

**VILLAGE OF SPARTA**  
**Kent County, Michigan**  
**Village Council Meeting**  
**February 12, 2024 at 7:00pm.**  
**75 N. Union St. (Sparta Civic Center)**

**Present:** Council President Whalen, Council Members Brenda Braybrook, Robert Carlstrom, Dave Cumings, Tom Peoples, and Bill Taylor.

**Absent:** Courtney Mais

**Also present:** Village Manager Jim Lower, Police Sgt Dave Price, DPW Director Bill Hunter, Airport Manager Mike Kryciok, and Village Clerk Katy Shelton.

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. **Roll Call:** Formal roll call was taken. Those in attendance/absent are noted above.

**4. Additions or Corrections to Consent and Business Agenda**  
**Consent Agenda:**

a. Approve Regular Village Council Meeting Minutes of January 8. 2024.

b. Approve Fire Board Minutes of January 18. 2024.

c. Approve road closures: Executive Orders 24-01, 24-02, 24-03, 24-04, and 24-05.

No additions or corrections noted.

5. **Approval of Consent and Business Agenda:** Motion by Braybrook with a second by Cumings to approve. Motion passed unanimously.

## **6. Public Comment for Agenda Item:**

Please Note: This Public Comment portion of the meeting is reserved for comment on agenda items. Personal or abusive attacks on Council members, staff members, or other participants will not be tolerated and may result in the Village President taking action, up to and including, having the speaker removed from the meeting by law enforcement officers.

A. Michelle Drissill, 19677 Cherry St. Conklin, asked about the home occupational ordinance as regards hair salons. She was told that her location is in the Township – not the Village, and so she needs to discuss this issue at a Township Board meeting. She mentioned that a change in this ordinance would benefit the Village as well.

## **7. Public Hearing:** Public hearing opened at 7:06pm.

### **a. Community Input on Possible Zoning/Code**

#### **Changes:**

Marv Bradford, 12538 Sparta Avenue, dba MRB Rentals: Asked what the benefit would be if his property was included in the proposed Commercial District. He was advised to open his discussion later in the meeting when this issue was being discussed.

Mary Kaiser, 300 Bob's Parkway, Sparta. She asked about the issue of campers being in residential backyards. She was told that a change in the ordinance had been made several years ago to allow for that. She disagrees with that decision.

Jim Kaiser, 300 Bob's Parkway, Sparta. He believes that we're lowering the standards for the Village and not raising them. He said that code violations are still frequently happening. He said that the idea of "educating" the residents on the code violations versus actually enforcing the violations was not working. Public hearing closed at 7:12pm.

**b. Res 24-03: A resolution establishing an industrial development district (IDD).** Public hearing opened at 7:12pm. This is development involving a new building or an addition to an

existing building. There must be an industrial district established first. It was noted that none of these new districts would include any tax credits – there were merely establishing geographical districts. An IDD designation then allows the business to be eligible for an IDD tax credit. There were no comments from the public. Public hearing closed at 7:14pm.

c. **Res 24-04: A resolution establishing a plant rehabilitation district.** Public hearing opened at 7:14pm. This involves the rehabilitation of obsolete buildings. There were no comments from the public. Public hearing closed at 7:16pm.

d. **Res 24-05: A resolution establishing a commercial development district.** Public hearing opened at 7:16pm. Village Manager Lower stated that establishing a commercial development doesn't actively do anything. It's only when a property owner asks to be included in the program that it would come into play. It will be a time and money savings for the Village in that the Village won't have to designate each parcel individually as the owner requests to be included. If they are located within the district, there are already so designated. Council member Braybrook asked about older legacy buildings that have been zoned as being commercial. It was noted that this district will only include the west side of North State St.

Marv Bradford, 12538 Sparta Ave, Sparta. He asked what the establishment of this district means for him.

Richard Gauw, 353 N State St, Sparta. He asked who is responsible for requesting a zoning variance – the seller or the buyer of a property. He was told that it's the buyer's responsibility.

Terry Hartman, 95 Ecklund, Sparta. He said that the parcels appear to be very small in size in the commercial development district. He asked if there was a minimum lot size to be zoned commercial.

Public hearing closed at 7:26pm.

## **8. Old Business**

a. None.

## **9. New Business:**

**a. Res 24-03: A resolution establishing an industrial development district (IDD):** This resolution establishes an industrial redevelopment district for the property between Division and Hickory Streets with Aspen and Prospect as the West and East borders respectively. It was noted that an IDD is for new industrial construction. Motion to approve by Carlstrom with a second by Braybrook. Motion passed unanimously.

**b. Res 24-04: A resolution establishing a plant rehabilitation district (PRD).** This resolution establishes a plant rehabilitation district for the parcel directly south of the IDD which was considered above in “a”. It is necessary that the buildings have a need for serious rehabilitation and have been the subject of enforcement activities by the Village in recent years past. It was noted that a PRD is for the rehabilitation of blighted and obsolete industrial facilities. Motion to approve by Cumings with a second by Carlstrom. Motion passed unanimously.

**c. Res 24-05: A resolution establishing a commercial development district.** This resolution will make all legally eligible property in our downtown/commercial district eligible for possible tax abatements. Establishing a broad district saves the Village time and money on potential future requests and makes the program available to the widest possible set of property owners. Individual property owners would need to make significant investments in their building and seek approval from the Village in order to qualify for the credit. Motion by Braybrook with a second by Taylor to approve. Motion passed unanimously.

Question by Council member Carlstrom: What if a parcel is zoned incorrectly ? For example, industrial instead of commercial. Village Manager Lower will look into this. He said that was one of the reasons he'd like to combine

those two zoning classifications into one. He also said that we can amend this district to add or delete a particular area.

**d. Centennial and Washington storm sewer and street**

**bid:** Village Manager Lower reported that the bids came in over the budgeted amount. Council member Carlstrom stated that we first started discussing this location two years ago, which might account for the higher bids. Village Manager Lower said that there was a legitimate sewer aspect to this product, so the funding source (43% from the sewer fund and 57% from the local streets fund) was appropriate. He said that the existing water lines (from 2001-2004) were in decent shape. He was asked if they'd been checked for lead abatement. Council member Braybrook asked if this project would help with flooding on Washington. The Village Manager said that it would not. Motion by Taylor with a second by Peoples to approve awarding the contract to Dan's Excavating in a not to exceed amount of \$586,810. Motion passed unanimously.

**e. Vector Truck Purchase Authority:** The problem is that, right now, if we have a sewer backup, we're at the mercy of private companies. We have to adhere to their time frames. The purchase of a vector truck will put our DPW in a position to do more work "in house" and deliver services faster and better. It will ultimately be a cost savings for the Village as well. We can also use it to clean out storm sewers. Village Manager Lower and DPW Director Hunter have been working together on finding an appropriate truck. Motion by Peoples with a second by Cumings to authorize the Village Manager to spend up to \$200,000 on a vector truck. Motion passed unanimously.

**f. Authorize Letter of Understanding (LOU) with the**

**police union:** The police union has requested a provision be added to their contract that explains the new retirement healthcare option the Village implemented last year. This

LOU doesn't do much more than lock in the changes the Village made in the police union contract. Motion by Carlstrom with a second by Braybrook to approve. Motion passed unanimously.

**g. Codify Emergency Expenditure Sewer Plant:** As a result of a malfunctioning of the primary clarifier's rack arm, significant remedies had to be undertaken. This included the expenditure of \$39,800 to Plumber Environmental for urgent repair services. This item approves that emergency purchase of services for that amount and authorizes the team to execute the necessary documents. Motion by Carlstrom with a second by Cumings to approve. Motion passed unanimously. Council member Carlstrom asked DPW Director Hunter if we can put together a plan about what to do in an emergency before the Village purchases a vactor truck. The DPW director said yes because it's a matter of when and not if this situation will come up again.

**10. Village Manager and Department Reports:**

a. All had nothing to add other than their previously submitted reports.

**11. Communications:**

a. Invite to Chamber Mardi Gras Night: This will be March 11<sup>th</sup> from 4:30p-8p at the Chamber offices. It was noted that the regularly scheduled Village Council meeting will be that night at 7pm.

**12. Payments of Bills:**

January Payables

PAYABLES	
(101) General Fund	\$104,546.02

(202) Major Street Fund	\$4,759.51
(203) Local Street Fund	\$11,810.75
(581) Airport	\$6,451.12
(590) Sewer Department Fund	\$91,443.82
(591) Water Department Fund	\$41,604.50
(661) Equipment Rental Fund	\$48,126.23
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$308,741.95</b>

Informational:

(206) Fire Department	\$4,547.33
(208) SRA Park Fund	\$225.05
(248) Downtown Development Authority	\$7,394.66
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,167.04</b>

Motion by Taylor with a second by Peoples to approve the payment of bills in the amount of \$308,741.95. Motion passed unanimously.

**13. Public Comment:**

a. Marv Bradford asked if the fence between the park and Park Lane could be stained as it looks unkempt. He was told that that will be done. It was asked how a resident gets an ordinance changed ? The resident needs to come to a Village Council meeting to discuss the issue.

Richard Gauw asked about the sidewalk near 353 Mark St. He said that the gas company came in several years ago and tore up the sidewalk while installing a gas line. He said that the sidewalk is still in disrepair. He also commented on the speed limit on N State St near the Sports Park. He said that he had contacted MDOT about moving the 35mph speed limit sign north up to O'Connor to hopefully slow down traffic south of that sign.

It was asked if anyone was in charge of code enforcement right now. For example, if someone has a really bad yard, does anyone in the Village address that. The answer is yes, the Village is responsible for those things – under the aegis of the police department. Sgt Price is in charge of those issues. It was noted that during the winter, yard violations are not really addressed due to the presence of snow. Most code enforcement in the winter focuses on plowing sidewalks and driveways. If a resident has an issue, he or she needs to call the Village office first. They may also go on the Village website where there is an area to send a message.

#### **14. Council Member Announcements:**

a. Council President Whalen mentioned that the Village Manager's year review is due. That will be discussed at the next Village Council meeting.

**15. Adjournment:** The meeting with adjourned by President Whalen at 8:03pm.



Submitted by Katy Shelton, Village Clerk.