

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

Present: President Robert Whalen, Council members Brenda Braybrook, Robert Carlstrom, Courtney Mais, and Tom Peoples.

Also present: Interim Village Manager Blaine Wing, Finance Director David Carpenter, Police Chief Andy Milanowski, DPW Director Dennis Brinks, Airport Manager Marty Coaker, and Village Clerk Katy Shelton.

Absent: Dave Cumings.

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 members in attendance or absent are noted above.
4. **Additions or Corrections to Consent and Business Agenda**
 - a. None
5. **Approval of Consent and Business Agenda**
 - a. Approve Regular Village Council Meeting Minutes of December 12, 2022
 - b. Approval of Special Village Council Meeting Minutes of December 15, 2022
 - c. Approval of Special Village Council Meeting Minutes of December 19, 2022
 - d. Approval of Special Village Council Meeting Minutes of December 22, 2022
 - e. Approve Fire Authority Meeting Minutes December 22, 2022Motion by Carlstrom with a second by Braybrook to approve the agenda. 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.

Michael Metzger, 13761 Pine Lake Ave, Cedar Springs spoke. He said that he was the chairman of the Sparta Township Historical Commission (STHC). He said that the Sparta American Legion Post is losing their charter to exist shortly. They currently occupy space in the offices connected to the Civic Center. He's asking that the Village (which administers the Civic Center) to allow the American Legion to donate all of their memorabilia to the Sparta Township Historical Commission to be housed in that space formerly occupied by the American Legion Post as a military museum. Although the STHC is technically a township organization, the vast majority of their activities benefit the Village. He cited the walking tours, the Memorial Day celebration in Veterans' Park (formerly Lamoreaux park), the military exhibit in the library, many projects with the Sparta schools, the STHC building with their many exhibits and reference materials, the Grand Marshall of the Sparta Town and Country parade, and the Sparta Notables event, as evidence of their value to the Village. He noted that the SHS will be donating \$2500 towards "Shorty's Monument" which will be erected in Veterans' park.

Jo Vander Werf, 11887 Phelps Ave, Sparta, spoke. She said that Sparta has a long and deep military history. The members of the American Legion post have worked very hard to keep their post going. However, over the years, their membership has dwindled. Allowing the memorabilia to be housed in the space formerly occupied by the American Legion post under the auspices of the STHS will allow the military spirit to continue and be celebrated.

Ted Anderson, 1747 W Division St, Sparta spoke. He emphasized Sparta's long military history. He commended the STHS for being a great organization. He recognized that the membership of the American legion post has dwindled over the years, but said that shouldn't mean that we no longer honor our veterans. He feels that moving the memorabilia over to that space will be a great way to honor those who have served our country.

Doug Pickney, 11353 Stebbens Ave, spoke. He said that one of his great uncles was captured and interred in Andersonville during the Civil War. He said that another uncle was at Normandy. He said that those types of memories are what are preserved at the American Legion post, and that they ought not disappear. He anticipates that, if the STHS gets that space and the memorabilia is moved there, they could open to the public two days a week. He thinks that since the location is right next to the Civic Center and very close to the location of the STHC building, that it's an ideal place for a military museum. He also mentioned that the American Legion is responsible for the building of the addition that houses their post.

Jan Holtz, 330 Running Water Courts, Sparta, spoke. She said that the Myers Schoolhouse Museum (a township entity) on the east side of town currently houses some military items, such as guns and uniforms. She said that those items really need to be closer to downtown Sparta to make them more accessible to the public. She stressed that the memories of local veterans are something of which we should be proud, and the Village should be part of that. She asked the Council to think of what we would be losing if those memories aren't preserved.

Dale Bergman, 9280 Sparta Ave, Sparta, spoke. He said that many communities have military museums. He said that the American Legion has a treasure trove of items and that giving those items over to the STHC will preserve all of that history. He stressed that the Village and the Township really need to co-operate and work together on this and other projects. He cited the Freedom Cruise, the Viet Nam Memorial Wall, and Shorty's Monument as evidence of that co-

operation. He also emphasized that the people who are responsible for awarding grants love to see such co-operation.

Dan Salas, 1300 Sparta Ave, Sparta, spoke. He said that the American Legion Post 107 is soon to be disbanded due to declining membership. He said that having their collection taken over by the STHC and moved into that space adjacent to the Civic Center continues the legacy of the American Legion and all of Sparta's veterans.

Jim Lynema, 291 Doris St, Sparta, spoke. He said that he supported the idea of having the STHC take over the collection and house it in the space connected to the Civic Center.

Jim Skultety, 135 N Union, Sparta, spoke. He said that he's on the STHC and was one of the volunteers at the recent military exhibit at the library. He noted that a large number of kids and veterans visited and said how much they enjoyed and appreciated the exhibit.

Jim Lyles, 97 S State St, Sparta and Chris Carlisle, 119 Martindale, Sparta spoke. Chris said that Post 107 has to be disbanded due to the membership dwindling. They are giving up their charter some time in the next couple of months. Allowing the STHC to take ownership of the American Legion memorabilia would be a great way to keep those items here and transition the space into an Historical Museum for Military Artifacts from Sparta. He said that we can't let 103 years of military history be dispersed and disappear. The STHC is out of room and can't house any more military memorabilia. He wants to prevent the state taking ownership of those items and moving them to Lansing once the Post closes down. He believes that the American Legion can provide staffing for such a museum. He is currently involved in inventorying all of the items housed at the Post.

Council President then introduced the interim Village Manager, Blaine Wing, to everyone in the room. Village Manager Wing then took a few minutes to describe his background and experience. He said that he looked forward to working with everyone in the Village.

Council President Whalen then said that there has been a lot of discussion as to what to do with that space once the American Legion is gone. The Village Council needs time to talk about the issue before any decisions are made. He granted the American Legion the right to use that space for storage while inventory is taking place.

Council member Carlstrom stated that the Council needs more time to discuss the issue and will reach out for more information before a final decision is made.

Jim Lynema asked if the final vote will be made at a public meeting. President Whalen said that we need a full Council to make a decision. He mentioned that Council member Gale Taylor has resigned due to health reasons, and so the Council is currently one member short. Mr Lynema then asked that the meeting at which the vote is taken be announced ahead of time. He was told that such a meeting will be announced on the Village web site.

7. Public Hearing:

- a. None

8. Old Business

- a. None

9. New Business

- a. Sparta Historical Commission request for use of the Civic Center. See above for comments. The Council will take all the comments into consideration and render a decision at some point in the future after discussion all aspects of the issue.
- b. Ordinance No. 23-1: An Ordinance to amend the Village of Sparta Code of Ordinances Chapter 34 Floods:** The Planning Commission recently voted to send this ordinance to the Village Council. There are no significant changes from the earlier ordinance. Motion by Braybrook with a second by Peoples to move forward with approval and send it on to FEMA. Motion passed unanimously.

10. Village Manager & Department Reports

- a. Rob Smith from Infrastructure Alternatives gave an update on our pumps. He said that all plants are working and are in compliance. Council member Carlstrom asked if the Council will still be getting monthly reports and was told that was correct. Rob Smith said that the River Road lift station had some missing parts, which were included in the repair cost, and will be up and running shortly.

11. Communications

- a. **Future Agenda Item – February 13, 2023 – Vacant Council Position:** President Whalen said he has reached out to former council member Bill Taylor to fill the vacancy. He said that the Council will be appointing someone at the next Council meeting. He said that anyone interested in the position needs to submit a letter of interest in the next week or two.

12. Payment of Bills

October Payables

PAYABLES	DECEMBER
(101) General Fund	\$ 59,643.14
(202) Major Street Fund	\$ 23,035.33
(203) Local Street Fund	\$ 26,479.90
(351) Capital Improvement Bond	
(376) 2008 USDA Sewer Debt	
(381) Water Redemption Fund	
(401) Sidewalk Fund	
(581) Airport	\$ 18,157.31
(590) Sewer Department Fund	\$ 45,095.51
(591) Water Department Fund	\$ 38,152.39

(661) Equipment Rental Fund	\$	10,870.84
Total	\$	221,434.42

Informational:

	\$	6,859.04
(206) Fire Department		
	\$	1,077.20
(208) SRA Park Fund		
	\$	58,748.21
(248) Downtown Development Authority		
Total	\$	66,684.45

Motion by Braybrook with a second by Mais to approve the payment of bills in the amount of \$221,434.42. Motion passed unanimously.

13. Public Comment:

Rodney Harrison, 11811 Fruit Ridge, Sparta, spoke about an incident that happened with his son in 2014. He expressed his dissatisfaction with the way the Village Council and the Sparta Police department have dealt with this issue. President Whalen responded that this was an issue that happened in 2014, it was handled, and it is over.

Joe Jenga, 700 Hominy Place, asked about the status of the marijuana dispensary discussion. President Whalen said that the change in Village Managers had delayed any discussion on this issue. He said that McKenna and Associates are currently working on a Master Plan for the Village, and that this issue will be addressed in the Plan. He said that there will be at least one public hearing on this issue. He advised Mr Jenga to attend the Village Planning meetings as this issue will first be addressed by the Planning Commission before it comes to the Village

Council. The Planning Commission had asked for a map of the marijuana exclusion districts, and such a map will be provided at the next planning meeting. The interim Village Manager said that he is involved in updating the Village web site and will help make sure that if Planning Commission meetings are canceled, that that fact will be announced on the Village web site in a timely manner.

14. Council Member Announcements:

a. None.

b. **Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned by President Whalen at 7:53pm.

Submitted by Katy Shelton, Village Clerk.