

**VILLAGE OF SPARTA**  
Kent County, Michigan  
**Village Council Meeting**  
**Monday April 10, 2023 at 7:00 PM**  
**75 N. Union St. (Sparta Civic Center)**

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

**Also present:** Village Manager Jim Lower, DPW Supervisor Dennis Brinks, Finance Director David Carpenter, Airport Manager Marty Coaker, Police Chief Milanowski, and Village Clerk Katy Shelton.

**Absent:** None.

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 13, 2023
  - b. Approve Special Village Council Meeting Minutes of March 30, 2023
  - c. DDA Minutes March 28, 2023
  - d. Fire Board Minutes
  - e. DDA Appointment- Tim Driscoll
  - f. Shorty's monument agreement with Sparta Twp.

Note: the council added item "m: compensation for other board meetings and sub meetings" to New Business.

5. **Approval of Consent and Business Agenda:** With the addition of the above item m, motion by Carlstrom with a second by Braybrook to approve the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

6. **Public Comment for Agenda Items:**

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. **Old Business:**

a. None

8. **New Business:** Note: Council decided to discuss item L (which concerns rezoning the Cascade Die Casting property) first due to representatives from that business being present.)

**I. Ord 23-04 An ordinance to amend – Chapter 82 Zoning:**

**Zoning Map:** This is a request to rezone the Cascade Die Casting property from GC to L1. This makes sense and is consistent with the historic use of the property, the zoning district, and long term plans. A public hearing was previously held on this issue. Motion by Braybrook with a second by Carlstrom to approve. Motion passed unanimously.

a. **Airport Lease Agreement:** A request was made to the airport to amend two ground leases to allow the joining of two large hangars. The ground lease lessees work together frequently, and the relationship is already established along with an outstanding relationship with the airport. The Village attorney reviewed this agreement and both the attorney and the airport committee believe this is a good agreement. Motion by Cumings with a second by Mais to approve the amended land lease agreements and building plans for Gordon Gilchrist and

Aaron Sedine and authorize appropriate signatures. Motion passed unanimously.

- b. Airport Manager Reclassification:** Due to the recent search for a new airport manager, it is evident that the salary level needs to be increased along with adding a health care plan. The airport manager's position has never been reclassified as full time by the Village Council. However, due to the fact that several expensive projects at the airport are coming up that will require full time supervision at the airport, we now need to have a formal full time airport manager. This will accomplish two things: it will continue the growth and momentum at the airport and attract and retain a well-qualified airport manager.

Due to the increase in salary and a full-time benefits package, this will increase the expenses of the airport budget by approximately \$32,000 annually. The Village Manager has been in discussions with the Village finance director and the current airport manager, and he is confident that the airport fund can absorb this increased cost. The Village Manager has also identified a top tier candidate for this position who would by far be the most professional and experienced manager the airport has ever had. This reclassification of the position is necessary in order for this candidate to accept this position. Motion by Mais with a second by Braybrook to approve a motion to reclassify the airport manager position as permanent full time with a full Village benefits package. Motion passed unanimously.

Council President Whalen also wanted it noted that the current airport manager Marty Coaker has done an outstanding job for the Village, and that he is very much appreciated.

- c. DPW Vehicle & Kubota Purchase:** The Village budgeted \$40,000 for a Kubota replacement as part of CIP this fiscal year. Unfortunately, the Kubota we want cannot even be ordered right now due to backlogs. The Village Manager would like to shift this purchase into FY2024 in the CIP and pull the truck that was budgeted for \$40,000 in FY2024 forward to put in

place of the Kubota. Motion by Braybrook with a second by Cumings to authorize the Village Manager to purchase the two vehicles and attachments as described in his memo for a total cost not to exceed \$90,000 between the two vehicles and attachments. Motion passed unanimously.

**d. Water Shut-off Policy Adjustment (Lead & Copper Rule):**

This issue arises because of a non funded mandate by the state to inspect all properties for lead and copper pipes. During the Covid pandemic, the Village Council placed a moratorium on water shut-offs due to non payment of the bill. This policy has not caused much of a problem because the overdue amount goes onto the tax bills if it goes past a certain date. Finance Director Carpenter has stated that the non-payments have normalized back to pre-2021 levels even with the water shut-off moratorium in place.

However, the Village might need to lift the moratorium in order to accomplish all of the home inspections that need to be done. Some homeowners are not allowing access to their homes by Village DPW staff for the purpose of inspecting the pipes. In order to gain entry for inspection, the Village DPW needs to be able to threaten and follow through on water shut offs for the properties in question. Any such shut offs will have to be approved by the Village Manager prior to action being taken. The simplest way to go forward would be for the Council to lift the shut off moratorium. DPW Supervisor Brinks stated that his department has tried repeatedly to educate the public by leaving door hangers and other information on the homes with no result. Council requested that any home owners who will be affected by this action be notified by certified mail. The Village Manager agreed to do this. Motion by Mais with a second by Carlstrom to remove the Village's moratorium on water shut offs immediately. Motion passed 6:1 with President Whalen opposed.

**e. Village Hall Hours & Personnel Manual Updates:** It is proposed that the Village office staff go to a four day work week schedule: Mon-Thur from 7:30-5:30 effective May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023.

This will bring the Village office into alignment with the Township office which has a similar schedule. The Village Manager will make sure that the public is informed via social media, Sparta Today, public postings, and so forth. The Village personnel manual will need to be updated to reflect this change as it applies to holidays and employee time off. The Village office will be closed on Fridays although the Code Enforcement officer will continue to work in the office as needed on Fridays. The Village Manager stated that he's discussed this issue with the Village office staff, and that they are on board with this change. Motion by Peoples with a second by Carlstrom to approve this change. Motion passed unanimously.

- f. **IAI Agreement:** The Village's agreement with IAI is set to expire on May 1, 2023. In the interest of protecting the public's tax dollars, there is interest among council members in putting these services out to bid in the future as well as possibly doing many of them in house after the sewer plant upgrades are completed or in progress. In light of this, the Village Manager, along with the Utilities committee, have worked out a two year extension with IAI. This will allow the Village the opportunity to maintain continuity during this period of sewer plant work. It will also give the Village the needed time to look at other options. Motion by Cumings with second by Braybrook to approve this agreement. Motion passed unanimously.
- g. **Res. 23-02 A resolution to add & delete certified streets:** This resolution adds a street to the official list of streets with MDOT. This will result in an increase in state funding. The resolution also deletes two small sections of streets that are no longer part of the Village's street system. Taken together, there is a net increase in Village streets which should result in a net increase in funding. This resolution affects Homestead Acres, Mark Street, and Doris Street. Motion by Mais with a second by Braybrook to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
- h. **Res. 23-03 A resolution to appoint Village Manager James A. Lower as street administrator:** During the Village Manager transition, the Council named DPW Supervisor Brinks as the Street Administrator. This resolution will name the Village

Manager as the Street Administrator, which is standard in most municipalities. Motion by Braybrook with a second by Peoples to approve this resolution. Motion passed unanimously.

- i. **Res. 23-04 A resolution to adopt council member/appointee email & computer policy:** This resolution creates a computer policy for council members and appointed officials. This policy is designed to allow for computers to be provided to other such officials as the Council deems necessary in the future. Motion by Mais with a second by Braybrook to approve this resolution. Motion passed unanimously.
- j. **Ord. 23-02 An ordinance to repeal – Chapter 10 Animals:** The Village needs to repeal the current animal control ordinance to allow for enforcement of the Kent County animal Control ordinance in the Village of Sparta. The Planning Commission has previously held a public hearing on this issue and recommended that the Village Council adopt it. Motion by Braybrook with a second by Mais to approve this ordinance. Motion passed unanimously.
- k. **Ord. 23-03 An ordinance to amend – Chapter 82 Zoning: Keeping of Animals:** After repealing the animal control ordinance, the Village needs to rehouse the sections related to the keeping of chickens and other animals in our zoning ordinance. This ordinance does that. The Planning Commission has previously held a public hearing on this issue and recommended that the Village Council adopt it. Motion by Braybrook with a second by Mais to approve this ordinance. Motion passed unanimously.
- l. Moved to the beginning of the new business.
- m. **Compensation for other board meetings and sub meetings:** Village President Whalen stated that Council members' compensation has remained the same for the past 20-25 years. He'd like to see it increased to a level similar to Township board member compensation. He'd also like to see sub committee board members compensated for attending meetings. The consensus of the Council was to approve this with Council members Braybrook and Taylor being opposed. The Village Manager will check to see if this needs to be a resolution or an

ordinance. If the Council votes for this increased compensation, it would go into effect at the next council member's election. In other words, it would not increase current Council members' compensation.

**9. Village Manager & Department Reports:** Police Chief Milanowski said that he is working to get the traffic speed machine fixed. (This gives the speed as a vehicle drives by it.) He was asked what it would cost to add lights if the vehicle was speeding. He'll check on that. Airport Manager Coaker said that this is his last two weeks. He also introduced the recently hired assistant manager Alex\_Warner.

**10. Communications**

- a. Special Village Council Meeting May 1<sup>st</sup> at 5pm. (this is a joint meeting with the Township). This is to go over the Village Master Plan with an emphasis on annexation.
- b. Airport Hanger Build-Loan Options: We have a mechanic who needs space as well as several other people interested in renting hangers at the airport. Finance Director Carpenter and Village Manager Lower will be meeting with the USDA to pursue low interest loan options for both the airport and Balyeat Field. Airport Manager Coaker highly supports this. He said that USDA loans have a solid history and very good interest rates. He also said that having an on site mechanic would make the Airport even more attractive than it already is. It will also increase fuel sales.
- c. Bayleat Field-Loan Options: The general idea is to repurpose Bayleat Field to include a larger parking area and to turn it into more of a fairground area. Right now, Bayleat is underutilized. It is hoped that with these changes, public use will increase. The two soccer fields that are currently in Bayleat Field will remain. The Village is working with Ken Yonkers from the Drain Commission in order to see what would be necessary to turn part of the field into a parking area. The Village is also pursuing low interest loans to fund these changes. It's very evident that the Village is desperate for more parking. Adding parking at Balyeat will open up some of the area up off Main Street so that

everything is not concentrated in that area.

**11. Payment of Bills**

**March Payables**

PAYABLES	
(101) General Fund	\$108,398.22
(202) Major Street Fund	\$2,981.53
(203) Local Street Fund	\$7,500.95
(581) Airport	\$39,890.54
(590) Sewer Department Fund	\$104,236.03
(591) Water Department Fund	\$44,714.22
(661) Equipment Rental Fund	\$914.83
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$308,570.32</b>

Informational:

(206) Fire Department	\$9,206.29
(208) SRA Park Fund	\$215.71
(248) Downtown Development Authority	\$2,890.54
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,312.54</b>

Motion by Cumings with a second by Braybrook to approve the payment of bills in the amount of \$308,570.32. Motion passed unanimously.

**12. Public Comment:** Chris Botruff was present. He said that he had recently bought the Masonic Lodge and wanted some input from the Council as to what sorts of businesses made the most sense to put into the building – how he can best serve the Village. Right now



he has no specific plans for the building. He does not anticipate making any sort of extensive changes to the existing structure. He also asked about the utilization by the general public of the parking lot next to his building as well as the sidewalk that runs through his property by the library. He was told that the parking lot is private property, and that he can do with it what he likes.

**13. Council Member Announcements:** Council Member Peoples stated that several of his neighbors have complained about their water smelling like rotten eggs. DPW Supervisor Brinks said that he will check with the Water Dept. Village President Whalen said that Sparta has excellent water, and if the water has an odd smell or taste, that's almost always a function of the pipes and/or hot water heater in the building.

**14. Adjournment:** Meeting was adjourned by President Whalen at 8:37pm.

Submitted by Katy Shelton, Village Clerk.