

**VILLAGE OF SPARTA**  
Kent County, Michigan  
**Village Council Meeting**  
**Monday March 13, 2023 at 7:00 PM**  
**75 N. Union St. (Sparta Civic Center)**

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

**Absent:** Brenda Braybrook

**Also present:** Village Manager Jim Lower, Police Chief Andy Milanowski, Sgt Dave Price, 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 members in attendance/absent are noted above.
4. **Additions or Corrections to Consent and Business Agenda**  
Consent Agenda:
  - a. Approve Closed Session Village Council Meeting Minutes of January 7, 2023
  - b. Approve Regular Village Council Meeting Minutes of February 13, 2023
  - c. Approve Regular Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of February 6, 2023
  - d. Approve Regular Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of March 6, 2023
  - e. Approve Downtown Development Authority Meeting Minutes February 14, 2023
  - f. Approve Fire Authority Meeting Minutes March 23, 2023
  - g. Approve Executive Orders 23-01 thru 23-07 ORDERS APPROVING CLOSING CERTAIN STREETS FOR VARIOUS VILLAGE FESTIVALS  
Correction: Item a (approve closed session Village Council Meeting Minutes of January 7, 2023) has an incorrect date. The correct date is January 30, 2023.
5. **Approval of Consent and Business Agenda**  
With the above correction, motion by Carlstrom with a second by Cumings to approve the agenda. 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. None.

7. **Public Hearing**

a. None

8. **Old Business**

a. None

9. **New Business**

a. **Safe Routes to School Engineering Agreement:** The Village has been awarded about \$530,000 for sidewalk improvements under the Safe Routes to School grant program. This goal of these improvements is to make sidewalks and pathways which access schools (K-8) safer and more attractive for users including those with disabilities. The emphasis will be on encouraging people to walk and bike rather than drive cars. As part of the grant, the Village of Sparta will be required to pay the engineering portion of the project. Prein and Newhoff submitted a bid for \$78,000 which has been determined to be a fair cost. The Village Manager is in discussion with the Township to pay 25% of the engineering costs and with the school system to pay 50% of the costs.

Council members asked about the possibility of an island on State St as well as questioning who will maintain the sidewalks which are on school property – the schools or the Village. Motion by Cumings with a second by Taylor to approve the proposal from Prein and Newhof in an amount not to exceed \$78,000, and to authorize the Village Manager to execute cost sharing agreements with Sparta Township and the Sparta Area Schools. Motion passed unanimously.

b. **Flow Monitoring Study/Report:** Kevin Koster from Prein and Newhof discussed the “Sanitary Sewer Flow Monitoring Study: Wastewater Collection System Inflow/Infiltration Analysis report which was submitted to the Village March 2023. He gave a brief overview of the Wastewater and Sewer systems in Sparta and answered Council Members questions. It was noted that most of Sparta is sitting on a clay substrate which means that the ground above it gets saturated very easily. Therefore, the soil is either very dry or very wet.

c. **DPW Contract Approvals: Spring Clean-up, Weed Control, Portable Toilets:** DPW Supervisor Dennis Brinks solicited bids on each of these

projects. The Council chose to discuss and vote on each of these individually.

1. **Spring Clean-up:** This will occur April 20, 21, and 22 of this year. Although four companies were approached to bid this project, only one, Pitsch Companies, submitted a bid. They handled the project last year, and their prices for this year are the same. Motion by Cumings with a second by Taylor to award the project to Pitsch Companies. Two council members, Robert Carlstrom and Tom Peoples opposed this motion. They both felt that Village residents pay an unfairly high percentage of this cost since they are taxed both as Village residents and as Township residents. They believe that the Spring Clean-up cost should be borne solely by the Township. Motion passed 4:2.
2. **Fertilizing and Weed Control:** Three companies submitted bids. Superior Fertilizing and Lawn Maintenance was deemed to have the best proposal. Motion by Taylor with a second by Mais to approve awarding this project to Superior in an amount not to exceed \$2244.37. Motion passed unanimously.
3. **Portable restrooms:** Two companies submitted bids, Plummers and Kerkstra. The Village has used Plummers in the past and has been very satisfied with their performance. Motion by Carlstrom with a second by Mais to approve awarding this project to Plummers. Motion passed unanimously.
- d. **DPW Truck #1 dump box replacement:** Truck #1's dump box is beyond repair. The truck itself is in decent shape. The Village can obtain a new box, frame, and hoist from MiDeal to replace the current one. This new one will outlast the life of the truck and can be moved to a future truck once that becomes necessary. MiDeal will ensure that we receive the lowest possible price. Motion by Cumings with a second by Peoples to approve the proposal to replace truck #1's dump box, frame, and hoist at a cost not to exceed \$31,135. Motion passed unanimously.
- e. **Police Fleet (in car) & Body Cam Upgrade Purchase Agreement:** Chief Milanowski and Sgt Price discussed this proposal and answered Council questions. They reported that the cameras in the police cars and the ones that the officers wear are long overdue for an upgrade. Technology for these devices has advanced dramatically in recent years. This proposal would bring the police department's camera equipment in line with what nearly all other Kent County police agencies use. It will also allow our police department to "sync up" directly with other agencies which will make our police officers safer and add transparency to our residents. Motion by Carlstrom with a second by Mais to approve the Axom Enterprise Inc Fleet Vehicle agreement for three vehicles not to exceed a total cost of \$36,853.20 over a five year period. Motion passed unanimously. Motion by Taylor with a second by Cumings to approve the

Axom Enterprise Inc Body Cam agreement not to exceed a total cost of \$34,103.60 over a five year period. Motion passed unanimously.

- f. **Civic Center Rental Agreement:** The Village has been in communication with Sparts Township and the Historical Commission regarding the lease of space formerly occupied by the American Legion in the Civic Center. The plan is for the Historical Commission to use the leased space for a Sparta Military History Museum. If approved, the Historical Commission will tour similar museums in Cedar Springs and Grandville to see their set ups. Village Manager Lower reported that the Township ratified this agreement at their last Board meeting. President Whalen reported that the Historical Commission has agreed to the terms of the lease. The proposed lease would be for a one year period, renewable annually for up to five years with both parties' consent. The lease also contains a standard 90 day "out" clause for both parties. The Village would derive \$100 monthly for the lease of the space to be paid in an annual lump sum. It was noted that the American Legion has not yet been technically dissolved. Once that happens, the Historical Commission will take over that space. Motion by Taylor with a second by Carlstrom to approve the lease agreement and authorize appropriate signatures. Motion passed unanimously.

- 10. Village Manager & Department Reports:** The Village Manager discussed the Village Master Plan's progress as well as the progress of the Parks Master Plan. He said that he had met with the Master Plan Rewrite Committee. There was a question as to whether the SRA Sports Park should be included in this since it's owned by the Township. It was noted that it's very important that the Village get a Parks Master Plan completed as quickly as possible since we cannot apply for any grants without one.

The recent discharge by a property owner of red dye into Village storm sewers was discussed. The DPW is tracking this. The owner of the property was cited for a prohibited discharge into a storm sewer. The violated ordinance also allows for a cost recovery. This incident will quite likely end up in court.

Council members asked why IAI (Infrastructure Alternatives Inc) has not been attending any Council meetings lately. The Village Manager reported that he recently had a good meeting with them, and he will find out why they have not been in attendance at any recent meetings. Their contract comes up in May. It was the consensus of the Council that they have a one year contract due to all the projects going on.

Council member Carlstrom had a number of questions on the recent Village payables which involve the DPW. He also wondered why so many public works projects have been farmed out versus having the Village DPW complete them. It

was suggested by President Whalen that the Council have a separate meeting with Public Works Supervisor Dennis Brinks in order to go over Council concerns.

The search for a new airport manager continues. The job was posted several weeks ago. The Village Manager as well as the current airport manager, Marty Coaker, are reviewing the applicants and will update the Council at the next regular meeting.

**11. Communications**

- a. **Set date for goal setting meeting with Manager/Council:** This will be held March 27, 2023 at 5pm at the Village Hall. President Whalen requested that Council Members bring their three top goals to the meeting.
- b. **Rouge River Flats Development Inquiry:** This involves an apartment complex located near Sparta Manor. The Village Manager was recently approached by the developer. The site plan was approved last year, but they do not have funding for the project. The developer was asking if the Village would be willing to grant them a tax abatement. If so, they would then offer low income housing. When this proposal came to the Planning Commission last year, the Commission expressly said that they did not want this project to involve low income housing. The Council’s opinion was since this is not a commercial or industrial project, that it’s not appropriate to offer the developer a tax abatement. The consensus of the Council was to say no to this proposal.

**12. Payment of Bills**

**February Payables**

PAYABLES	
(101) General Fund	\$109,595.70
(202) Major Street Fund	\$12,613.17
(203) Local Street Fund	\$9,572.36
(581) Airport	\$21,145.01
(590) Sewer Department Fund	\$66,567.14
(591) Water Department Fund	\$50,409.84
(661) Equipment Rental Fund	\$17,940.26
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$287,843.48</b>

Informational:

(206) Fire Department	\$24,488.32
(208) SRA Park Fund	\$329.64
(248) Downtown Development Authority	\$6,469.90
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$31,287.86</b>

Motion by Mais with a second by Carlstrom to approve the payment of bills in the amount of \$287,843.48. Motion passed unanimously.

**13. Public Comment:** Jim Lynema, 291 Doris, Sparta, had several comments. Regarding the Village parks, he said that he hoped that the Village kept the small parks and fields when the Parks Master Plan is revised because they are so family oriented. He said the SRA Sports Park is great – however it’s away from the center of the Village. He also had a question about the water treatment plant. He wondered if the flow meter report will produce enough information to justify what it cost to produce the report. He also requested that the March 27<sup>th</sup> meeting be publicized so that Village residents will know that the Council is meeting. President Whalen assured him that the meeting will be publicized appropriately.

**14. Council Member Announcements:** President Whalen brought up the subject of the need for additional parking in the Village. He said that Balyeat Field, which is used for soccer as well as for Town and Country events, could possibly be used for parking on its northern and eastern sides. It was noted that the field lies on a flood plain and is often very wet. Kent County will be approached to see if we could drain some of that water into Nash Creek. Creating parking in Balyeat would help alleviate the congestion in the downtown area. Other advantages would be that Town and Country activities could be expanded, the yearly carnival could be held there, a walking trail could be created which connected to Rogers Park and then onto the Sports Park, and that fireworks could still be held there.

Council Member Carlstrom responded to Jim Lynema that a lot of good information did result from the Flow Report.

**15. Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned by President Whalen at 9:01pm.