

**VILLAGE OF SPARTA**  
Kent County, Michigan  
**Village Council Meeting**  
**Monday November 13, 2023 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:** None.

**Also present:** Village Manager Jim Lower, Village Clerk Katy Shelton, Finance Director/Treasurer David Carpenter, Police Chief Andy Milanowski, DPW Director Bill Hunter, DDA Director Elizabeth Morse, and Fire Chief Dan Olney.

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 October 9, 2023
  - b. Approve Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of October 2, 2023
  - c. Approve Fire Board Minutes of October 19, 2023
  - d. Approve DDA Minutes of October 10, 2023
  - e. Approve Fireworks Display for 11/17, with a rain day of 11/18Council President Whalen asked that item “e” be moved to “New business”.
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.  
A. None.

## **7. Public Hearing**

### **a. Proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Budget, Millage Rate, and 2024-2029 Capital Improvement Plan.**

Public hearing opened at 7:02pm.

Village Manager Lower gave a presentation on the above items. Council member Carlstrom questioned the need for a new fixed generator at the Applewood lift station. After some discussion, this item will be not be purchased in 2024, and the issue will be revisited sometime in the future.

Public hearing closed at 7:34pm.

## **8. Old Business**

a. None.

## **9. New Business:**

The Council decided to flip flop the discussion of items “a” and “b”.

**a. Res. 23-20 A Resolution Adopting FY 2024 Village Budget, Determining Mills to be levied and adopting 2024-2029 Capital Improvement Plan.** Council President Whalen mentioned that the Village has been operating at 12 mills for many years even with the cost increases that the Village has seen. Motion by Taylor with a second by Carlstrom to approve the resolution. Motion passed unanimously.

**b. Sparta Fire Department FY2024-25 Operating Budget:** Fire Chief Dan Olney discussed the reasoning for the proposed increase in the Fire Department budget. This will be an annual increase from the Village of \$11,666.34. The total budget is \$35,000 which includes the Township’s share. One factor in the increase is that Chief Olney will be moving into a full time Fire Chief with a proportionate raise of pay. Council members Carlstrom and Peoples both commented on the inequity of the percentage of Village funding of the Fire Department based on the population of the Village vis a vis the Township. It was also mentioned that the Fire Department funding is statutorily the

responsibility of the Township. Council President Whalen commented that the Fire Board did not invest their money properly which resulted in a loss of investment income. Motion by Braybrook with a second by Mais to approve the FY2024-2025 Operating Budget. Motion passed unanimously.

- c. **25 Ida Red Special Land Use Permit Application:** Village Manager Lower stated that there was a public hearing on this item at last week's Planning Commission meeting. The Planning Commission at that time recommended approval to the Council of this application. He said that the members of the public who attended the meeting were overwhelmingly in support of the issue of a marijuana dispensary operating in the Village. He also said that this particular agenda item ONLY affects the special land use permit application. There are many steps in the future before a dispensary is actually allowed to operate in the Village.

Council member Peoples said that he was concerned with the intersection of Division and Applewood Drive. There have been several posts on the Sparta Communications Facebook page regarding near missed car accidents at that intersection. Since the proposed marijuana dispensary will be a block south of that intersection, he is concerned that increased traffic might increase the chance of car accidents. The Village Manager responded that the dispensary license is subject to yearly renewal. If traffic problems increase because the dispensary is located there, that issue can be revisited at the time of the yearly renewal. Motion by Mais with a second by Carlstrom to approve the special land use permit application. Motion passed 6:1 with Peoples opposing due to the traffic issue.

- d. **IAI Sewer Service Contract Termination:** Village Manager Lower outlined the problems the Village has experienced with IAI in the past several years. He also discussed recent staff changes at IAI. In light of that, he and the DPW recommend that the Village terminate its contract with IAI and hire Rob Smith who was formerly with IAI as the Village's Waste Water Superintendent. The Village will also hire an hourly laborer to work under Rob's supervision at the Waste Water Treatment plant full time as a village employee. That way the Village will once again be staffing and operating its facility with dedicated full

time Village staff. All of these changes are anticipated to save the Village \$33,000 to \$38,000 per year once all the changes have been completed. Motion by Cumings with a second by Braybrook to terminate the IAI Sewer Service Contract and move forward with the proposed changes. Motion passed unanimously.

- e. **Approve Fireworks Display for 11-17 with a rain date of 11-18.** Motion by Carlstrom with a second by Braybrook to approve. Motion passed 6:0 with Whalen abstaining.
- f. **Village Manager & Department Reports:** The Village Manager thanked the Council for its support of his proposed budget and CIP. He is very invested in looking for ways to cut costs and then use that money to invest in the Village roads. He also mentioned that he'll be out of the office for awhile, and that David Carpenter would be acting as his proxy with his full authority. He also discussed the proposed work on Sparta Ave/State Street from the northern Village boundary to 13 Mile. Council President Whalen said that the project needs to go south to 12 Mile and not stop at 13 Mile since that section of the road needs the most improvement. The Village Manager said that he would investigate the cost for this.

DDA Director Morse mentioned that this Friday is the big "Turn on the Lights" event in downtown Sparta which includes a parade and fireworks.

- g. **Communications:** President Whalen mentioned that Tom Bliss died last Saturday. He said that funeral arrangements are pending. He would like the Village to send a floral arrangement to the family. The Council supported this idea. The Village Manager announced that Christine Phelps will be starting work at the Village as the new accounting clerk.

**10. Payment of Bills**

**October Payables**

PAYABLES	
(101) General Fund	\$131,699.55

(202) Major Street Fund	\$81,743.14
(203) Local Street Fund	\$12,762.03
(581) Airport	\$36,828.26
(590) Sewer Department Fund	\$71,005.34
(591) Water Department Fund	\$71,226.10
(661) Equipment Rental Fund	\$138,009.97
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$543,274.39</b>

Informational:

(206) Fire Department	\$89,019.60
(208) SRA Park Fund	\$8,046.95
(248) Downtown Development Authority	\$18,015.02
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$115,081.57</b>

Motion by Taylor with a second by Mais to approve the payment of bills in the amount of \$543,274.39. Motion passed unanimously.

**11. Public Comment:**

- a. None.

**12. Council Member Announcements:**

President Whalen wished all the deer hunters good luck and safe travels.

**13. Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned by President Whalen at 8:28pm.

Submitted by Katy Shelton, Village Clerk.