

VILLAGE OF SPARTA
Kent County, Michigan
Village Council Meeting
Monday, April 8, 2024 at 7:00 PM
75 N. Union St. (Sparta Civic Center)

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

Absent: Courtney Mais

Also present: Village Manager Jim Lower, DPW Supervisor Bill Hunter, Police Chief Andy Milanowski, Police Sgt Dave Price, Airport Manager Mike Kryciok, and Joe Benjamin and Maddie Tatara from Fleis & Vandenbrink.

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 March 11, 2024
 - b. Approve Fire Board Minutes of March 21, 2024No additions or corrections
5. **Approval of Consent and Business Agenda:** Motion by Carlstrom with a second by Braybrook 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.

None.

7. Public Hearing

- a. Res. 24-12 A resolution approving a commercial redevelopment certificate application for JNJ Investments at 209 E Division St:** Public hearing opened at 7:02pm. This is being developed by the Knaufs and is the old dry cleaner building. No public comment. Public hearing closed at 7:03pm.
- b. Res. 24-13 A resolution approving a commercial redevelopment certificate application for JNJ Investments at 220/228 E Division St:** Public hearing opened at 7:03pm. This is being developed by the Knaufs and is the old Jimmy O's building. No public comment. Public hearing closed at 7:04pm.
- c. Res. 24-14 A resolution adopting a final project planning document for wastewater system improvements and designating an authorized project representative:** Public hearing opened at 7:04pm. This resolution is a vehicle for the Village to start the process for applying for funding. It does not commit the Village to anything. The project is expected to cost around \$19,000,000. No public comment. Public hearing closed at 7:06pm.

8. Old Business

- a. None.

9. New Business

- a. Res. 24-12 A resolution approving a commercial redevelopment certificate application for JNJ Investments at 209 E Division St:** JNJ Investments (Jim and Janet Knauf) is investing \$260,000 into the old dry cleaning property at this address. It will become a beauty salon where additional services such as light therapy and tanning will be offered to customers. The Knaufs are asking for a Commercial Redevelopment tax credit for this project, and are asking for the full 10 year duration. If approved, the certificates will functionally lock the taxable value of the property in question at what it is currently paying to the village, township, and county. Sparta Area Schools and the State Education Tax would still apply to the new value. However, the village, township, and county would not see an increase in taxes until the exemption expires. After some discussion on the length of the exemption, motion by Braybrook with a second by Peoples to approve a five year exemption with language in the certificate that would allow for the abatement to be extended if the Knauf's demonstrate financial hardship or need. Motion passed unanimously. Village Manager Lower will begin drafting the certificate.
- b. Res. 24-13 A resolution approving a commercial redevelopment certificate application for JNJ Investments at 220/228 E Division St:** JNJ Investments (Jim and Janet Knauf) is investing a substantial sum to renovate the old Jimmy O's building. It was house four new commercial suites on the ground floor and three new apartments upstairs. The Knaufs are asking for a Commercial Redevelopment tax credit for this project, and are asking for the full 10 year duration. If approved, the certificates will functionally lock the taxable value of the property in question at what it is currently paying to the village, township, and county. Sparta Area Schools and the State Education Tax would still apply to the new value.

However, the village, township, and county would not see an increase in taxes until the exemption expires. After some discussion on the length of the exemption, motion by Peoples with a second by Braybrook to approve a five year exemption with language in the certificate that would allow for the abatement to be extended if the Knauf's demonstrate financial hardship or need. Motion passed unanimously. Village Manager Lower will begin drafting the certificate.

- c. Res. 24-14 A resolution adopting a final project planning document for wastewater system improvements and designating an authorized project representative:** Joe Benjamin and Maddie Tatara from Fleis & Vandebrook Engineers were present to discuss this. They gave a presentation with handouts to describe the results and took questions from the Council. In order to apply for state funding support, it is required to have a public meeting/discussion on the plan and to pass this resolution.

Assuming the Village is able to reach an agreement with Old Orchard, the total upgrades will cost an estimated \$18,957,000. The Village would require Old Orchard to pay for the upgrades specific to their waste as well as ongoing treatment costs. If the plan ultimately does not include Old Orchard, the Village will be looking at an approximately \$11,000,000 project. The Village intends to fund this project through a mixture of grants, state/federal support, and low interest loans, The final financing plan is still being worked on and will develop as the project moves forward. The approval of this resolution by the Council will allow the Village to seek the state level loans and grants.

The work on the WW Treatment Plant is necessary to upgrade the equipment and increase the processing

capacity at the plant due to the growth in the Village and the age of some of the components.

President Whalen praised Council Member Carlstrom for his knowledge and abilities in these types of projects. He said that his input has been invaluable. He also praised Joe Benjamin for his work on the project. Motion by Cumings with a second by Carlstrom to approve the resolution. Motion passed unanimously.

- d. Res. 24-15 A Resolution authorizing the Village Manager to sign MDOT Sponsor Contracts:** MDOT has recently changed its requirements for signing contracts. Previously, a resolution was required for each individual airport grant project authorizing an individual to sign on behalf of the Village/Airport. Now, a blanket resolution authorizing an individual to sign these contracts is allowed. This resolution designates the Village Manager as the authorized signer for MDOT sponsor contracts. Motion by People with a second by Carlstrom to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
- e. Special Land Use Application- 379 N. State St. in Home Daycare:** The owners of this property are planning to run a state licensed in-home day care center. The Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing regarding the application. NO opposing comments were received at the hearing. The Planning Commission voted to recommend approval to the Village Council unanimously. Motion by Braybrook with a second by Cumings to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
- f. Street Sweeper Purchase Authorization:** Since 2017, the Village has spent \$134,127 on street sweeping. The proposal for 2024 is over \$20,500 for 1 parking lot cleaning and a spring and fall street sweeping. This is a large amount of money for not much activity. It also does not include sweeping done as needed ahead of events. Emergency call

outs cost \$225 an hour and additional sweeping is \$210 an hour. If the Village has its own sweeper, that will not only save money but also allow us to do more sweeping. More sweeping will help improve water quality and the overall look of the Village. The Village has also used contracted sweeping services to help with spills in the past. Having its own street sweeper will help with the response times in these scenarios. The Village Manager said that used sweepers often sell at auction for a very reasonable price. This resolution authorizes the Village Manager to spend up to \$65,000 on the purchase of a street sweeper. Motion by Peoples with a second by Carlstrom to approve. Motion passed unanimously.

g. Code Enforcement Plan: Based on recent code enforcement activity and the public's reaction to it, most code enforcement was paused in December 2023. Since then, Police Sgt Price has been doing most of the day to day code enforcing. The Village Manager and staff have put together an action plan that addresses how the Village will go forward with the enforcing of the Village's codes and ordinances. Hopefully, this plan will yield the desired results of the council and the community. It will focus the Village's code enforcement efforts on the right targets, provide proper daily oversight of code enforcement activities, and allow the Village to maximize the use of staff resources it already has in order to get the desired results. The Village Manager prepared a hand out detailing the action plan which included priorities and objectives, the various roles that will be involved in the plan, and the prioritization of code enforcement issues. The consensus of the Council was to move forward with this plan.

h. Lot Sale or Split Discussion: Habitat for Humanity recently approached the Village regarding the lot at 92 State Street which is owned by the Village. They would like to build a

house there. The consensus of the Council was to authorize the Village Manager to enter into negotiations with Habitat for Humanity regarding a purchase agreement.

10. Village Manager & Department Reports: Airport Manager Krzciok said that the airport was bringing back the mud races. It was mentioned that Police Officer Caleb Jones will be receiving a life saving award on April 27th through Kent County.

11. Communications: None.

12. Payment of Bills

March Payables

PAYABLES	
(101) General Fund	\$122,163.17
(202) Major Street Fund	\$2,540.72
(203) Local Street Fund	\$3,470.21
(581) Airport	\$17,323.70
(590) Sewer Department Fund	\$140,685.57
(591) Water Department Fund	\$31,279.51
(661) Equipment Rental Fund	\$210,648.25
Total	\$528,111.13

Informational:

(206) Fire Department	\$6,965.35
(208) SRA Park Fund	\$217.20
(248) Downtown Development Authority	\$8,967.78
Total	\$16,150.33

Motion by Taylor with a second by Braybrook authorizing the payment of bills in the amount of \$528,111.13. Motion passed unanimously.

13. **Public Comment:** None.

14. **Council Member Announcements:** None.

15. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 8:56pm by President Whalen.

Submitted by Village Clerk Katy Shelton.