

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
AGENDA**

Wednesday, March 5, 2014

**Town Hall Room
Meridian Municipal Building
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864**

WorkSession

1. Call the work session to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. Approval of the work session agenda
3. Review of the minutes of the January 15, 2014 work session/regular meeting
4. Discussion on 2014 Environmental Stewardship Award nominees
5. Public remarks
6. Adjournment

Regular Meeting

1. Call the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. Approval of the regular meeting agenda
3. Approval of the minutes of the January 15, 2014, work session/regular meeting
4. Green Themes discussion about "Our Common Interests" with Marcia Horan, Chair of East Lansing's Commission on the Environment
5. Public remarks
6. Chair's Report
7. Communications/staff report
8. Approval of 2014 Environmental Stewardship Award recipients
9. Other Business
10. Study groups/liaison reports
11. Public remarks
12. Adjournment

WORK SESSION

PRESENT: Chair Jackson and Commissioners Searl, Anderson, Scherbarth, Kielbaso, Sarver, and Moran (6:42).

ABSENT: None

STAFF

PRESENT: Richard F. Brown, Jr., AICP, Associate Planner

OTHERS

PRESENT: None

1. **CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER**

Chair Jackson called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

2. **APPROVAL OF THE WORK SESSION AGENDA**

The Work Session agenda was approved without objection.

3. **REVIEW OF THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 4, 2013 WORK SESSION AND REGULAR MEETING**

Minor corrections.

4. **OTHER BUSINESS**

Discussed and made revisions to the resolution for Mike Thomas. Discussed the upcoming 2014 visioning session. Commissioner Kielbaso discussed the Environmental Commission's working relationship with the Land Preservation Advisory Board.

5. **PUBLIC REMARKS**

None

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

Work session adjourned without objection at 6:58 p.m.

**CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION MINUTES
Meridian Municipal Building
January 15, 2014 - draft**

REGULAR MEETING

PRESENT: Chair Jackson and Commissioners Moran, Sarver, Anderson, Kielbaso, Scherbarth, and Searl

ABSENT: None

STAFF

PRESENT: Richard F. Brown, Jr., AICP, CBSP Associate Planner

OTHERS

PRESENT: Cynthia Stump and Luba Sitar of ITC Holdings

1. CALL REGULAR MEETING TO ORDER

Chair Jackson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF THE REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

- **MOTION** by Commissioner Kielbaso to approve the agenda. Supported by Commissioner Scherbarth. Approved 7-0.

3. WELCOME OF NEW MEMBERS TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Commissioners Alexander and Sarver introduced themselves.

4. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 4, 2013 WORK SESSION AND REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

- **MOTION** by Commissioner Scherbarth to approve the minutes with corrections. Supported by Commissioner Moran. Approved 7-0.

5. GREEN THEMES PRESENTATION BY CYNTHIA STUMP OF ITC HOLDINGS

Summary of ITC Holdings by Cynthia Stump and Luba Sitar.

6. PUBLIC REMARKS

None

7. CHAIR'S REPORT

Reminded the other Commissioners of the visioning session coming up on February 18th.

8. COMMUNICATIONS/STAFF REPORT

Associate Planner Brown summarized the following:

- He will be working with the ZBA as well as the Environmental Commission starting in February.
- Only one Environmental Stewardship Award nomination has been received to date.
- We are looking for additional Green Theme speakers.

9. **ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2014**

- **Chair** – Nomination of Ned Jackson by Commission Kielbaso, supported by Commissioner Scherbarth. No other nominations received. Approved 7-0.
- **Vice-Chair** – Nomination of James Kielbaso by Commissioner Anderson, supported by Commissioner Moran. Nomination of Jeralyn Moran by Commissioner Kielbaso, supported by Commissioner Sarver. Commissioner Moran approved 4-3.

10. **SELECTION OF LAND PRESERVATION REPRESENTATIVE BY THE CHAIR**

Chair Jackson appointed Commissioner Kielbaso as representative.

11. **RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION FOR MIKE THOMAS**

- **MOTION** by Commissioner Kielbaso to approve the resolution as revised. Supported by Commissioner Scherbarth. Approved 6-0. (Commissioner Alexander was out of the room).

12. **OTHER BUSINESS**

The existing commissioners introduced themselves to the new commissioners.

13. **STUDY GROUPS/LIAISON REPORTS**

The chair will speak with the Chairs of other commissions about this subject at the joint visioning session on February 18th.

14. **PUBLIC REMARKS**

None

15. **ADJOURNMENT**

- **MOTION** by Commissioner Moran to adjourn the Regular Meeting. Supported by Commissioner Anderson. Approved 7-0. Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Preventing the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species to Natural Waterways



Above & Inset: Parrot Feather Watermillfall. Photo credits: Matt Ankney Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

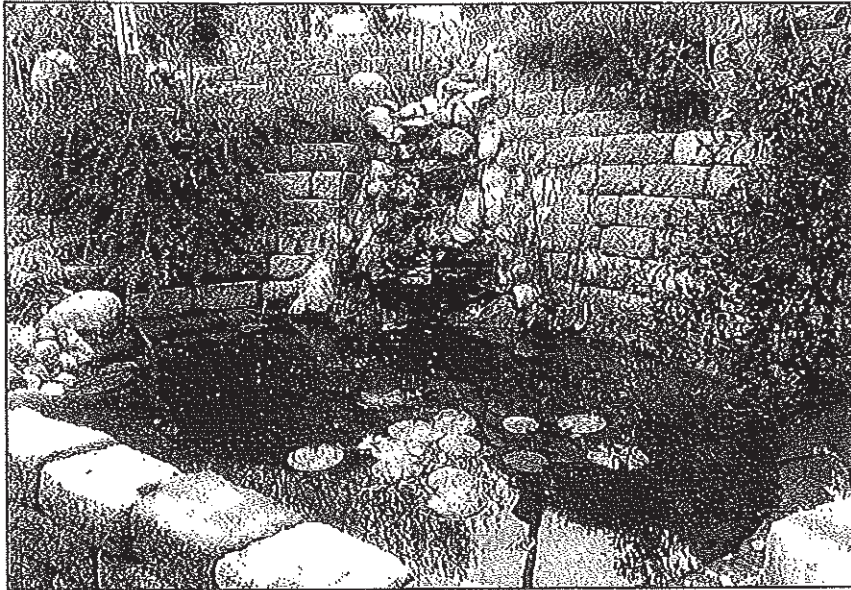
Managing a client's water feature can sometimes mean helping him or her make tough decisions about excess or unwanted aquatic plants, which can propagate and outgrow the feature. The client may be tempted to release excess plants into a ditch, drain, pond or into a natural waterway. Because many popular water feature plants are not native to U.S. waters and even appear on state and federal prohibited species lists, it is important

to guide clients in the responsible disposal of these organisms. Releasing any aquatic organism into the environment is NOT an accepted practice and may even be punishable by law.

Many water garden plants have the potential to become invasive – outcompeting and destroying the rich diversity of native aquatic species. Because they have evolved together, native plants and animals have a symbiotic relationship; they rely on each

other for nutrients, sunlight and water and keep each other in balance so that one species does not dominate the environment.

When non-native plants are introduced into waterways they can become invasive due to an absence of natural controls (predators, disease, climate, etc.) that would normally keep them in check. Exotic, non-native plants have proven over and over again their ability to adapt to colder environments and water temperatures.



A water garden being prepped for winter. Photo credit: Jane Herbert, Michigan State University Extension.

These invaders of our waterways are called Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). They not only negatively impact the aquatic environment; they create negative recreational and economic impacts for individuals, businesses and communities.

A case in point is last summer's discovery of European Frog-bit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*) in the City of Alpena, Michigan's Wildlife Sanctuary—a beautiful 500 acre coastal wetland adjacent to Lake Huron in Michigan's northeastern lower peninsula. Understandably popular with water gardeners, E. Frog-bit is a small but attractive floating plant that looks like a miniature water lily with tiny white flowers. In fact, E. Frog-bit is an aggressive invader that grows in dense floating mats that crowd out native wetland plants. These mats of tough intertwining roots and waxy leaves also shade out submergent aquatic plants. As it spreads, E. Frog-bit creates a monoculture that reduces the diversity and complexity of habitat that native wetland plant communities normally provide to birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians and mammals that utilize wetlands for some or all of their life cycle. E. Frog-bit reproduces vegetatively through the movement of plant parts, limited seed dispersal through fruit development, but most significantly by overwintering buds called turions that break loose from the plant and float to new locations.

As there is no aquatic herbicide proven safe and yet effective in the treatment of E. Frog-bit, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) AIS Early Detection, Rapid Response (EDRR) Unit worked with the city over a two week period to remove by hand over 1,000 pounds of E. Frog-bit from the sanctuary. But according to EDRR Coordinator Matt Ankney, "We barely scratched the surface of the current infestation." Upon further investigation, the MDNR found E. Frog-bit upstream in the Thunder Bay River watershed. Large scale removal efforts are being planned for next spring and summer.

Another Michigan case in point is last fall's discovery of Parrot Feather Watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*) in a storm water detention pond located in Wayne County's Brownstone Township in southeast Michigan. This plant is related to Eurasian Water Milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*)—an aggressive aquatic invasive that has spread across the U.S. and Canada. Parrot Feather is another popular water gardening and aquarium plant with deeply cut, bright blue-green, feathery leaflets. It is one of the few submerged aquatic plants whose stems and leaves extend above the surface of the water. Heavy infestations resemble a forest of tiny fir trees across the surface that shade and crowd out native aquatic plants. Trailing stems, up to 5 feet long, form dense, strangling mats below

the surface.

Again, the MDNR EDRR Unit worked with local government to conduct verification and assessment. This process included a survey of local waters near the detention pond. To date, it appears the Parrot Feather is isolated to the detention pond; however, more intensive survey efforts are being planned for the surrounding area in the spring of 2014.

Following the verification and assessment, MDNR staff developed an initial response plan for eradicating this species from the site. Working cooperatively with the local homeowners' association, the DNR obtained permissions and permits for a late-season herbicide application. Treatment of the Parrot Feather was conducted in early November 2013, funded through a federal grant project. The site will be monitored for treatment efficacy, with any necessary follow-up treatments will begin in spring 2014.

Parrot feather has only been found in the Great Lakes basin in a few previous locations (in Michigan's Oakland County and Indiana's Steuben County). The source of this new infestation is unknown, but it is highly possible that this plant was released into the pond.

What can water gardeners and managers do to help prevent the spread of AIS? For starters, never assume a plant is native to your area. Never assume a plant is harmless or benign. Understand that retail names and descriptions of plants can be misleading. The national Habitattitude Campaign (www.habitattitude.net) recommends the following options for safe disposal:

- Contact retailer for proper handling advice or for possible returns
- Give/trade with only well informed water gardeners
- Donate to a local aquarium society, school, or aquatic business
- Seal aquatic plants in plastic bags and dispose in trash to be landfilled

DO NOT RELEASE water garden plants into the outdoor environment—even if they appear to be dead. **DO NOT COMPOST** water garden plants—even if they appear to be dead.

More than 13 million homes in the United States have water gardens or aquaria. These industries generate more than \$1 billion in the U.S. economy. However,

non-native plants can be very difficult to control once they become established in the environment -- diminishing recreational opportunities, impacting native species and costing billions of dollars to control. The cost of trying to control aquatic invasive species in the U.S. is more than \$100 billion per year, approximately \$1,100 per household according to the national Habitattitude campaign.

Before purchasing non-native plants know which species are prohibited and restricted in your state. Water garden retailers, managers and enthusiasts should know that it is illegal to be in possession of, sell, offer to sell or introduce into the environment prohibited plants and animals and hefty fines may be incurred. State prohibited aquatic plant lists may include such popular water garden and aquaria plants as European Frog-bit, Fanwort, Parrot's feather, Water Hyacinth, Water Lettuce, Yellow floating heart and others along with many fish and snails.

Habitattitude encourages enjoyment of water features AND protection of our lakes, streams and wetlands by offering responsible solutions to the disposal of dead, dying or unwanted aquatic organisms. The campaign also offers tips for



European Frog-bit. Photo Credit Jane Herbert, Michigan State University Extension.

thoughtful planning of your water feature to avoid heartache and the possible spread of AIS. Habitattitude is a national education campaign encouraging proper disposal of exotic plants and animals to protect waterways from AIS. For more information, visit www.habitattitude.net. L&W

by Jane Herbert and Linda Whitlock, Michigan State University Extension

Jane Herbert is a statewide Senior Water Resource Educator and Linda Whitlock is the Kalamazoo County Master Gardener Coordinator for Michigan State University Extension. Jane and Linda develop and deliver education on preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species to natural waterways. They may be contacted at the Kalamazoo County MSUE Office in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Phone: 269-383-8830, Email: jherbert@anr.msu.edu or whitlo13@anr.msu.edu.

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