

VILLAGE OF SPARTA
Kent County, Michigan
Village Council Meeting
Monday, October 14, 2024 at 7:00 PM
75 N. Union St. (Sparta Civic Center)

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

Absent: No one.

Also present: Village Manager Jim Lower, DPW Supervisor Bill Hunter, Police Chief Andy Milanowski.

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 9, 2024
 - b. Approve Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of August 5, 2024
 - c. Approve Fire Board Meeting Minutes of September 19, 2024
 - d. Approve DDA Meeting Minutes of September 10, 2024
 1. None.
5. **Approval of Consent and Business Agenda:** Motion by Mais with a second by Cumings 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.
7. **Public Hearing**
 - a. **Res. 24-25 Baker Investment Properties 278 Hickory IFT:** Public hearing opened at 7:01pm. Village Manager Lower presented the issue being considered. The owner of the property, Rex Baker, was present to answer any questions. There was no public comment. The public hearing was closed at 7:03pm.
8. **Old Business**
 - a. None.

9. New Business

- a. **Res. 24-25 Baker Investment Properties 278 Hickory IFT:** Baker Investment LLC is requesting an Industrial Facilities Tax (IFT) abatement for the investment of \$906,492.00 in plant rehabilitation that they are currently completing at that address. The application states that the IFT will help them create local jobs. The request would abate half of the tax burden on the rehabilitation 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. There were no questions by the Council. President Whalen thanked Mr Baker for his investment in the community. Motion by Braybrook with a second by Carlstrom to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
- b. **Ord. 24-07 An ordinance to amend- Chapter 82 Zoning: Zoning Map:**
 1. **92 S State St** is being sold to Habitat for Humanity to build a house. As part of the sale, they need the parcel rezoned from B (Business) to RH (Residential High Density.)
 2. **15 E Averill St** has split zoning. It appears at one time this was multiples parcels. They have since been combined, but the zoning was never unified. This needs to be corrected so that the parcel can be developed into its highest and best use. Adoption of this ordinance was unanimously recommended by the Planning Commission to the Village Council. Motion by Mais with a second by Taylor to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
- c. **Emergency Purchase Ratification – Dump Truck Engine:** The Village of Sparta's DPW operates a fleet of dump trucks crucial for maintaining Village infrastructure. Recently, its 2015 International 5 ton dump truck experienced significant engine failure. The truck is an essential asset to the Village, particularly for snow removal and heavy hauling. It is the newest vehicle in the fleet, and its prompt repair is critical. Due to this truck's critical role in the Village's fleet, and its urgent need for repair, Village staff enacted an emergency purchase per section 2-205 of the Village Code of Ordinance to authorize MHK Equipment Service to rebuild the engine. This would ensure the truck is operational ahead of the upcoming winter season. Motion by Cumings with a second by Braybrook to ratify the emergency expenditure of \$31,151.02 for the engine rebuild. Motion passed unanimously.
- d. **Clean-Up Day 2025:** Due to the projected upcoming construction of the new Civic Center, it will be impossible to have the usual clean-up days at the DPW garage in April of 2025. One option that some other municipalities use is a voucher system. With this system, a resident with proper ID is given a voucher to take items to a local land fill, and the municipality pays for the vouchers. The resident will also have to show proper ID at the Recycling Center. The Village Manager said that Kent County has agreed to work with our Village on setting up such a voucher system for the North Kent Recycling and Waste Center on 10 Mile Road. He said that the Village would pay half of the cost of the vouchers, and the township would pay the other half. He anticipates the cost of the

vouchers to be in the neighborhood of 13K, which is about what previous clean up days have cost. The consensus of the Council was to move forward with this plan. Exact dates during which the vouchers could be redeemed will be established, but will be in the spring, and will last for approximately a month. The consensus of the Council was to move forward with this plan. It is anticipated that the Village will continue with this voucher system in the future even after the Civic Center construction is completed.

- e. **Draft Budget & Water/Sewer Rates- Discussion Only.** The Village Manager stated that he will formally present the budget and CIP in detail to the Council in November. Tonight, he wanted to apprise the Council of the Village's plan for utility rates. He said that for 2025 and all future years, the Village would like to propose an automatic 2% across the board utility rate increase. This automatic increase could be stopped or amended at any time by council resolution. However, in order for the automatic increase to take effect, no action would be needed by the council. He said that making this change would make rates stable and predictable for residents. The only time rates would need to be adjusted going forward would be for large capitol bond projects like the sewer plant project that the Village is currently working on. This will allow the Village to keep up with inflation while not overburdening the residents. In the past, the Village has gone for several years without an increase, which then led to large rate increases in order to catch up with inflation. The Village staff believes that a small regular increase is a better policy for the residents. The consensus of the Council was to move forward with this policy change.

10. Executive Session

- a. None.

- 11. Village Manager & Department Reports:** DPW Director Bill Hunter introduced three new members of his team: Amber Bouwman, Corey Fahling, and Jordan Gapinski. Conrad Bowman has been on staff at the DPW for a little while now. Police Chief Milanowski stated that presidential candidate Kamala Harris is coming to Grand Rapids on Friday. He said that the Sparta Police Department has been asked to assist with that event.

12. Communications:

- a. Meeting Dates 2025: Village Manager Lower stated that he would like to move the Village Council meetings from the second Monday of the month to either the third Monday of the month or else "piggy back" them onto the same first Monday of the month that the Village Planning Commission currently uses. The Council meeting would follow the Planning meeting in that case. The Council discussed these ideas for a few minutes.

13. Payment of Bills

September Payables

PAYABLES	
(101) General Fund	\$116,371.04
(202) Major Street Fund	\$3,173.19
(203) Local Street Fund	\$152,383.91
(581) Airport	\$70,085.39
(590) Sewer Department Fund	\$354,826.46
(591) Water Department Fund	\$44,953.47
(661) Equipment Rental Fund	\$787.57
Total	\$742,581.03

Informational:

(206) Fire Department	\$8,209.73
(208) SRA Park Fund	\$10,375.17
(248) Downtown Development Authority	\$3,900.21
Total	\$22,485.11

Motion by Mais with a second by Braybrook to approve the payment of bills in the amount of \$742,581.03. Motion passed unanimously.

14. Public Comment: Travis Ward, 2169 Sparty Lane, Sparta, was present. He stated that his property is in Sparta Township. He was concerned about an October 9, 2023 Action memo which dealt with (in his words) “the annexation of the property just west of M37” – specifically 2124 12 Mile Rd, which is owned by Chad Momber. The Council and Mr Ward then discussed this issue for several minutes including whether this involved an annexation or a 425 Plan, as well as the Village’s Master Plan.

15. Council Member Announcements: 1.
None.

16. Adjournment: Meeting was adjourned by President Whalen at 7:53pm.

Submitted by Katy Shelton, Village Clerk.