

**VILLAGE OF SPARTA**  
Kent County, Michigan  
**Village Council Meeting**  
**Monday October 9, 2023 at 7:00 PM**  
**75 N. Union St. (Sparta Civic Center)**

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

**Absent:** Robert Carlstrom.

**Also present:** Police Chief Andy Milanowski, IAI Project Manager Rob Smith, Airport Manager Mike Krzciok, Village Manager Jim Lower, 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 September 11, 2023
  - b. Approve Special Council Meeting Minutes of September 25, 2023
  - c. Approve Fire Board Minutes of September 22nd, 2023
  - d. Approve DDA Minutes
  - e. Appointment of Bill DeHann to the SRA Board

5. **Approval of Consent and Business Agenda**

- a. No additions or corrections. Motion to approve made by Braybrook with a second by Mais. Motion passed unanimously.

At this time, Village Manager Lower introduced the new DPW Supervisor Bill Hunter. Mr Hunter addressed the Council and gave a brief overview of his background before coming to his current position in Sparta.

## **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 number of residents were in the audience to hear about and comment upon item 9a of the agenda: 425 Agreement request 2124 12 Mile Rd. NW. All of the following comments relate to that issue.

- a. Rachel Shangle, 65 S. State St, said that the Village and Township have worked well in the past over various annexations issues. She said that there is a clause in the prior agreement that the Village and Township made that limits annexation in “The Ridge” – that area to the west of M37. She said that we already have low cost housing available in the Village and sees no reason to rush into another annexation in this particular location.
- b. Barb Johnson, 9210 Alpine Ave, said that she agreed completely with Rachel and did not want to see any development west of M37.

- c.** Marcy Savage, 1025 N Sunset Pines, said that she too agreed 100% with Rachel that there should be no development west of M37. She said that this property is zoned Ag-2, so she understands that the owner can build on it. However, she has heard that the development envisioned for this parcel consists of more than housing – that it also will include restaurants, gas stations, and so forth. If those types of commercial entities are built outside of the village limits, that will hurt the businesses that are currently located within the Village. She said that if the Village violates that agreement that the Township will be loathe to enter into any other agreements with the Village in the future. She believes that this request goes beyond what the original agreement specified. She also mentioned that the planned expansion at Glenwood Estates trailer park of 100 lots will help to alleviate some of the housing shortage in Sparta.
- d.** Dale Bergman, 9280 Sparta Ave, said that he supported a 425 agreement at this location if the Village and Township could reach a consensus on the issue. He mentioned that the property is adjacent to the Village and that water and sewer already exist across 12 Mile Rd.
- e.** Bill Goodfellow, 2267 12 Mile Rd, stated that we did a 425 with the “rodeo grounds” and didn’t end up with anything positive from that. In fact, we ended up with legal problems. He said that the Spectrum Health facility located across from the property in question is classified as “non-profit” so we do not receive any taxes from them.
- f.** Mary Ann Wright, 83 West Division, said that as a realtor she is very aware of the immense shortage of housing in our area. She said that the addition of 100 lots at Glenwood Estates trailer park didn’t really affect that shortage because those lots will be rental rather than owner occupied properties.

- g. Rob Steffins, 4344 13 Mile Rd, said that the previous agreement between the Township and the Village clearly spelled out that further development in that area “shall not” be carried out. He said that we need to honor that agreement. He understands that that property probably will be developed at some point in the future for residential use because of its zoning, but he doesn’t think that the time for that is now.

## 7. Public Hearing

- a. **Res. 23-17 A resolution approving Cascade Die Casting IFT Request:** Public hearing opened at 7:15pm. Doug Foltz, CFO at Cascade Die Casting, was present to address the Council and to answer any questions. Village Manager Lower gave a brief synopsis of what Cascade Die Casting was asking from the Village, which is an Industrial Facilities Tax Abatement for the \$1,288,845 expansion that they are in the process of completing. This expansion will help them retain 149 local jobs and create an additional 16 within two years. Mr Foltz stated that his company needed to upgrade their facilities in order to attract and retain employees. Council Member Peoples asked about adding another fire hydrant at the back of the building and was told that that would happen. Public hearing closed at 7:18pm.

## 8. Old Business

- a. None.

## 9. New Business

- a. **Res. 23-17 A resolution approving Cascade Die Casting IFT Request:** As mentioned above, this resolution would approve the granting of a tax abatement for Cascade Die Casting in order to facilitate the \$1,288,845 expansion that they are in the process of completing. The request would

- abate half of the tax burden on the new addition for a period of twelve years for all local taxing entities. This is a tool commonly used in the State of Michigan as an incentive for industrial development. The Village has approved many such requests in the past. Motion by Cumings with a second by Braybrook to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
- b. Res. 23-18 A resolution authorizing the village manager to sign MDOT Sponsor Contract:** MDOT requires an official resolution authorizing the Village Manager to accept grant funding on behalf of the airport. These are done for each grant funded project individually. This resolution is specific to the AWOS weather reporting system. The airport fund will be responsible for a 5% match (\$9713) while MDOT and the FAA will cover 95% of the project cost, which is \$194,243 in total. Motion by Mais with a second by Taylor to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
- c. Res. 23-19 A resolution to provide for the designation of Nov. 1 as Nation Family Literacy Day:** The Sophie de Marsac Campau Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution asked the Village to designate 11-01-23 as National Family Literacy Day. The goal is to help raise awareness and further the cause of literacy. Motion by Mais with a second by Braybrook to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
- d. 425 Agreement Request 2124 12 Mile Rd. NW:** The owners of 2124 12 Mile Rd NW, John Klamt and Chad Momber, have requested that the parcel be brought into the village via a 425 agreement with Sparta Township. They will be meeting with the Township Board on Oct 12<sup>th</sup> to discuss this. The Sparta Township supervisor has advised the Village Manager that he and the members of his board would like the Village for formally vote on whether or not the Village would be interested in granting this request prior to its being considered by the township. Village Manager Lower

and Village Council President Whalen then spent some time in discussing the differences between annexation and a 425 agreement. They also said that they did not see anything in that earlier agreement that would preclude the Village from signing a 425 agreement for this parcel. Council President Whalen emphasized that this council was elected to represent the wishes of the Village and not the Township. He said that everyone understands that there is a considerable demand for additional housing. He also stated that this land will inevitably be developed, and that it would be better if the Village could have some input as to how it is developed.

- e. Ord. 23-11 An ordinance to amend the purchases division of chapter 2, article V:** This ordinance does three things: it increases the Village Manager's purchasing authority from \$5000 to \$25000, it allows the Village Manager to make any emergency purchases necessary, and it clarifies in the Village code the Village's practice of accepting the best bid, not necessarily the lowest bid. Motion by Mais with a second by Taylor to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
- f. Ord. 23-12 An ordinance to amend section 70-66 & to add article VII "Public Parking Lots" to Chapter 70 of the Village of Sparta Code of Ordinances:** This ordinance was drafted to address the problems in various parking situations in the Village, such as long term parking of vehicles in our parking lots as well as other problems such as inoperable vehicles, improperly parked vehicles, and so forth. This ordinance will add teeth to our enforcement capabilities. Since the Village will very shortly have a large increase in available parking, this ordinance will help with the parking problems that inevitably will arise. Chief Milanowski stated that we've needed something like this for a long time. Motion by Braybrook with a second by People to approve. Motion passed unanimously.

- g. Bid Approval- Tree cutting/Trimming:** Bill Hunter, the DPW Supervisor, explained this issue. He said that an RFP had been sent out to deal with tree cutting and trimming that were beyond the scope of our DPW department due to the trees being too high, being on too steep of a grade, and so forth. Beaver Tree Service submitted the lowest proposal at \$8350. The Village has worked with them in the past and has been satisfied with their work. Motion by Taylor with a second by Mais to approve a contract with Beaver Tree Service in a not to exceed amount of \$8350. Motion passed unanimously.
- h. Parking Lot Final Cost Approval:** The original budget for this project was \$525,000 with the understanding that the budget would quite likely need to be revised as the project progressed. Due to various factors that have come up since that original budget discussion, the final cost amount is now \$668,327. Motion by Cumings with a second by Braybrook to approve the final cost. Motion passed unanimously.
- i. Childcare RFP - Discussion:** The Village Manager sent a draft of the RFP for the 347 Evergreen building to all Council members. He said that drafting the RFP was not difficult. What WAS difficult was figuring out how to get that proposal out in front of the appropriate entities. He said that he had arranged with his contacts at the State of Michigan and the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce to get the RFP out in front of licensed providers in West Michigan and the surrounding areas, which should greatly increase our chances of being successful with the RFP. It was the consensus of the council to move forward with this process.

**10. Village Manager & Department Reports**

- a. Nothing further to discuss.

**11. Communications**

- a. Site Readiness Grant Opportunity:** The Village Manager stated that the owner of the “rodeo grounds” approached the Village to see if we’d partner with him in seeking this grant. The state will invest money into large industrial sites to fund water and sewer improvements. This particular property has water but no sewer and is zoned industrial. The consensus from the council was to move ahead on this issue. The Village Manager said that Village engineers Prein & Newhof are looking at this project.
- b. Housing Next Grant Opportunity:** The Village Manager spoke about this. He reminded the Council that Brooke Osterman from Housing Next, which is a sub department of the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce, previously addressed the Council. This grant would involve zoning changes that would yield higher density housing within the Village.
- c. Adult-Use Marijuana Retailer Application:** The Village Manager said that a formal letter has gone out to all residents within 300 yards of any potential marijuana retailer locations. He said that the Village has received one application so far, and that it looked very well put together. He said that any potential marijuana retailers would need to get a special land use permit first and then obtain a license. He said that there will be a public hearing on this issue at the November Planning Commission meeting.

**12. Payment of Bills**

**September Payables**

PAYABLES	
(101) General Fund	\$82,564.57
(202) Major Street Fund	\$22,819.01



(203) Local Street Fund	\$38,508.51
(581) Airport	\$68,773.22
(590) Sewer Department Fund	\$270,911.51
(591) Water Department Fund	\$22,706.29
(661) Equipment Rental Fund	\$1,741.57
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$508,024.68</b>

Informational:

(206) Fire Department	\$22,834.20
(208) SRA Park Fund	\$8,763.60
(248) Downtown Development Authority	\$26,865.54
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$58,454.34</b>

Motion by Taylor with a second by Mais to approve the payment of bills in the amount of \$508,024.68. Motion passed unanimously.

**13. Public Comment:**

- a. Rachel Shangle (see above) requested that everyone come to the Township meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> to give their opinion on the 425 agreement. She also asked any council member to call her directly if they had any questions.
- b. Barb Johnson (see above) said that people do not want to see large clusters of housing and such projects have overwhelmingly been defeated in the past. She warned

against incorrectly developing property and cited Allendale as an instance of incorrect development. She said that we have current property that is east of M37 that could be developed properly.

- c. Marcy Savage (see above) said that she doesn't believe the Village and Township can just override a previous agreement not to build in this area and doesn't understand why we need more housing on the Ridge.
- d. Dale Bergman (see above) asked for an official vote from the Council as to whether or not they wanted to enter into a 425 agreement with the Township on this parcel. The vote was 5:1 to enter into the agreement with Braybrook dissenting and Carlstrom absent.
- e. Rob Steffins (see above) said that this agreement does not preserve farmland. He said that such an agreement is not in the best interest of Sparta, and that it would violate the previous agreement where the Township and Village stated they "shall not" allow further development on the Ridge.
- f. Shelly Taylor, 8989 Baumhoff, stated that more development would increase our tax base and more housing would mean that we'd have a larger school enrollment.
- g. Kristie Cain, 8795 Baumhoff, stated that we need to preserve the respect between the Township and Village boards. She also believes that we need to keep M37 as a boundary between farmland and developed land. She said that once you start to build houses, you cannot get that land back to its original state.

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

**15. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned by President Whalen at 8:17pm.**

Submitted by Katy Shelton, Village Clerk.