

**VILLAGE OF SPARTA**  
Kent County, Michigan  
**Village Council Meeting**  
**Monday December 11, 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, Airport Manager Mike Krzciok, 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 November 13, 2023: See below #5.
  - b. Approve Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of November 6, 2023
  - c. Approve Fire Board Minutes of November 16, 2023
  - d. Approve DDA Minutes of November 14, 2023
  - e. Approve DDA Reappointments of Rex Baker, Kelly Potes & Joel Stoner.

The Village Manager requested that we remove item “a” under new business (Res 23-21) at the Bliss family members’ request and place it on the January agenda.

**5. Approval of Consent and Business Agenda:** President Whalen requested that the minutes of the November 13, 2023 Village Council meeting be amended as regards to the discussion under “New Business – Sparta Fire Department FY2024-2025 Operating Budget”. He wanted it made clear that his comments reflected his desire that the Fire Board invest their money in a more fiscally responsible (economically productive) manner. He said that he did not mean to imply that the Fire Board had invested their monies improperly. With that correction and with the removal of Res 23-21, motion by Mais with a second by Braybrook to approve. 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. Public Hearing**

a. Proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Fee Schedule for Utilities. Public hearing opened at 7:02pm. No comments. Public hearing closed at 7:03pm.

**8. Old Business**

a. None.

**9. New Business**

- a. **Res. 23-21 A resolution of Tribute offered as a Memorial for Tom Bliss.** Moved to the January Council meeting per the Village Manager at the family's request.
- b. **Res. 23-22 A resolution establishing ready to serve water user charges:** Motion by Cumings with a second by Carlstrom to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
- c. **Res. 23-23 A resolution establishing ready to serve sewer user charges:** Motion by Braybrook with a second by Mais to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
- d. **Res. 23-24 A resolution establishing water commodity charges:** Motion by Carlstrom with a second by Peoples to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
- e. **Res. 23-25 A resolution establishing sewer commodity charges:** Motion by Braybrook with a second by Cumings to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
- f. **Res. 23-26 A resolution approving the 2024 Regular Village Council Meeting Schedule.** Motion by Mais with a second by Taylor to approve. Motion passed unanimously. Note: subject to holidays, Village Council meetings are held on the second Monday of every month at 7:00pm at the Civic Center.
- g. **Res. 23-27 A resolution approving the 2024 Regular Planning Commission Meeting Schedule:** Motion by Mais with a second by Carlstrom to approve. Motion passed unanimously. Note: subject to holidays, Village Planning meetings are held the first Monday of every month at 7:00pm at the Civic Center.
- h. **Res. 23-28 A resolution adopting amendments to the FY2023 Budget:** Motion by Cumings with a second by Taylor to approve. Motion passed unanimously. It was noted that the Finance Director/Treasurer David Carpenter is extremely satisfied with the state of the Village's fiscal health.

- i. **Res. 23-29 A resolution to adopt the 2023 Village of Sparta Master Plan.** The final public hearing on this issue was held at the last Planning Commission meeting. Overall, the reception of the Master Plan has been positive. Motion by Mais with a second by Braybrook to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
- j. **Fire Department Budget Increase Reconsideration:** The Council discussed this issue in some detail. They realize that the Fire Board feels a sense of loyalty to the local bank with whom they have been investing. However, Michigan Class seems to provide a much better rate of return on investments for municipalities. They were told that the Fire Board met today and decided to try investing 50% of their monies with Michigan Class for six months and see what the results are. There was a feeling from the Council that they should perhaps reverse their recent approval of the increase in the Fire Department's FY2024-2025 budget because of their investment decisions. The Council believes that the Fire Department could get a better return rate with Michigan Class.

Several Council members stated that they were very concerned about a potential shortfall in the Fire Department's operating budget if the Village decided to not approve the latest budget increase. President Whalen said that since the Township was statutorily responsible for funding the Fire Department, that no shortfalls could occur. It was mentioned by several members that the Village was 100% in support of the Fire Department. They are just concerned with where the department is investing its money.

It was the unanimous rollcall consensus of the Council members that the Village would NOT be rescinding approval of the recent Fire Department budget increase. However,

they directed the Village Manager to convey the message to the Fire Board that if 100% of their appropriate monies do not get invested with Michigan Class, that the Village Council will reconsider at their next meeting the rescinding of the latest approval of the Fire Department budget increase.

**10. Village Manager & Department Reports:** The Village Manager reported that he and President Whalen met with Sowing Seeds Day Care regarding the new facility by Nash Park. He said it was a very good meeting.

**11. Communications:** The Village Manager stated that he would like to have a workshop in the near future to discuss goal settings, the change in size of the Planning Commission membership, and ordinances in general.

**12. Payment of Bills**

**November Payables**

PAYABLES	
(101) General Fund	\$696,458.51
(202) Major Street Fund	\$2,724.55
(203) Local Street Fund	\$3,507.87
(581) Airport	\$45,645.53
(590) Sewer Department Fund	\$47,470.55
(591) Water Department Fund	\$49,035.58

(661) Equipment Rental Fund	\$3,915.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$848,758.37</b>

Informational:

(206) Fire Department	\$11,274.34
(208) SRA Park Fund	\$21,335.11
(248) Downtown Development Authority	\$7,114.08
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$39,723.53</b>

It was noted that expenses are higher than normal for the month due to the recent parking lot improvements. Motion by Taylor with a second by Cumings to approve the budget in the amount of \$848,758.37. Motion passed unanimously.

**13. Public Comment:**

a. None.

**14. Council Member Announcements:** The Village Christmas luncheon will be on the 21<sup>st</sup> at 11:45 at the Civic Center.

**15. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 8:00pm by President Whalen.

Submitted by Katy Shelton, Village Clerk.