like Teams, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and other technology based resources.

### **Cloud Services Hardening**

The IT Department worked with Brightline to enhance security of the Township's cloud based services. Strengthening of certificate management and verifications, enhanced login methods, and password management were just a few of the new initiatives undertaken in 2023.

### **Expanded Use of PowerDMS to Improve Police Operations**

The IT Department worked with the Police Department to purchase & configure additional services to improve efficiencies in Police onboarding operations, scheduling, and improve follow up with people interacting with our Police Department.

### **Implementation of the JustFOIA Hosted Service**

The IT Department worked with the Clerk's Office to purchase & configure additional services to improve processes related to the processing of Freedom of Information Act requests submitted and processed throughout Township operations. The JustFOIA service has been integrated with our Microsoft 365 system to significantly improve security and ease-of-use for both Township Staff and the entities making these regular requests.

### **Expansion of Cellular Services**

IT Staff worked with AT&T to evaluate their FirstNet service and potential impact that this prioritized service might bring to our mobile users. If working as intended, this offshoot from AT&T would allow registered users to 'jump to the front of the line' in events where cellular services are running beyond the designed capacity. Events such as a Michigan State University football game and/or an active shooter on campus are events that would likely highlight this technology. Initial tests were extremely dissatisfying, but we continue to work with the FirstNet team to explore the tremendous potential.

### **Continued Expansion of Cloud-Based Assets**

IT Staff worked with end user Departments to increase utilization of OneDrive, SharePoint, Teams, and other applications to support virtual operations. These activities will continue over all of 2024.

### **Reduced Use of Our Third Party Helpdesk**

This system is supposed to respond to requests for technical support 24 hour a day, 366 days a year. Technical issues with the connection between our system and our third party provider were more common throughout 2023. Staff continues to work with the third party provider to stabilize connections between our systems, but

internal staff continues to struggle to realize the expected potential.

**Established Relationships with Third Party Network Engineering Services**

IT staff worked with Brightline, Avalon, CDW-G, Trendset Communications Group, & Logicalis consulting services to expand knowledge of Network Technicians as they perform activities related to Desktop, Server, and Network projects undertaken throughout 2023.

**Routine Items**

The Department serviced over 750 requests for service throughout the year, and managed a network with over 1,000 nodes, including security and backup services.

**TEAM MEMBERS**

Stephen Gebes, Director of Information Technology  
Kristen Cole, Network Technician  
Kamic Jok, Network Technician

# PARKS AND RECREATION



## 2023 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **Parks and Pathway Maintenance**

The Park Maintenance Division manages the upkeep of much of our community's public spaces and does so to a very high standard. Areas under their purview include our 1,000-acre park system, 78-miles of pedestrian-bicycle pathway, 20-miles of park trails, 22 park restrooms, 8 pavilions, 2 dog parks, field preparation for all youth and adult sports programs, special event set up and clean-up and multiple special projects.

Ongoing maintenance each year includes items such as mowing, tree trimming and clean-up of downed trees from storms, emptying park trash, snow removal, chipping Christmas trees chipping, mulching of garden beds, ball diamond maintenance, trail maintenance, playground maintenance, dog park maintenance, general park clean-up, pavilion maintenance, cleaning and maintaining park restrooms, watering DDA and Meridian Garden Club flower beds, event set-up and take down, repairing pathways, maintaining irrigation at various locations, raising and lowering flags when necessary and maintaining the new ice rink on a daily basis during the winter months.

Special Projects in 2023 included:

- Constructed multiple dumpster and port-a-john corrals for better aesthetics
- Hawk cage renovation at Harris Nature Center
- Upgrades to the backstops on all baseball/softball fields at Towner Road Park, Hartrick Park and Nancy Moore Park
- Conducted playground inspections and repaired and replaced items as necessary. In 2023, a new climbing wall and stepping pods were replaced at Hartrick Park, a Dragonfly seesaw and Log crawl-through tunnel were added at Harris Nature Center, thanks to the generous donation from the Haslett-Okemos Kiwanis Club.
- Worked with the Kiwanis Club to install 6 new benches in multiple parks
- Installed new "Leash your Dog" signs on all park trails and backstops at baseball fields
- Assembled and installed a new shade structure at Towner Road Park pickleball courts
- Windscreens were installed on the west side of Marketplace on the Green and on the stage
- Added a fence to divide the Large Dog Park in half in order to preserve turf for longer periods of time.

- Conducted heavy mulching to eradicate pesky burrs.
- Constructed new sidewalk at Marketplace to make crossing at the crosswalk more accessible.
- A total of 114 dead deer were removed from pathways and roadways by Park Maintenance and DPW staff.

Meridian Historical Village Building repair and maintenance – The following projects were completed in 2023 with financial assistance from ARPA funding:

- Roofs were replaced at the Grettenberger Farmhouse, Barnes House and Unruh Barn
- Exterior painting was completed on the Chapel and Schoolhouse
- Cracked and heaved sections of sidewalk were replaced throughout the Village
- All the interior lights in the Chapel were replaced with LED lighting
- Structural and electrical improvements were made to the Unruh Barn

Ferguson Park Improvements:

- A new roof was added on Ferguson Park restroom building
- Installed new picnic tables and benches

### **Harris Nature Center (HNC) Facility/Programming Report**

The Harris Nature Center continued as a shining gem in our park system providing opportunities for environmental education, outdoor recreation, wildlife viewing and an accessible trail for a peaceful walk in the woods.

- HNC had some wonderful upgrades to the exterior of the building including new paint on the brick and stone work on the front of the building to tie in the look of the pavilion and outdoor restroom building.
- The Harris Nature Center had another successful year with program participants, as well as, drop-in visitors since the pandemic hit.
- Hosted 8 weeks of Annie’s Big Nature Lesson exposing 241 students to a weeklong learning experience in an outdoor classroom.
- 4,570 drop-in visitors at the center
- 4,101 total program participants:
  - 864 public program participants
  - 2,745 School group participants
  - 492 of those participants attended Summer Camp (\$40,350 brought in from registrations)
- The park and trails remained very busy throughout the year.
- Hosted 2 Native Plant Sales (spring and fall) and sold over \$11,000 in native plants (profit=\$4,047).

### **Harris Nature Center Foundation**

- Hosted Turtle Toast event featuring live music and light refreshments. 50 people attended.
- Funded 9 school bus scholarships for a total of \$1,000 and 484 students.
- Purchased 2 new play features with the help of donations from the Haslett-Okemos Kiwanis Club. These features are a Dragonfly Seesaw and Log Crawl through Tunnel.
- Held an Outdoor Adventure Raffle with prizes for outdoor activities.
- Donated several winter clothing items for the “closet” at the nature center. These items are given to children that visit the nature center during field trips that are less fortunate and do not have the proper attire for being outdoors.

### **Farmers’ Market Report**

The Farmers’ Market has grown dramatically since moving to Marketplace on the Green both in the vendor participation and customer visits. The Market operated every Saturday May – October, every other Saturday

November – April and on Wednesdays from June through August for a total of 64 markets and 300 total hour of shopping! The Farmers Market saw over 70,000 visitors this year and over one quarter million in the last 3 years total.

Here are some other highlights:

- There was \$40,000+ in food assistance reimbursed to customers this year
- There were 145 unique vendors participating at the market in 2023
- Nearly 7,000 pounds of food from the Market was donated by farmers and customers for local pantries and soup kitchens
- Over 40 musicians played at the Market on Wednesdays and Saturdays throughout the year
- Okemos High School students volunteered over 150 hours at the Market counting people and assisting with the food assistance program
- Our food waste collection program at the Market received 250-300 gallons of food scraps from residents equating to 140-180 tons of CO2 kept out of the atmosphere
- CADL joined us every other Wednesday evening at the Market. They brought their mobile library and had an activity station with make and take crafts for kids and families to create that were related to books they brought with them.

### **Senior Center**

Providing a place for older adults to engage socially and keep their minds and bodies active, is an important element to being a prime community. The Meridian Senior Center located in Chippewa Middle School served a membership of 287 older adults with nearly 1,500 programs, events, and fitness activities throughout 2023.

### **Deer Management – 13<sup>th</sup> Year**

The Parks and Recreation Department placed and managed 67 hunters on 1,600 acres of parks and land preserves (44 properties) during the 2023 Deer Management Archery Program, as well as, on 29 private properties. The total deer harvested by the archers was 115.

### **Recreation Programs**

In 2023, the Department implemented a new registration system for recreation and HNC programs, Farmers' Market and pavilion rentals.

The youth sports programs continued with a large number of participants engaging youth in physical activity. Youth sports also serves as a vital component in connecting parents and neighbors, as much time is spent at practices and games.

#### **Okemos**

- K-6th Spring Season/549; Fall Season/437; Total = 986
- K-7th Grade Flag Football Program: 67
- 1st -8th Grade Baseball Programs: 83
- 1st-8th Grade Softball Program: 81

#### **Haslett**

- K-6th Grade Spring Soccer/280; Fall Season/215; Total = 495
- K-6th Grade Basketball Program: 285
- K-7th Flag Football Program: 106
- 1st-5th Softball Program: 20
- 1st-8th Grade Baseball Program: 67
- T-Ball Program: 67

#### **Williamston**

- T-Ball Program: 3
- 1st-4th Grade Softball: 11

#### **Other Programs**

- Sporties for Shorties: 470 (ages 3-5)
- Adult Softball Leagues: 6 teams

- 4 on 4 Sand Volleyball Leagues: 14 teams
- Our pickleball courts at Hillbrook and Towner Road Parks host drop-in play at scheduled times daily. Each site has a Facebook group to assist with communicating with other players and to promote events and social activities. These courts have been greatly used and appreciated by our older citizens.
- Fitness Over 50 Exercise Group had a total of 100 participants in 2023. They meet year-round on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings at the Central Park Pavillion and inside at the Meridian Mall Food Court.

### **Special Events**

- Halloween at the Market Event – 200 kids + families
- 2 Howl-o-ween parties – 23 pups
- Mom to Mom Garage Sale - 22 vendors
- Music at the Market average 200-300+ audience members/week (23 weeks of live music)
- 2 Yappy Hours (dog park parties)- 50
- Flashlight Easter Egg Hunt - 400 kids +families
- Running Club - 26 Participants

### **Celebrate Meridian**

The largest special event of the year was the Celebrate Meridian Festival that occurred on Friday, June 23 with Meridian Township’s first Meridian Teen Night with the main event on Saturday, June 24. The event took place at Marketplace on the Green and in Central Park with live music, beer and wine tent, food trucks, children’s games, inflatable gaga ball pit, inflatable obstacle courses and fireworks finale.

The community-wide celebration was the result of a team effort from nearly every township department and from the generosity of local businesses and volunteers.

### **Meridian Heritage Festival**

The Meridian Heritage Festival took place on October 7 in the Meridian Historical Village hosted by the Friends of Historic Meridian and Nokomis Cultural Center. The event offered historical reenactments, demonstrations, food, music, fun and education! There was also a vintage baseball game between the Lansing Capitols and the Chelsea Monitors.

### **Re-Opening and Programming at Snell Towar Recreation Center**

The Snell Towar Recreation Center saw new life this year with its re-opening to the public in July. Programs that were offered include:

- Vinyl nights—an adult program where participants are encouraged to come and listen to/discuss their favorite records. We average anywhere from 5-10 adults and keep the front room open for the youth drop-in program to still run on these nights.
- Drop in programming – Recreation Intern, Alex Skinner created drop in nights twice per week with approximately 12-15 youth per night.
- Read-along nights were very popular that included neighborhood parents reading books to participants. The books were provided by the Capital Area District Library.
- July Open House and August Block Party events drew over 50 residents each night. Activities included a community cookout, inflatable gaga ball pit, cornhole, basketball, soccer, and kickball.

### **The Park Ranger Program**

The program continues to be an asset in assisting park users during evening hours and weekends from Memorial Day through Labor Day. This program has been very successful in providing positive interaction and assistance to park visitors. The program was first implemented in 2001.

### **Park Pavilion Reservations**

The Meridian Township Park System offers eight parks with pavilions for public use. Our most popular park pavilion was Central Park pavilion with 42 paid reservations and 150+ drop in usage events. The year ended with a total of 211 reservations at pavilions at seven different parks, and over 20,000 people using the pavilions on a reservation basis in 2023.

## PARK COMMISSION

The Meridian Township Park Commissioners are elected to 4-year terms and have the responsibility of setting policy and direction for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of parks.

### PARK COMMISSION MEMBERS

Mary Nardo Farris, Chair  
Ami Van Antwerp, Vice Chair  
Mark McDonald  
Mark Stephens  
Amanda Lick

## LAND PRESERVATION AND STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

### **Land Preservation Program**

- Rule signage stating rules and citing the land preservation ordinance were designed and ordered for installation at all land preserves in 2024. The purpose of these signs is to increase awareness and accessibility of these areas.
- New hanging name plates have been designed and purchased for installation at all 26 land preserves.
- A new parcel was added to the Land Preservation Program through the acquisition of a 2.71-acre parcel on Cornell Road across from Cornell Elementary School.
- In partnership with the Environmental Commission, new Wetland Ordinance and Wetland Educational signage has been designed for installation in special areas of our publiclands.

### **Volunteer and Meridian Conservation Corps (MCC) Accomplishments**

- The Meridian Conservation Corps consists of 295 community volunteers who work under the leadership of Stewardship Coordinator, Emma Campbell and conduct valuable work to improve our natural environment.
- The MCC logged over 750 hours in 2023. Over 70 Meridian Conservation Corps Stewardship Workday and Educational Events were successfully completed.
- These events include invasive species removal, native planting and seed sowing, native seed collection, trash cleanup, and education on wetlands and local flora and fauna.
- The Meridian Conservation Corps partnered with MI Waterways Stewards for a community wide Red Cedar River Cleanup, collaborating with East Lansing to remove trash from over a mile corridor of the Red Cedar between Meridian and East Lansing.

### **Prescribed Burn Management**

3 prescribed burns were successfully completed at Davis Foster Preserve, Red Cedar Glen Preserve (first ever burn), and Lake Lansing North Preserve in 2023.

### **Wetland Education and Restoration Program**

The goal of this program is to expand the community's knowledge of ecosystem services that wetlands provide, as well as, Township ordinances and state regulations for wetland protection. Two wetland buffer restoration projects were completed at Central Park South in 2023. Seven Wetland Walks were conducted to educate the public on wetland protection and local ordinances.

## LAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Jamie Hiller, Chair  
Steve Thomas, Vice-Chair  
Yu Man Lee  
Kendra Grasseschi

Kris Parnell  
Courtney Wisinski, Township Board Liaison  
Mark Stephens, Park Commissioner Liaison

### TEAM MEMBERS

#### **Administration**

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| LuAnn Maisner  | Director of Parks and Recreation                     |
| Bridget Cannon | Administrative Assistant II                          |
| Kati Adams     | Parks and Land Preservation Superintendent           |
| Michael Devlin | Parks and Recreation Specialist                      |
| Nick Wing      | Parks and Recreation Specialist                      |
| Emma Campbell  | Land Stewardship Coordinator                         |
| Kati Adams     | Parks, Pathways and Land Preservation Superintendent |
| Tom Cary       | Farmers' Market Manager                              |

#### **Harris Nature Center**

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Kati Adams       | Parks, Pathways and Land Preservation Superintendent |
| Allison Goodman  | Park Naturalist                                      |
| Kathryn Page     | Assistant Park Naturalist                            |
| Olivia Schneider | Assistant Park Naturalist                            |
| Audra Francis    | Assistant Park Naturalist                            |
| Bryce Usiak      | Assistant Park Naturalist                            |
| Jesse Munson     | Assistant Park Naturalist                            |

#### **Parks, Land Preservation and Pathways**

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Larry Bobb        | Parks, Land Preservation & Pathways Maintenance Lead |
| Traverse Fuller   | Utility Worker                                       |
| Josh Cannon       | Utility Worker                                       |
| Dan Inman         | Utility Worker                                       |
| Tom Baker         | Utility Worker                                       |
| Troy Goodwin      | Utility Worker                                       |
| Rebecca Fisher    | Assistant Stewardship Coordinator                    |
| Alex Skinner      | Recreation Intern                                    |
| Daniel Fedorowicz | Park Ranger  |

|                    |                             |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Derm Clarkin       | Seasonal Maintenance Worker |
| Tobias Lyons-Callo | Seasonal Maintenance Worker |
| Ashlyn Eddins      | Seasonal Maintenance Worker |
| Samuel Schmidt     | Seasonal Maintenance Worker |
| Adam Malinowski    | Seasonal Maintenance Worker |

#### **Meridian Senior Center**

|                |                          |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| Cherie Wisdom  | Center Coordinator       |
| Jenise Turchan | Administrative Assistant |



# POLICE



The Meridian Township Police Department is committed to establishing and maintaining partnerships in our community; and with understanding, cooperation and equality; we strive to enhance the quality of life and protect the rights of our community.

## CORE VALUES

### **COMPASSION**

We care for and empathize with our fellow human beings.

### **COURAGE**

We face danger to ensure the safety of others. We will stand up for what is right. We will be brave when others may not. We strive to eliminate fear through our actions.

### **EXCELLENCE**

We employ those who strive to achieve a higher standard. We listen to our employees and the members of our community to continually improve our effectiveness and reliability. We strive to exceed community and professional expectations.

### **FAIRNESS**

We will treat all individuals impartially. We will act in a just manner. We appreciate different points of view. We exercise discretion appropriately.

### **INTEGRITY**

We will fulfill our mission in its entirety using sound principles, honesty and sincerity.

### **RESOURCEFULNESS**

We can be relied upon for help and support. We have the ability to deal with situations effectively. We build on our mutual experiences to effectively resolve problems.

### **RESPECT**

We value the rights and beliefs of others. We are courteous. We treat others as we expect to be treated. We appreciate diversity.

## WORK ETHIC

We are self-motivated and self-directed. We do what is asked and strive to achieve expectations. We hold ourselves to a higher standard.

In 2023, there were 19,026 calls for service (excluding traffic stops 2,637).

| 2023 Written Reports |              |
|----------------------|--------------|
| Alarms               | 383          |
| Traffic Crashes      | 727          |
| All Other            | 3,853        |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>4,963</b> |

### Yearly Comparisons

#### Written Reports

| 2020  | 2021  | 2022  | 2023         |
|-------|-------|-------|--------------|
| 4,963 | 5,008 | 5,526 | <b>4,963</b> |

#### Calls for Service

| 2020   | 2021   | 2022   | 2023          |
|--------|--------|--------|---------------|
| 16,228 | 17,211 | 18,540 | <b>19,026</b> |

#### Arrests

| 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023       |
|------|------|------|------------|
| 402  | 554  | 503  | <b>441</b> |

#### Citations

|                           | 2020         | 2021         | 2022         | 2023         |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Citations Issued          | 1,517        | 1,711        | 1,231        | <b>736</b>   |
| <b>Total # of Charges</b> | <b>1,888</b> | <b>2,279</b> | <b>1,590</b> | <b>1,055</b> |

### Traffic Safety

Traffic safety is a primary focus of keeping the community safe. Our aim is to address traffic safety using three strategies: Education, Enforcement, and Engineering. The Department works in conjunction with the Ingham County Road Department and the State Highway Department to address concerns related to road design. The Department uses a data driven approach to target specific areas identified as potential problem areas based on review of traffic crash data, citizen complaints, and traffic problems that are created as a result of road closures. Speed monitoring instruments including a speed trailer and speed signs are used to complete traffic studies regarding speed-related safety concerns and traffic counts. The equipment is used to educate the motorists and can be deployed easily in areas identified internally or through citizen reporting. This year we completed eight (8) directed patrols and seven (7) traffic surveys.

One of our officers provides car seat inspections for the Department. During 2023, eight (8) car seats inspections took place throughout the year. We also provided one (1) free car seat to a parent in need during a traffic stop.

### Traffic Crash Investigation Team

Traffic crashes involving fatal or potentially fatal injuries require investigators with specialized training and equipment. Area law enforcement agencies have committed personnel to the Ingham Regional Crash Investigation Team (IRCIT). On-duty team members are called to assist participating agencies with potentially fatal crash investigations. While providing a more rapid response of team members to the scene of an accident, the sharing of resources has also provided investigators with increased experience and has reduced the financial burden on member agencies. The Department added two (2) new accident investigators to the IRCIT in 2023. The IRCIT was activated 49 times in 2023, with Meridian Township Police requesting it four (4) times. Additionally, Meridian Township Police accident investigators assisted in a total of eleven (11) IRCIT activations outside of the township in 2023. In 2023, the Department had two (2) fatal crashes, one (1) serious injury crash, and one (1) single vehicle/single occupant crash on private property that was determined to be medical and required no additional investigation.

| <b>Meridian Township Deer Involved Collision Data</b> |                        |                           |              |
|---|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Year</b>   | <b>Injury Involved</b> | <b>No Injury Involved</b> | <b>Total</b> |
| 2020  | 5                      | 157                       | 162          |
| 2021  | 4                      | 125                       | 129          |
| 2022  | 2                      | 99                        | 101          |
| <b>2023</b>   | <b>0</b>               | <b>88</b>                 | <b>88</b>    |

### Volunteers

Volunteers continued to be instrumental this year during several events hosted by the Department. Volunteers assisted at our annual Halloween open house in October, greeting guests and helping to hand out treats and gift bags. Volunteers also came to assist the Department to help wrap presents for our Shop with a Cop event. A volunteer parking enforcement program has been looked at for revival in 2024.

### Community Police Officers

Community Policing is the foundation of all our actions and interactions. Officers are assigned specific neighborhoods to serve as a familiar point of contact for those neighborhoods and their leaders. Through this contact, relationships are formed, trust is built, and problem solving is shared. Officers communicate directly with their citizens, participate in community activities, and spend uncommitted time in their neighborhoods so our community trusts and understands our Department.

Neighborhood leader meetings are held quarterly at the Township Hall and are well attended, both by residents and officers.

Annually on the first Tuesday of August the Department engages the community through a nationwide event known as National Night Out (NNO). The event is a great opportunity for the community to come together with law enforcement in a casual and inclusive way. In 2023, 22 individual NNO events were attended by members of the both the Police and Fire Departments. Officers had the opportunity to interact with residents, play games with children, and enjoy food and casual conversations.

National Faith & Blue Weekend is based on the premise that strong communities are built on mutual respect, trust and understanding. Law Enforcement entities and faith-based groups are key pillars of a local community, and when they work together, communities thrive. The Department attended several events hosted by local churches in October.

### Adult Crossing Guards

The Department hires, trains, and manages five (5) adult school crossing guards for schools in the township. The guards are supervised by the School Resource Officers and the Department is always actively accepting applications for more.

## Canine Summary

Meridian Township Police Department maintained one K9 Team in 2023, Officer Anderson and K9 Ares, and added a second one in service comprised of Officer Trevino and K9 Reno. Officer Trevino and K9 Reno passed their certification course in October. Both teams are trained in article searches, area searches, building searches, narcotics detection, apprehension/protection, and tracking. Surrounding Departments request or provide mutual aid from K9 Teams when they either do not have one on-duty or do not have one at their Department. Officer Anderson and K9 Ares completed 388.75 hours of monthly maintenance training as well as certifying nationally through the National Association of Professional Canine Handlers (NAPCH) at the yearly seminar. Officer Trevino and K9 Reno completed 408 hours of training including initial certifications and monthly maintenance trainings.

| 2023 Canine Team Activity Numbers       |           |
|---|-----------|
| Calls Handled By Meridian's Canine Team | 25        |
| Calls Handled By Other Departments      | 14        |
| Call Outs To Other Departments          | 19        |
| <b>Total Calls For Service</b>          | <b>58</b> |
| Activity Type                           |           |
| Ingham Regional SRT                     | 0         |
| Article Search                          | 7         |
| Area Search                             | 2         |
| Building Search                         | 3         |
| Narcotics Search                        | 15        |
| School Sweeps (OHS/HHS/ELHS)            | 1         |
| Tracking                                | 30        |
| Demonstrations                          | 3         |
| Other Use                               | 3         |
| <b>Total</b>                            | <b>64</b> |

\*A canine call may include more than one activity type.

## Special Response Team

The Ingham Regional Special Response Team (IRSRT) is comprised of personnel from the Meridian Township Police Department, Ingham County Sheriff's Office, MSU Police Department, and East Lansing Police Department. The team is called upon to respond to high-risk situations such as barricaded suspects, active shooter situations, and other situations involving extreme danger. IRSRT's primary jurisdiction is all of Ingham County, with the exception of the city of Lansing. Meridian Township commits four operators to the team, currently one lieutenant, two sergeants, and one officer. Meridian Township operators received 576 hours of regular monthly training and 192 hours of annual training in 2023. This totals 768 hours of yearly training. IRSRT had 19 activations in 2023.

## School and Community Resource Unit

The School and Community Resource Unit is comprised of two School Resource Officers (SROs) who work with the Haslett and Okemos Public Schools. In 2023, a state funded grant allowed Haslett Schools to receive a full-time school resource officer. Officer Kolby Casaday was assigned to the position and began his service to HPS in August. The SROs provide a number of services to the schools in an effort to provide a safe environment for children to learn including DARE lessons, emergency planning, and security throughout the district. They also assist with a number of community events throughout the year.

The SROs participated in "No Senior with Christmas" event. This is a Tri-County TRIAD program which led to about 450 holiday baskets distributed to tri-county elderly residents. Meridian Township residents received 25 of the baskets.

Meridian Township Police Department held the annual "Shop with a Cop" event in December of 2023.

The SROs worked with school counselors and nine (9) area students participated. The officers worked in conjunction with Walmart, Buddies Pizza, and Dunkin Donuts to fund the event. Numerous private donors also provided funds to support this event.

**Investigations Unit**

Sergeant Ed Besonen handles the day-to-day operations of the unit and ensures each investigation is handled efficiently and with great care. In 2023, one sergeant and four officers were assigned to the unit.

Criminal complaints begin at the road patrol level but sometimes require additional attention from a specialized investigator. Our Investigations Unit may take over an investigation if it is determined the crime is complex or will require a more time consuming and thorough investigation. Investigators work closely with victims, officers, other law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and the Township Attorney to ensure a thorough and fair investigation is complete.

The investigations unit assigned a total of 292 complaints in 2023.

| <b>Complaints Assigned Per Year</b> |            |
|-------------------------------------|------------|
| 2020                                | 351        |
| 2021                                | 279        |
| 2022                                | 171        |
| <b>2023</b>                         | <b>292</b> |

**Court Services**

Our Court Services Officer (CSO) acts as a liaison between the police department, the Ingham County Prosecutors Office, the Township Attorney, and the court system. The CSO tracks and processes criminal complaints and submits them to the appropriate attorney’s office for review of warrant request and juvenile petitions. The CSO is also responsible for the registration and address verification of sex offenders in Meridian Township.

| <b>Court Services</b>      | <b>2020</b> | <b>2021</b> | <b>2022</b> | <b>2023</b> |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Subpoenas Served           | 729         | 328         | 461         | <b>422</b>  |
| Personal Protection Orders | 43          | 40          | 40          | <b>44</b>   |
| Warrant Requests           | 581         | 787         | 809         | <b>873</b>  |
| Warrants Signed by CSO     | 362         | 251         | 339         | <b>398</b>  |
| Twp. Attorney Requests     | 113         | 93          | 122         | <b>112</b>  |
| Total Petition Requests    | 39          | 50          | 107         | <b>102</b>  |
| Retail Fraud Requests      | 190         | 145         | 145         | <b>111</b>  |
| OWI Requests               | 61          | 69          | 55          | <b>36</b>   |
| Assault Requests           | 47          | 127         | 73          | <b>175</b>  |
| Assault Requests-Domestic  | 151         | 138         | 142         | <b>90</b>   |
| Larceny/Fraud Requests     | 70          | 48          | 63          | <b>110</b>  |
| Narcotics Requests         | 10          | 16          | 19          | <b>20</b>   |

**Records Unit**

The Records Unit consists of a supervisor, two full-time technicians, and a part-time technician. They provide support to the Uniform Division as well as the Investigations Unit by preparing criminal reports for prosecution and reporting crime statistics to state agencies. They also maintain databases for statistical reports which are provided to department staff, the Township Manager, the Township Board,

and is made available to the public.

Records personnel also process all police reports, crash reports, traffic citations, and other related documents. Customer service is an emphasis of our Records Unit. Records personnel assist the public by responding to FOIA requests, processing insurance requests for reports, processing pistol purchase licenses, and answering incoming phone calls.

| Annual Crime Reporting Summary     | 2020       | 2021       | 2022       | 2023       | % Change<br>2022-2023 |
|------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Murder/Non-Negligent Manslaughter  | 1          | 0          | 1          | 0          | -100%                 |
| Rape and Attempted Rape            | 51         | 62         | 36         | 60         | 67%                   |
| Robbery                            | 12         | 10         | 17         | 6          | -92%                  |
| Aggravated Assault                 | 39         | 35         | 35         | 51         | 57%                   |
| <b>Total Part 1 Violent Crime</b>  | <b>103</b> | <b>107</b> | <b>89</b>  | <b>117</b> | <b>31%</b>            |
| Burglary                           | 88         | 64         | 69         | 66         | -4%                   |
| Larceny                            | 749        | 611        | 467        | 478        | 2%                    |
| Vehicle Theft                      | 44         | 56         | 75         | 74         | -1%                   |
| Arson                              | 0          | 6          | 0          | 3          | 300%                  |
| <b>Total Part 1 Property Crime</b> | <b>881</b> | <b>737</b> | <b>611</b> | <b>621</b> | <b>2%</b>             |
| <b>Total Part 1 Offenses</b>       | <b>984</b> | <b>844</b> | <b>700</b> | <b>738</b> | <b>5%</b>             |
| OWI Arrests (Liquor or Drugs)      | 53         | 69         | 48         | 35         | -27%                  |
| Traffic Accident – Roadway         | 588        | 785        | 818        | 711        | -13%                  |

### Accreditation

Accreditation is an on-going program that encourages law enforcement agencies to improve performance and service to the community. Accreditation status acknowledges the implementation of conceptually sound written directives, policies, procedures, and training. It is the voluntary adoption of the best practices in law enforcement and requires constant evaluation of the professional objectives set forth by an independent body of professionals in the Michigan Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission (MLEAC).

In February 2020, the Department became the first police agency in mid-Michigan to gain full accreditation status from the MLEAC and the 19th overall in the state of Michigan. Today, there are 64 accredited agencies in the state and many more agencies are in the process.

In February of 2023, through the hard work of our accreditation team, we officially received accredited status for an additional three years.

### Mid-Michigan Police Academy

The Services Division Commander represents the Department and acts as a coordinator for the Mid-Michigan Police Academy which is hosted by the Lansing Community College (LCC). Coordinators work closely with recruits during the 17-week academy, giving our coordinator an opportunity to identify possible candidates for employment. This also allows the coordinator to monitor each recruit's progress and assist in career development. Because of our involvement in the police academy, the Department can have an active role in shaping the future of law enforcement locally, regionally and across the state of Michigan. Three Department officers also teach various classes at the academy. The Department earns LCC credit hours for the time spent coordinating and teaching at the police academy. These credit hours can be used to send officers to training at LCC.

In 2023, the Department sponsored two recruits through the Mid-Michigan Police Academy during the fall session. Two other recruits are being sponsored through the Washtenaw Community College Police Academy and will be completing the academy in mid-March. The recruits from the fall academy are currently in field training.

### **Training**

Under the direction of the Chief of Police, the Training Sergeant oversees all training for the Department. The Department provided employees with 2,572 hours of training in 2023. It included some of the following:

- In-Service: 1,151.50 hours (this includes de-escalation training, mental health/PRT training)
- External: 1,157 hours
- Firearms: 178 hours

The Department prides itself in keeping our employees up to date on best practices and keeping our skills sharp through training. Our officers are routinely trained in subjects such as verbal de-escalation, dealing with people in mental health crisis, domestic assault investigations, legal updates and many other important topics. The in-service training program consists of monthly training for all sworn employees, periodic roll call videos, policy tests, quarterly firearms sessions, and computer based instruction. The external training program utilizes universities and private experts to handle specialized training outside the scope of the Department trainers. The Department strives to remain at the forefront of progressive policing by acknowledging the importance of both continuing education to retain current skills and the acquisition of new knowledge for officers to expand their skill base.

### **Citizens' Academy**

The Department hosted a ten-week Citizens' Academy that meets once a week for three hours in the fall. This academy exposes the attendees to police operations and procedures. The department did not host the academy this year due to renovations at both the Township Hall and the Police Department.

### **Youth Citizens' Academy**

The Department hosts a seven-week Youth Academy that meets once a week for two hours in the spring. The students learn about police work while being able to experience hands-on activities. The Department did not host a Youth Academy this year due to the renovations at the police department.

### **Property Room Report**

The Quartermaster maintains the property room. Activity involving the property room in 2023 included:

- 1,872 items entered as evidence
- 506.5 pounds of narcotics incinerated from the Prescription Drug Drop Off Box
- 273 abandoned vehicles were processed

### **Citizen Satisfaction Survey**

A total of 1,200 citizen satisfaction surveys were mailed to victims and complainants involved in traffic accidents and other calls for service in Meridian and Williamstown Township. Surveys are used as a tool to monitor customer satisfaction with the Department's services. In 2023, a total of 179 surveys were returned. The 18% response rate was increased as compared to 2022.

#### **Citizen Satisfaction Survey for Sworn Personnel**

| <b>Category</b> | <b>Rating of Excellent/Good</b> |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Helpfulness     | 94%                             |
| Friendliness    | 93%                             |
| Knowledge       | 95%                             |

|                      |     |
|----------------------|-----|
| Quality of Service   | 95% |
| Professional Conduct | 94% |
| Response Time        | 94% |

**Rating of Emergency and Non-Emergency Dispatch Service (Ingham 911 Dispatch)**

| Category             | Rating of Excellent/Good |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Helpfulness          | 73%                      |
| Friendliness         | 73%                      |
| Knowledge            | 72%                      |
| Quality of Service   | 73%                      |
| Professional Conduct | 73%                      |

*\*Not all questions generated a response.*

**2023 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN**

In conjunction with the Township Manager, the Department establishes goals to help in the delivery of law enforcement services. Many of our goal accomplishments and other activities are listed as follows.

**Continue efforts to fill all vacant positions while simultaneously working toward creating a diverse and inclusive workforce.**

In 2023, we have hired four new officers to fill vacant positions. It was determined in field training that some of these officers did not meet our standards and are no longer employed here. However, we currently have four recruits in the police academy, two of which graduate in December. We have two other candidates who have accepted conditional offers to attend upcoming police academies as well.

Nine of our thirty one officers are female, bringing the total percentage of female officers to over 29%. Our goal of employing 30% females by the year 2030 is absolutely obtainable. We continue to seek out qualified candidates of all backgrounds who meet our standards.

**Leverage suggestions made by Uniform, Health and Wellness, Recruitment and Retention, and Social Media Committees to provide an environment more likely to retain employees while attracting potential employees.**

All officers have received new Class B uniforms, fulfilling a recommendation from the recruiting and retention committee and the uniform committee. The uniforms look professional, are more comfortable, and have tactical advantages over the Class A uniform.

A newsletter has been designed and sent out to all employees to ensure communication is routinely made to all, a recommendation from the retention committee.

New members were added to the recruitment team to ensure we are attracting the most qualified candidates to our agency.

**Refresh the Police Department by updating vital areas such as the briefing, locker, and equipment rooms to create a modern, comfortable, and efficient workspace.**

New lockers replaced old, mismatched lockers in both the men’s and women’s locker rooms. The briefing room received a much-needed update such as fresh paint, new table and chairs, new cabinets for more efficiency, and new technology including a message board that will be used to more effectively communicate through all shifts. Other updates including access control and new flooring throughout the building are scheduled for completion before the end of 2023.



**Expanding technology available to all employees for a more efficient workflow. Integration of new software to increase efficiency and flow of information through the township and to the community.**

PowerFTO, an online application, was purchased and is being utilized to document training for our newly hired officers. We are also using PowerTime, an online application that allows employees to check their work schedules, submit time off requests, and submit overtime among other things. Power Engage allows for online surveys to be sent to the public at the completion of a police contact via text message.

iPads are being purchased for all sworn officers to be used to make evidence collection more efficient, to improve our Telehealth program for people in crisis, and to offer a mobile option for many of our electronic applications.

**Collaborate with school district partners to receive School Resource Officer grants and secure two full time SRO positions.**

Haslett Public Schools secured a state-funded grant and Officer Kolby Casaday was named their full-time SRO. Officer Casaday will have an office in Haslett High School and will be committed to providing full-time service to Haslett Schools.

**Prepare for staff succession through training and mentoring.**

Multiple promotions have been made in 2023, including the promotion of Curt Squires to lieutenant, Dan King to sergeant, and Lorenzo Velasquez to sergeant. All will attend leadership training in the near future. Several officers were trained as field training officers, a necessary step in preparing young officers for supervision and leadership in our department.

**Assist the parks department with the Deer Cull to reduce injuries and damage as a result of collisions with the motoring public.**

Our department harvested approximately 200 deer during the program in 2023. The number of traffic crashes involving deer has steadily decreased over the past three years while the program has been in place.

**Upon becoming fully staffed, assign officers to specialized units to expand their job knowledge, provide added proactive services to the community without relying on partner agencies, and expand assignments needed to recruit and retain employees.**

Though we have added officers through our hiring process and sponsorship activities, we have not yet reached full staffing levels. We continue to work toward this goal as we focus on recruiting talented individuals that meet the high standards we have for our employees.

**Identify an officer to train as a canine handler and purchase a new canine to assist in the detection of narcotics, the location of missing and wanted persons, and location of missing articles.**

Officer Trevino was chosen as the next canine handler and our newest canine, a German Shepard named Reno, was purchased. They attended training together in September and are currently assigned to road patrol. Our canine team now features two duos, Officer Anderson and Ares and Officer Trevino and Reno. This team enables us to have a canine scheduled to be on duty every day.

During 2023, the K9 vehicle was replaced by a new Ford Police Interceptor. The new vehicle has much needed upgrades from the prior vehicle, including a larger and safer internal K9 containment system, as well as several safety systems for the handlers and their K9 partners.

## WILLIAMSTOWN TOWNSHIP POLICE SERVICES

The Meridian Township Police Department provides law enforcement services to Williamstown Township. The 2022-2024 contract arranges for Williamstown Township to compensate Meridian Township \$141,802.00 for calendar year 2023 and \$69.68 per hour outside of the 40 hours of weekly patrol for emergency and non-emergency responses.

| Williamstown Township Statistics            |       |       |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|   | 2020  | 2021  | 2022  | 2023  |
| Written Reports                             | 285   | 280   | 251   | 232   |
| Calls for Service                           | 1,304 | 1,506 | 1,279 | 1,222 |
| Calls for Service (excluding traffic stops) | 1,043 | 1,143 | 1,063 | 1,035 |
| Arrests                                     | 8     | 12    | 15    | 15    |
| Citations Issued                            | 115   | 95    | 46    | 10    |
| Total Number of Charges                     | 132   | 111   | 56    | 14    |

| Written Reports |            |            |            |            |
|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                 | 2020       | 2021       | 2022       | 2023       |
| Alarms          | 31         | 29         | 23         | 19         |
| Traffic Crashes | 102        | 105        | 101        | 72         |
| All Other       | 152        | 146        | 127        | 141        |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>285</b> | <b>280</b> | <b>251</b> | <b>232</b> |

### MTPD TEAM MEMBERS

**CHIEF**

Richard Grillo

**CAPTAIN**

Bart Crane

**LIEUTENANT**

Curt Squires

**SERGEANTS**

Edward Besonen  
 Dan King  
 Lorenzo Velasquez  
 Andrew McCready

Chris Lofton  
 Jason Clements  
 Brian Canen

**OFFICERS BY SENIORITY**

Christina Scaccia  
 Kyle Royston  
 Rebecca Payne  
 Bryan LeRoy  
 Doug Strouse  
 Adam Slavick  
 Ian Mandernack

Antonio Trevino  
 David Reinke  
 Megan Heinemann  
 Meghan Cole  
 Bryant Martin  
 Isabela Acker  
 Jack Akers

Kolby Casaday  
Megan Klein  
Blaine Anderson

Stacey Bazan  
Natalie Tyndall  
Larry Vandermolen  
Nathan Wicks

**CIVILIAN PERSONNEL**

Kristi Schaeding, Administrative Assistant  
Heidi LaFargue, Records Supervisor

Alycia Boik, Records Technician  
Emma Gorrell, Records Technician

**CADETS**

Kayla Frank  
Lauren Rico  
Carrigan McGraw  
Sara Hanson  
Tala Atta  
De'Mia Finley  
Maggie Eggleston

# PROJECT MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONS



## 2023 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **Township Sign Project**

We are now at 56 total signs under the contract, with a total contact amount of \$700,079. The average cost per sign is \$12,501.41.

In 2023, we constructed 15 facility and welcome signs and 13 park signs.

### **2023 Renovations of the Service Center, Municipal Building and Public Safety Building**

Renovations to the Service Center began in April. The front entry and hallway at the Service Center received new carpet and newly painted walls. A new countertop was installed at the front counter and we lowered a section of the front counter to make it ADA compliant.

Perpetration for this project began in December of 2022. Renovations to the Municipal Building began in April after we had relocated all of our 55-60 team members who work in this facility.

The renovations included removal of all wallpaper, extensive drywall repairs, painting the walls and trim, installing new flooring, and new office furniture.

The front counter in the lobby was also given a new façade, including dropping a portion of the counter to become ADA compliant. This project also included replacing the four banks of doors that comprise our front entrance.

The project was originally scheduled to be completed in October but was finished in early September.

The Public Safety locker rooms have been updated with new lockers. We began replacing flooring throughout the Public Safety Building in November. This project will be completed over the next 3-4 months as we are strategically phasing the work to keep the Public Safety Building open and operating during the renovations.

### TEAM MEMBER

Melissa Massie, Director of Project Management & Operations

# PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT



Charter Township of Meridian Code of Ordinances: Chapter 2, Article 1

A Department of Public Works shall be created and the department shall be headed by the Director of Public Works and Engineering. The department shall be responsible for all matters relating to the management, maintenance, and operation of all the physical properties of the Township. This department shall have exclusive control of the construction, maintenance, and operation of the Township sewers and water mains, the operation of Township dumps and landfills, the operation and maintenance of the cemetery, and the maintenance of all Township facilities.

## 2023 DEPARTMENT GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

### **2023 Sanitary Sewer Rehab Project**

The 2023 Sanitary Sewer Rehab Project was completed at the end of 2023. This project was designed and put out to bid in 2022. We began construction in April of 2023.

The project focuses on grouting and lining of the Township's sanitary sewer system in neighborhoods surrounding Lake Lansing, as well as in two areas near Wonch and Ferguson Parks. These areas of the Township's sanitary sewer system were identified for rehabilitation work through the 2017 Stormwater, Asset Management, and Wastewater (SAW) Grant.

This project is part of an ongoing utility maintenance program that will sustain the high-quality sanitary sewer infrastructure for our residents.

### **Phase I of the Timberlane Water Main Replacement Project**

We also recently completed the 2023 Timberlane Water Main Replacement Project. Design and engineering of this project began in 2022. This project was put out to bid in July of 2023. Construction began in August and was completed in November.

There will be a second phase of this water main project in 2024 which will involve replacing all of the water main on Timberlane St and Blue Haven Dr that is outside of the road ROW. We replaced all of the water main under the roads in 2023 to allow for the reconstruction of these roads as part of the 2022 Local Road Program contract.

Road construction was delayed in 2022 due to an emergency declaration project on the Proctor Drain by the Ingham County Drain Commissioner's Office. The drain project was completed in August, which allowed for the water main construction to begin prior to road reconstruction.

### **Local Road Program**

The fourth year of the 10-year, voter-approved program is complete. The goal of the program is to raise the average Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) of our 153-mile local road system to a "good" condition (8/10 on the PASER rating).

In 2019, when we proposed the new road millage, our average PASER rating was 4.48. At the end of 2023, our average PASER rating is now 5.423, over a 21% increase in the first four years of the 10-year local road program.

We completed all 8.86 miles of reconstruction with the lone exception of Timberlane St, Linden St, and the neighborhood on the north side of Lake Lansing. We had the contractor capacity to complete the reconstruction of the roads on the north side of Lake Lansing; however, we only received one bid on the sanitary sewer work that needs to precede the road work. The lone bid was exceedingly high (\$1.8 million). Therefore, we postponed the road work to May of 2024 so we could put this sanitary sewer RFP back out to bid in November of 2023 when contractors will have more time to submit bids. We put the 2023 County Park West Sewer Replacement RPF back out to bid on November 13, 2023. The sanitary sewer work will be completed by April 12. The road work will then begin in May when asphalt plants reopen.

In addition to the nearly 8.86 miles of reconstruction, we completed 7.3 miles of overlay preventive maintenance paving on the 2022 "chip and fog" roads. This overlay paving completed a Texas Underseal treatment to these roads.

Thanks to the Board's generous support with \$2 million in American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding, we were able to:

1. Add Wellington Estates (1.03 miles) to our 2022 contract. Construction occurred in June and July of 2023 at 2022 contract rates.
2. Prevent eliminating any of the 2022 roads after our asphalt prices increased by 55% due to the inflation caused by all of the one-time federal infrastructure funding.
3. Fund a significant portion of the 7.3 miles of "chip & fog" overlay paving.
4. Add a portion of Northview Drive immediately south of Grand River Avenue that was going to be left in poor condition based on the scope of the Drain Commissioner's Daniels Drain project. This crush and shape paving project on Northview Dr was completed in November of 2023.

### **2023 Preventative Maintenance Road Projects**

We completed all 3.95 miles of crack seal work and 14.27 miles of asphalt rejuvenator treatments to extend the life of the roads in fair, good, and excellent condition.

By the end of 2023, we will have reconstructed 32 miles of our poorest condition roads and will have completed over 47 miles of preventative maintenance road work.

Funding for the 2023 Local Road Program is provided by four main sources: the 2019 road bond proceeds (\$5,468,000), a transfer from the general fund (\$280,000), contribution from Ingham County (\$335,000), and American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding (\$700,000).

### **MDOT's Grand River Avenue Project**

After two years of intensive construction, we have successfully rebuilt the Grand River Ave corridor from the CN Railroad Bridge just east of Park Lake Rd to Oak Pointe Ct, which included work on the Okemos Consolidated Drain, the Township's water mains, the Township's sanitary sewer system, and other underground utilities.

The work that occurred in 2022 to raise Grand River Ave approximately 2 feet and to take a compensating cut from behind the Central Fire Station on Township-owned property proved successful as Grand River Ave did not have to be closed due to flooding in the spring of 2023.

We were also successful in coordinating the construction schedule to allow for the closure of Central Park Dr for the 2023 Celebrate Meridian event. This is the first time we were able to close Central Park Dr for Celebrate Meridian since 2019.

### **Recycling Center Projects**

Although our 2023 EGLE grant application was not successful, we made significant improvements to the design of the facility in 2023. We are hopeful that we will be successful in securing this grant in a future year. We will continue to reapply each year as the reason that we did not get the grant in 2023 was due to fact that there was less funding for this grant than most years. 2024 is also going to be a low funding year, but we are optimistic that we will obtain this grant at some point in the future.

Township staff met with EGLE in early September to discuss our 2023 application and received very positive feedback. The challenge that we have is that we are not in a recycle center desert, meaning we do have recycling centers in the Greater Lansing Region. The rural areas of the state are capturing all of the grant funding right now due to the low funding level and the points that are awarded based on the closest existing recycling centers.

This grant would fund 80% of the construction cost of the new recycling center located behind the Township Service Center.

We completed spring maintenance of the recycling center in April. Many years ago, the Township would receive a significant number of complaints because of the poor condition of the service drive for the Recycling Center. As a result of our new maintenance program, we no longer receive any complaints about the condition of the service drive.

### **Renewable Energy Plan**

Township staff, along with help from Absolute Solar, the Energy Team and the Environmental Commission, have developed a renewable energy plan in accordance with this goal. This plan, if constructed, would result in 100% of the energy use being supplied by Township-owned solar arrays for our nine facilities that have the highest energy consumption:

10. Municipal Building (partially powered by renewable energy)
11. Public Safety Building (partially powered by renewable energy)
12. Service Center (already powered by renewable energy at 100%)
13. North Fire Station
14. Central Fire Station
15. South Fire Station (partially powered by renewable energy)
16. Historical Village
17. Harris Nature Center
18. Main Lift Station (our largest sanitary sewer lift station)

The renewable energy plan focuses on these seven facilities:

8. Central Fire Station
9. North Fire Station
10. Municipal Building
11. Public Safety Building
12. Historical Village
13. Harris Nature Center (Options A and B)
14. Main Lift Station Some additional work will be necessary in the future to develop a plan for our smaller Township facilities (predominantly park restroom facilities).

### **Design of the Township's first electric vehicle charging stations**

This project is in design and we hope to have it completed in the spring of 2024. We have experienced delays in obtaining data and information that we need from Consumers Energy before we can design the electric vehicle charging system for the Municipal Complex.

### **Wetland Protection and Education**

The wetland education mailing was mailed to all property owners with wetlands and/or wetland buffers, 2,505 property owners in total, in May.

Township staff have also developed new signage to help increase wetland protection and educate residents. The installation of these signs will be focused around Lake Lansing where we frequently receive complaints of dumping.

- These signs will be implemented throughout the Township, in 2023-24, at roadside wetlands, land preserves, and park areas where we experience dumping.
- Fifty 15" x 12" reflective signs were purchased for placement
- Figure 1 shows the area on Lake Drive that will receive signage due to observed dumping into wetlands.
- Figure 2 shows the ordered signage citing the Wetland Protection Ordinance for dumping.

### **Wetland Education Signage**

- Interpretive signage has been developed to place at wetland areas, such as the Nancy Moore wetland bridge, to educate residents about the importance of wetlands and associated flora and fauna.
- Bids are currently being developed to purchase signage. Priority areas are wetlands at parks in the Township. Land Preserve wetlands will also receive signage utilizing the preservation budget. Once quotes are obtained, signage will be ordered and installed.

### **2023 Green Grants Initiative**

**Tree Planting at Cornell Woods:** This Green Grant supported tree planting in common areas in the Cornell Woods Subdivision, including a pond area and an open field. In addition to the environmental benefits (reduce run-off, enhanced biodiversity, natural habitat, etc.), the trees will also enhance the beauty of the area and serve as an outdoor classroom.

**Montessori Radmoor Meadow:** This Green Grant supported creation of meadows and campus-wide native plantings to enhance the biodiversity of Radmoor's living classroom and provide educational planting and plant care opportunities for students.

**Presbyterian Church Native Landscape Enhancement Plan:** This Green Grant supported creation of an overall landscaping plan to support both humans and wildlife and provide a cohesive, sustainable, and healthy landscape.

**Publication and Distribution for Mud Lake:** This Green Grant supports printing and other costs related to a book about Wildlife Lake, formerly known as Mud Lake. The book, written by a former Haslett resident includes true local stories that reflect the importance of natural areas, outdoor adventures, and an understanding of our relationships with nature and climate adaptation.

**Ralya Pollinator Garden:** This Green Grant supports creation of a pollinator garden at Ralya Elementary School in Haslett. This is a collaborative effort with students, the Meridian Garden Club and a fifth grade teacher.

### **MSU to Lake Lansing Trail**

Meridian Township recently opened Phase I of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail on Friday, December 8 at



1 p.m. We held a ribbon cutting ceremony at Noon on Friday, December 8 to celebrate the accomplishment of opening this regional asset that will serve our residents for decades to come.

Construction of Phase I began in December of 2022. Construction of Phase II began in late August. We currently anticipate that Phase II construction will be completed by June of 2024.

After many years of hard work to acquire the land, secure the necessary funding, and design the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail, we are very excited to announce the opening of Phase I. Once Phase II is complete in June of 2024, users will have an easy, safe, and enjoyable option for non-motorized travel between the MSU Campus and Lake Lansing Park South, along approximately five miles of connected pathways and trails.

Phase I is approximately one mile long and starts on the north side of the Hagadorn Road and Shaw Lane intersection and concludes at the Grand River Avenue and Park Lake Road intersection. Phase I includes a bridge that will take pedestrians and bicyclists over the Red Cedar River behind the MSU Community Music School. The trail will then take users along the banks of the Red Cedar River to the north side of the CN Railroad tracks.

The estimated cost of construction for Phase I is \$3.7 million. Meridian Township successfully obtained a \$1.7 million federal TAP grant for Phase I. The remaining portion of the project will be funded by the Ingham County Trails and Parks Millage and the Township Pathway Millage.

Phase II is 1.2 miles long and begins near the Grand River Avenue and Campus Hill Drive intersection and concludes near the Okemos Road and Gaylord C Smith Ct. intersection. Pedestrians and bicyclists will use the Township's existing pathway system to get from the Grand River Avenue and Park Lake Road intersection, where Phase I ends, to the Grand River Avenue and Campus Hill Drive intersection, where Phase II begins.

The estimated cost of construction for Phase II is \$730,000. This phase is funded by the Ingham County Trails and Parks Millage and the Township Pathway Millage.

From the northern end of Phase II on Okemos Road, users will be able to use the existing 10-foot-wide pathway on the east side of Okemos Road to the inter-urban pathway. The Township widened this half-mile stretch of the Okemos Road pathway for the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail in 2021. Users can then take the existing 1.1-mile inter-urban trail from Okemos Road to Marsh Road.

The Township hopes to complete the design and engineering of Phase III in 2024, which would allow for construction in 2025. Phase III is the final phase of the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail. Phase III will provide a trail route from Marsh Road, just south of Haslett Road, all the way to Green Road in the northeast corner of the Township.

Once all three phases are completed, the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail will provide residents with approximately 6.75 miles of trail system, which will enhance the region's trail network by connecting to the MSU and Lansing River Trails. We can't wait to celebrate the opening of Phases I and II with the community.

### **2023 Curbside Storm Debris Collection Program**

At the Special Meeting held on August 30, the Meridian Township Board approved funding to conduct curbside brush and tree debris pickup in response to the severe storm that came through Greater Lansing on August 24.

The Township began picking up brush and tree debris from the storm on Tuesday, September 5. The Township completed the program in 2.5 weeks.

### **ELMWSA Wins 2023 Regional Water Taste-Off Competition**

East Lansing-Meridian Water and Sewer Authority (ELMWSA) has won the 2023 American Water Works Association Mt. Pleasant Regional Water Taste-Off Competition.

After winning the Regional Water Taste-off Competition, ELMWSA was honored to compete for the prize of best tasting water in the State of Michigan. The state competition was held at the Michigan Section American Water Works Association Annual Conference in Port Huron on September 13.

Water samples from all over the state were judged on taste, smell, and water clarity. The competition scoring was very close and ELMWSA finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Taste-Off. The winner for best tasting water in Michigan for 2023 was Marquette Township.

We are excited to compete in next year's competition and hope to be crowned as the best tasting water in Michigan.

### **Application to the Ingham County Trails & Parks Millage for a Grant for Phase I of the Eastern-Third Regional Trail**

In 2021, we updated our Pedestrian Bicycle Pathway Master Plan. One of the new additions to the Master Plan was the Eastern Third Regional Trail.

This trail is made possible by the Consumers Energy right-of-way (ROW). Treasurer Deschaine's desire to see a pathway along Cornell Rd was part of the impetus for this addition to the Pedestrian Bicycle Pathway Master Plan. For many reasons, it is not feasible to construct a trail along Cornell Rd. However, this Consumers Energy ROW runs parallel to Cornell Rd, making it the perfect alternative.

Similar to the MSU to Lake Lansing Trail, this would be a 10 foot wide asphalt trail with boardwalks being used to cross wetlands. We are proposing to construct this trail in four phases. This application is for the northern-most portion of the trail, which begins on the south side of Haslett Rd, just west of Green Rd. Phase I would conclude at Tihart Rd.

Township staff have applied to the Ingham County Trails and Parks Millage Program for funding. Our application includes a 10% local match, which will be comprised of \$90,000 toward the cost of construction and \$30,000 in in-kind support from Township staff for design, engineering, inspections and administrative support for this project. The estimated cost of Phase I is \$1,200,000.

We should learn if we are awarded the grant in early 2024.

### **2023 Asphalt Sealcoating and Striping Project**

This project was bided out in August of 2023 and construction began in September. We double sealcoated the parking lots and service drives at the following Township facilities and re-striped the parking lots:

- Municipal Complex
- Service Center Parking
- North Fire Station Parking
- Central Fire Station Parking
- South Fire Station Parking
- Okemos Library Parking
- Glendale Cemetery Service Drives

This work will extend the life of this asphalt by protect our parking lots and service drives from the harmful effects of water and sunlight.

We also replaced failing concrete in the Municipal Complex prior to beginning the sealcoating project.

## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Bill McConnell, Chair  
Kendra Grasseeschi  
Anna Colby, Vice-Chair  
Courtney Wisinski, Township Board Liaison

John Sarver  
Amelia Saffron, Student  
Graham Diedrich  
Tom Frazier

### TEAM MEMBERS

#### **Administration**

Dan Opsommer

Deputy Township Manager  
Director of Public Works & Engineering  
Administrative Assistant II  
Administrative Assistant II

Denise Green

Robin Faust

#### **Engineering**

Younes Ishraidi, P.E., C.F.M.

Nyal Nunn, C.F.M.

Ryan Schaner

Jack Hughes

Michael Love

Tom Westerfield

Chief Engineer  
Senior Project Engineer  
Records Manager & GIS Specialist  
Project Engineer  
Engineering Technician  
Engineering Technician

#### **Environmental Programs**

LeRoy Harvey

Environmental Programs Coordinator (PT)

#### **Public Works Superintendent**

Rob MacKenzie

#### **Water Utility**

Robert Stacy

Mike Ellis

David Lester

Dan Palacios

D'Destin Kaufmann

Derrick Bobb

Ben McCann

James Arnett

Lead Utility Worker  
Utility Worker  
Utility Worker  
Utility Worker  
Utility Worker  
Utility Worker  
Utility Worker  
Utility Worker

#### **Sewer Utility**

Jacob Flannery

Kyle Fogg

Don Cuson

David Borowicz

Lead Utility Worker  
Utility Worker  
Utility Worker  
Utility Worker

#### **Buildings, Grounds and Cemetery**

Tyler Kennell

Keith Hewitt

Lead Utility Worker  
Utility Worker

#### **Motor Pool**

Todd Frank

Lead Mechanic

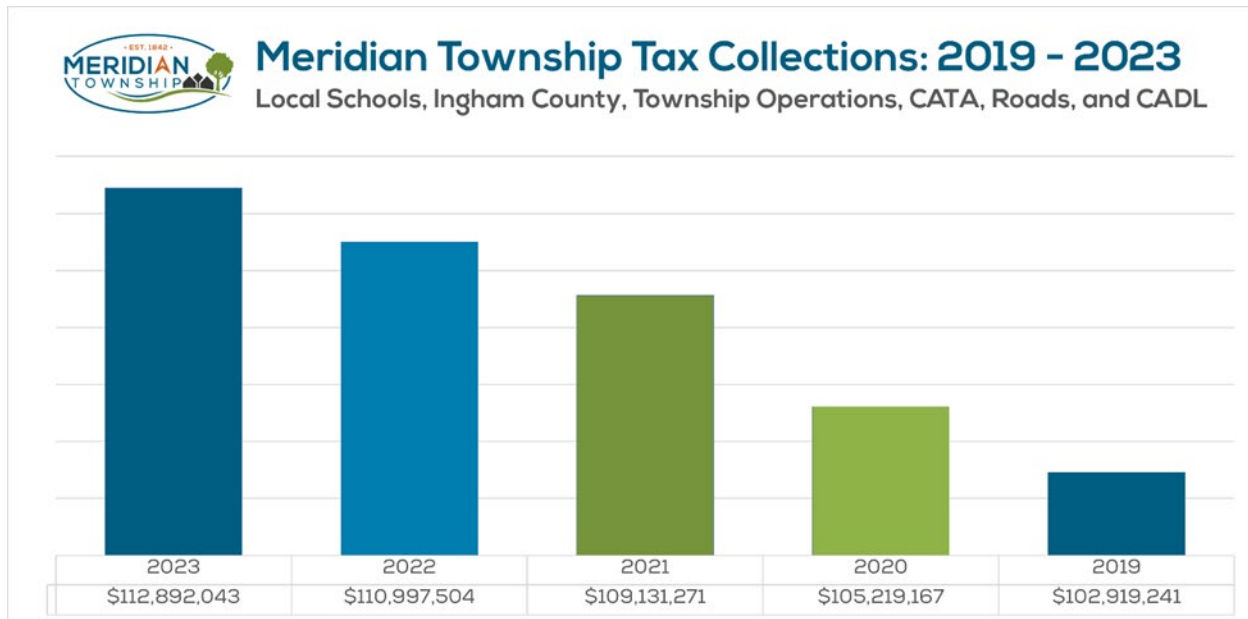
# TREASURER'S OFFICE

The Treasurer's Office is required by law to receive and take charge of all funds belonging to the Township and distribute other funds collected to the appropriate taxing authorities. These collections are primarily real estate and personal property taxes, but also include fines, licenses, permits, deposits, bonds, and fees.

In 2023, The Treasurer's Office:

- Mailed out 29,150 summer and winter tax bills, and 872 special assessment bills.
- Took approximately 20,000 in personal transactions annually at the counter.
- Received \$780,000.56 in cash at the counter.
- Mailed, or emailed, approximately 3,000 receipts or duplicate tax bills.
- Provided extensive financial reporting to the Board, auditors, and other taxing authorities.
- Provided the Township with nearly \$2.5 million in interest earnings from short-term liquid investments.

During the calendar year 2023, the total property taxes collected and distributed were \$112,892,043, an increase of 1.7% from the \$110,997,504 collected in 2022. By comparison, \$109,131,271 was collected in 2021.

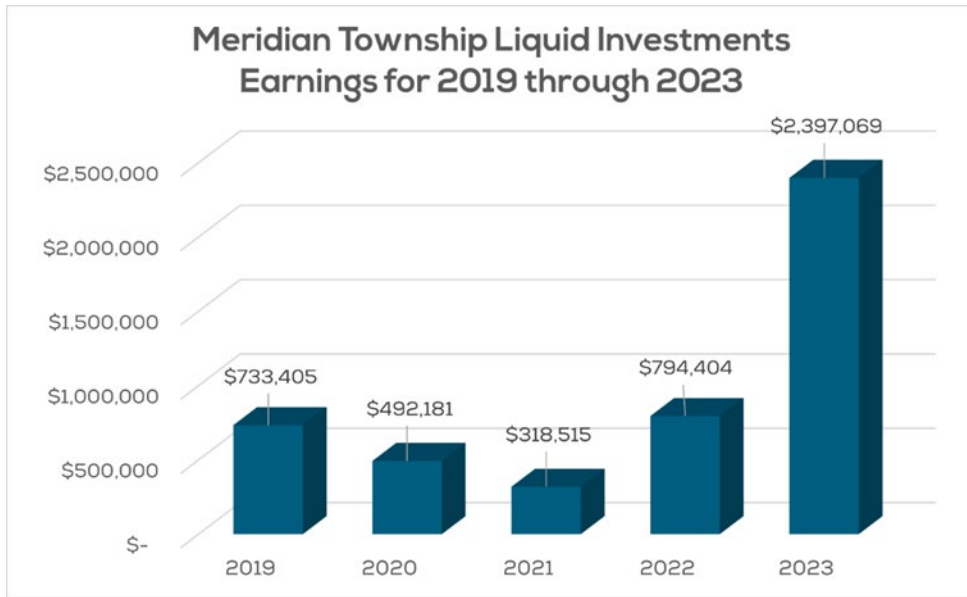


The Treasurer is required to pay out collected funds to local school districts within 10 days of receipt. In Meridian Township, these include the Okemos School District, Haslett School District, East Lansing School District, Williamston School District, and the Ingham Intermediate Schools. Other governmental units receive tax money from Meridian Township according to each taxing authority's millage. These receipts were also distributed to Ingham County, Lansing Community College (LCC), Capital Area Transit Authority (CATA), Capital Area District Library (CADL) and the Capital Region Airport Authority (CRAA). Meridian Township operations received approximately 20% of the tax collection in 2023.

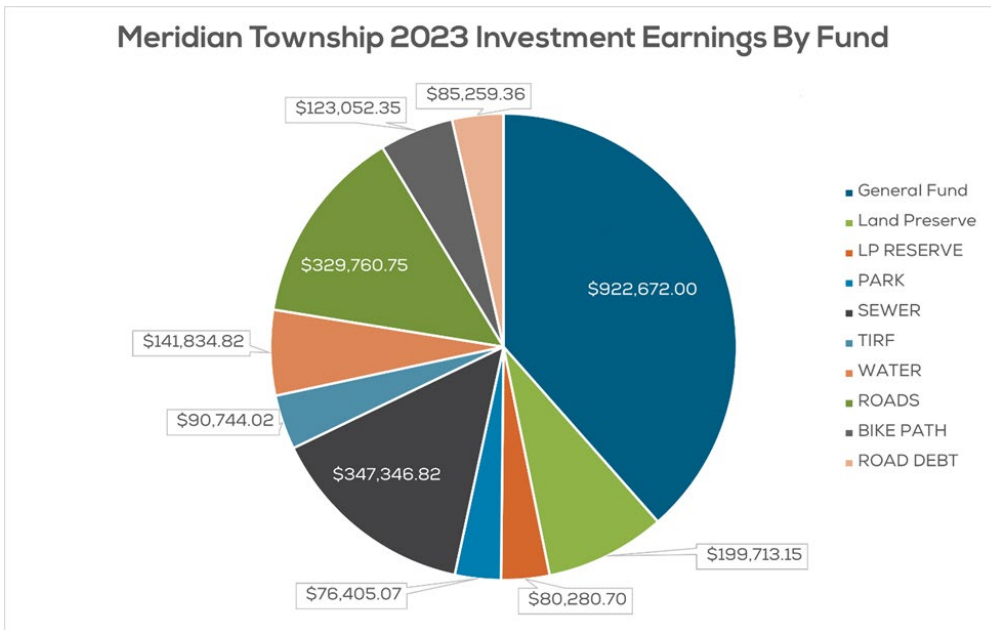
With the Winter 2023 taxes, this flyer was sent out to all taxpayers explaining where their taxes were distributed.



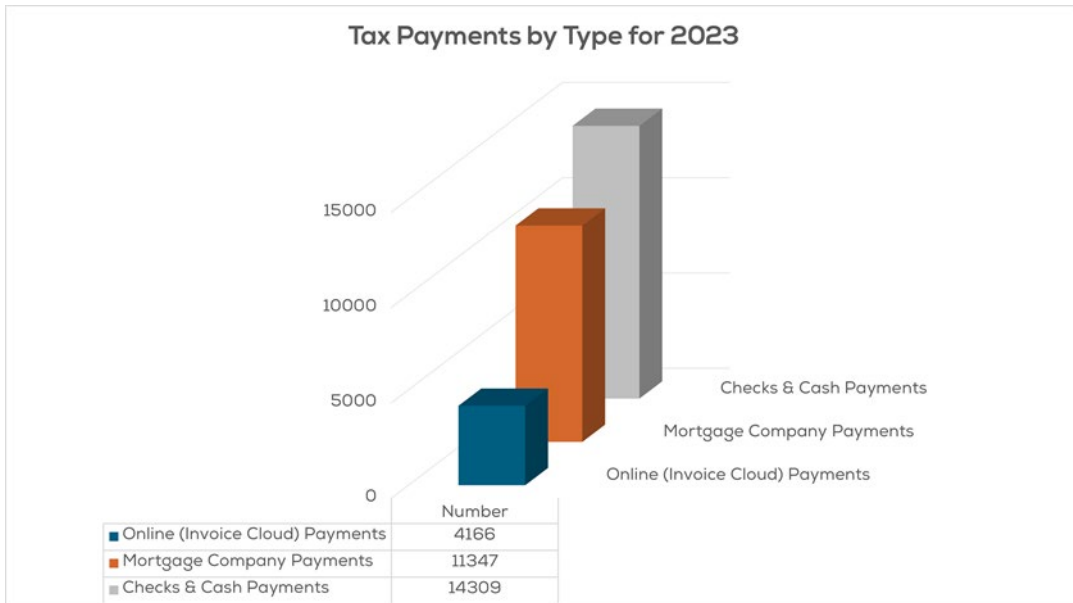
At the end of 2023, the Treasurer's Office managed \$53,094,213 in fixed and non-fixed investments. In 2023, interest earnings on liquid (cash) investment tripled over 2022 earnings. This was largely a result of significantly higher interest rates created by the Federal Reserve Bank trying to reduce inflation.



The interest earned was for the general fund and nine other Township funds maintained by the Treasurer’s Office. Here is a breakout of the earnings in 2023 by fund:



For 2023 the Treasurer’s office provided our residents with in-person and online access to tax and utility bill payments. The forms of payments received in the Treasures office continue to trend toward electronic payments. While checks and cash received still make up 48% of our tax payments, the percentage of electronic receipts reached 14% in 2023, up from less than 2% in 2019.



The Treasurer served as a Township Board member and attended twice-monthly meetings and presented quarterly reports to the Board on investments, collections, and distributions.

In 2023, the Treasurer’s Staff worked closely with other Township Departments and organizations:

- Assisted the Assessor with various Tax Tribunal property tax appeal cases.
- Assisted the Finance Director with documentation for the annual audit.
- Served on the Meridian Township Pension Board.
- Assisted the Meridian Brownfield Redevelopment Authority (BRA).
- Served as the Treasurer of the Meridian Economic Development Corporation (EDC).
- Board Member of the Capital Area Transit Authority (CATA).
- Meridian Township Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) Township Board liaison.
- Member of the two service clubs: Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs of Haslett & Okemos.
- Board Member of the Capital Area Treasurers Association (CAT).
- Served on the Community/Senior Center Task Force.

Residents can receive free tax information on their own property by using the Township website ([www.meridian.mi.us](http://www.meridian.mi.us)) or calling the Treasurer’s Office at (517) 853-4140

### **TEAM MEMBERS**

Phil Deschaine, Treasurer  
 Deanne Muliatt, Deputy/Assistant to the Treasurer  
 Stephaney Guild, Bookkeeper