



Charter Township of Meridian
Senior/Community Center Task Force
Township Municipal Building, 5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864
Tuesday, September 24 2024 – Minutes

Members

Present: Scott Hendrickson, Patrick Malley, John Hood, Josh Robertson, LuAnn Maisner, Michele Steed and Steve Vagnozzi

Members

Absent: Suchir Nagisetty and Amanda Lick

Staff

Present: Interim Township Manager Timothy Schmitt, Deputy Township Manager Dan Opsommer and Parks and Recreation Director Courtney Wisinski

Others

Present: None

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor Hendrickson called the meeting to order and read the mission statement at 6:00pm.

2. PUBLIC REMARKS

Supervisor Hendrickson opened comments from the public at 6:04 pm.

Dave Ledebuhr, Township Resident, requested a closed session meeting with the VP of Development at CBL for the Meridian Mall to discuss other possible locations at the Mall.

Peggy Frisch, President Senior Center Advisory Board, suggested there should be more than one member of the senior center on the committee and concerned about the Chair being fair and uninfluenced.

Todd Quiring, Township Resident, had the following questions: Who was the consultant on the Younkers project? What Public Act and year was the appropriation from and what State Department is it going through?

Ellen Portnoy, Township Resident, requested focus be on the Senior Center rather than Community Center. Suggested there should be more than one member of the senior center on the committee and an independent facilitator be engaged.

Supervisor Hendrickson closed comments from the public at 6:13 pm.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

**MOTION BY MEMBER MAISNER TO APPROVE THE AGENDA. SUPPORTED BY MEMBER HOOD.
MOTION APPROVED 6-0.**

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

None.

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

6. INTRODUCTIONS

Supervisor Hendrickson asked that each member of the committee introduce themselves.

LuAnn Maisner, previous Meridian Township Parks & Recreation Director for 20 years. In 2011, when the Okemos Community Education Director retired, they engaged the Meridian Township Parks and Recreation Director to oversee and manage the Meridian Senior Center.

Josh Robertson, Township resident for seven years, worked in the legislature for the Michigan House and Senate, and is currently an attorney.

Patrick Malley, Superintendent for Haslett Public Schools, looking forward to being a part of the process and gathering whatever information he can from the community.

Steve Vagnozzi, Township resident for 48 years, served on the Township Transportation Commissions, Okemos School Board, and is an active participant at the Senior Center for five years.

Michele Steed, Township resident for 37 years, was involved with the Nokomis Learning Center in its early days, Okemos Cares Program, and is now retired.

John Hood, Superintendent for Okemos Public Schools, starting his 29th year at Okemos Schools and as a former teacher and principal at Chippewa Middle School has had a chance to participate with the Senior Center.

Scott Hendrickson, Meridian Township Supervisor, has been serving since May. Prior to that, he has served as Township Trustee, Planning Commissioner, Zoning Board of Appeals and on the Local Officials Compensation Commission. He has been a resident since 2011.

7. SENIOR/COMMUNITY CENTER TASK FORCE HISTORY

Supervisor Hendrickson wanted to layout the mission and vision of the task force. The Supervisor has established the task force to fill a need. When the 2027-2028 school year is complete the existing Senior Center will be demolished as part of the Okemos Schools Bond Project. We need to find a place for the seniors to go and it is his hope that after the next six months, the task force will make two recommendations to the Township Board. First, a stand-alone Senior Center. Second, a joint Senior/Community Center. This timeline would allow for the Township Board to have two meetings to discuss the recommendations in advance of the deadline for August ballot language.

Interim Manager Schmitt presented the history of the Senior/Community Center Task Force. The project has been a goal of the Township Board for a couple of years. The original task force consisted of Treasurer

Deschaine, Community Planning & Development Director Schmitt, Director Massie, Former Parks and Recreation Director Maisner, Trustee Wilson, Former Township Manager Walsh, New Parks and Recreation Director Courtney Wisinski and the Senior Center Coordinator Cheri Wisdom. This group looked at potential sites and put out an RFP for facility design services. After review, decided to engage with Progressive for facility design.

The appropriation for the project came from the State of Michigan in the 2023-2024 Omnibus Bill through the Department of Health and Human Services. This is the seed money for the project and the Township Board set aside ARPA dollars to engage the design services from Progressive. The following five sites were investigated by the original committee for possible locations.

The Younkers site was primary site that had the most thorough analysis. It is a very large building and the Board voted to not proceed due to the costs to operate the facility. Member Vagnozzi requested the total dollar amount that was shared with the Board to operate and build out this facility be shared at the next task force meeting.

The site between the Post Office and the Central Fire Station was examined. The Township does own the site. This site does have small wetlands and is heavily wooded. There was a concern about taking down numerous trees.

Soccer fields at the Municipal Building were examined as a site and they are entirely within a flood plain. A site adjacent to the Nokomis site was reviewed, it is a small site with a small amount of available parking and some drainage issues. The property at Gaylord C. Smith Drive, in front of the Service Center, was not pursued further because it is prone to flooding, near the railroad track and the parks department has other plans for the property.

Discussion of the lack of possible locations if we are to stay around the center of the community at the Grand River Avenue/Marsh Road intersection. Member Vagnozzi suggested we look into the possibility of the Foods for Living site along with the Nokomis site and the possibility of the senior center being on a separate site from the community center.

Superintendent Hood requested a need for the task force to have some guiding principles that are in line with the township's strategic plan. In addition, conversation with the seniors is needed on what activities/features they like about the existing Senior Center. The task force had discussion about how to facilitate this conversation and work to rebuild the trust with the senior community that was lost from the previous committee.

Superintendent Hood wanted to update the committee on the history as it relates to Okemos Public Schools. He stated Okemos Schools met with the seniors in 2022 to let them know that the existing Senior Center would be going away and that they have built in \$750,000 into the school bond to relocate the Senior Center on School District property. As Okemos Schools was scheduled to meet with the seniors about the potential new location, the Township became aware of the funding available from the State of Michigan. At that time, former Township Manager Walsh met with Superintendent Hood and asked that he "pause" the process on finding the seniors a new space in Okemos Schools.

Supervisor Hendrickson suggested the task force set the transparent guiding principles, suggested by Superintendent Hood, at the October task force meeting and two members of the task force be prepared to present those to the Township Board at their November 12th meeting for approval. In addition, he reviewed the financial history of the project. This includes a \$5 million grant from the State of Michigan, a \$750,000-\$1,000,000 grant from Slotkin's Office, which we should hear about in December, Ingham County has grant

funding available, also looking at charitable contributions, Township has funds available in the Capital Project Fund, and the Community Services Millage that currently funds the Senior Center operating costs.

8. PROPOSED CALENDAR

Supervisor Hendrickson presented the draft calendar. Discussion was had to share the Parks and Recreation Master Plan and the Township Goals. He mentioned we have a webpage for the Senior/Community Center Task Force on the Township website. The task force also has an email address of: scctaskforce@meridian.mi.us. The schedule below was adopted; however the March date is during spring break week and may need to be amended in the future.

The Senior/Community Center Task Force is set to meet monthly, from September 2024 to March/April of 2025. Meetings are proposed to be at 6:00PM on each of the following dates:

- September 24, 2024
- October 22, 2024
- November 19, 2024
- December 10, 2024
- January 28, 2025
- February 25, 2025
- March 25, 2025
- April 8, 2025 (If needed)

The meetings will be held in the Town Hall Room of the Municipal Building at 5151 Marsh Road and will be televised on HOMTV.

Additionally, the Township Board has requested regular 'check ins' from the Task Force to discuss progress and keep everyone informed. The hope is to have two members of the Task Force present to the Township Board. Tentatively, these checks in are scheduled for:

- November 12, 2024
- January 7, 2025
- February 4, 2025
- March 4, 2025

Member Vagnozzi requested that Staff look to see if there are any other possible locations and bring those back to the next task force meeting in October.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

- a. October 22, 2024, 6:00pm-Township Municipal Building, Town Hall Room, 5151 Marsh Road.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:22pm without objection.