

**VILLAGE OF SPARTA**  
Kent County, Michigan  
**Special Village Council Meeting**  
**Monday May 1, 2023 at 5:00 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, Village Clerk Katy Shelton, and the Township Board: Township Supervisor Dale Bergman, Board Members Jason Bradford, Bill Goodfellow, Barb Johnson, Marcy Savage, Rachel Shangle, and Rob Steffens.

Absent: None

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm.
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:**
  - a. None
5. **Approval of Consent and Business Agenda:**

Motion by Carlstrom with a second by Goodfellow 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.

Jim Lynema, 291 Doris St, Sparta: thanked the Council Member who made sure that this meeting was posted on Sparta Communications in Facebook.

Dave Doyle, 9185 Baumhoff, Sparta, asked about the future plans for the sewage treatment plant. President Whalen instructed him to see either him or the Village Manager after the meeting to discuss it.

Ken Hanlin 1144 12 Mile Rd, Sparta, asked about the proposed annexation of the property near 12 Mile and Old Alpine. He said that based on the proposed Master Plan, it looks as if the Village is looking at tripling the size of the village through future annexation. He said that he owns property in this area which has been in his family since 1903. He said that he believes that future development is inevitable, but that he hopes that the Village uses common sense with this issue. He doesn't want to see "sardine sub-divisions" in Sparta. He also stated that a 5pm start time for meetings was inconvenient for people who work a full time 9-5 job.

President Whalen responded that there is no specific plan for future annexation by the Village of Township land. He said that the Village is merely working on updating the Master Plan to see where annexation could possible take place, and that there are no specific plans for annexations.

**7. Old Business:**

- a. None

**8. New Business**

- a. Joint meeting with Sparta Township regarding future land use, joint planning areas, and annexations.

Danielle Bouchard from McKenna Associates gave an in depth presentation as to the progress on the Master Plan and what still needs to be done. She said that the main thrust now is for

increased housing and growth opportunities as well as parks and recreation areas, legacy neighborhoods, and regulating density. She said that there is a good working relationship between the Village and the Township as far as the development and annexation of land outside of the Village goes, and that this should be a joint planning area between those two bodies. She also said that it's very important to preserve agricultural lands. She said that with the Master Plan, the Village is not looking to rezone properties or annex land in the short term, but that we're looking at where the Village can go in the future. The Master Plan also needs to take into effect existing development.

Bill Goodfellow asked if the current Village infrastructure could handle what is being proposed for the future. He wondered how much our current wastewater treatment system can handle. He wondered what the plan was to service any future development.

Village Manager Lower responded that that is very much an important consideration, but reiterated that any future development will be very gradual. He also said that a major overhaul at the wastewater treatment plant is in the Village's plans. He said that the discharge into the Rogue River is an important factor for the Village to consider in any future plans.

Barb Johnson asked about the quality of the Village water. She said that quite a few of the residents have complained about that. President Whalen responded that Sparta water has been tested repeatedly, and that it's of a very high quality. He said that if a resident has bad smelling water, it's almost always because of the internal plumbing inside the residence. Old pipes and old water heaters often result in strange looking or smelling water.

The Village Manager, the Village President, and Danielle Bouchard all emphasized that any future annexation or development will happen on a case by case, piece by piece

basis. Nothing will happen overnight. They also stated that it is the responsibility of the developers of any future projects to figure out the engineering aspects of those projects. The developers will pay for any necessary water and/or sewer lines to be installed.

It was emphasized again that the preservation of existing farm and agricultural lands is a big goal of the Village and the Council. The intention is to stay out of prime farmland – especially on the Ridge.

The Village Council and the Township Board then spent a considerable amount of time discussing specific areas in the Village and Township. Various maps were utilized in order to more clearly identify the areas where possible future annexation might occur. The village/township map was divided up into quadrants and each quadrant was discussed individually. In most cases, each of those quadrants was subdivided into smaller units. Council and Board members discussed each area as to the possibility of the Village annexing them. There were a multitude of questions and concerns expressed about many of the areas. After each section was finished being discussed, either a consensus from all members was gotten or else an informal vote was taken. Several times there were Township Board members who did not want a certain parcel to be subject to possible annexation by the Village. However, in every case, the majority of the members voted to go along with having those areas be subject to possible annexation.

It was also noted that any future annexation would have to be agreed to by the property owner. Regardless of what the Village or Township did on their Master Plans, if a property owner does not want his or her property to be annexed, then no annexation was possible. Also, in order for any property to be annexed into the Village, that property must abut current Village property.

Danielle Bouchard also mentioned that growth boundaries are best when they are in accordance with physical features that already exist. That makes the most sense for annexation or rezoning.

The next steps will be to redraw the Village/Council maps taking into account the possible annexation areas that were discussed at this meeting. It will basically be a future land use map. She will have an update at the next Village Council meeting. There is a stakeholder meeting on May 9<sup>th</sup> for large business owners to give their input. There is also a public open house on May 17<sup>th</sup> for residents to view the Master Plan, ask questions, and provide feedback. It is anticipated that the Master Plan will undergo several months of revisions before it approaches its final version.

**9. Public Comment:**

Ken Hanlin asked again about possible annexation of the properties near him. President Whalen stated that no annexation can take place without the property owner's approval. If someone doesn't want their property to be annexed, that property will not be annexed.

Jody Hyde, 2155 Van Dyke St, Conklin, asked about Glenwood Estates. She said that they have a very bad septic system there. President Whalen said that it's up to the owner of the property to repair the septic system. He said that that was not an area that the Village was looking to annex because it wouldn't make any financial sense.

Chad Momber asked about rezoning property from Ag-1 to Ag-2. He also asked if the Village could annex Ag-1 land. President Whalen stated that any property to be annexed must abut Village limits at the time of annexation. He also repeated that the property owner must initiate and approve of any annexation of his/her property.

**10. Council Member Announcements:** President Whalen thanked the Township Board for coming to the Council meeting. Township

Board President Bergman said that he appreciated the two entities meeting together and felt that a lot of progress was made tonight.

11. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned by President Whalen at 6:40pm.

Submitted by Katy Shelton, Village Clerk.