

**VILLAGE OF SPARTA**  
Kent County, Michigan  
**Special Village Council Meeting**  
**Wednesday February 2, 2022 at 6:00 PM**  
**75 N. Union St. (Sparta Civic Center)**

**Council Members Present:** Village President Robert Whalen, Council Members Brenda Braybrook, Robert Carlstrom, Dave Cumings, Jayne Heath, Bill Taylor, and Gale Taylor.

**Also Present:** David Carpenter (Finance Director), Shay Gallagher (Village Manager), Andrew Milanowski (Police Chief), and Katy Shelton (Village Clerk).

**1. Call to Order:**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance:**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited following the Call to Order.

**3. Roll Call:**

Formal roll call was taken. Those present or absent are noted above.

**4. Additions or Corrections to Consent and Business Agenda:**

None.

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

Motion made by Gale Taylor with a second by Cumings to approve the agenda. Motion passed unanimously.

**6. Public Comment for Agenda Item:**

None

**7. Public Hearing:**

None.

**8. Old Business:**

None.

**9. New Business:**

**a. Sparta Police Department Staffing Discussion:**

The Village Manager gave a synopsis of the issue. He said that there has been a consensus from the Village Council to increase Police Department Staffing – especially with full time officers.

Looking at potential health insurance savings and the retirement of one full time officer this year, both the Village Manager and the Finance Director believe the Village can afford to add one more full-time officer either in a command staff sergeant or road officer position. This additional officer would either be promoted from within the department or be hired from outside. The Police Chief envisions this new position to consist of 2/3 road duties and 1/3 administrative duties.

There is a consensus from the Council to move forward with hiring an additional full-time officer. The Village Manager envisions this taking place sometime in the next six months, though hopefully it will be much sooner. That will give him and the Police Chief adequate time to decide exactly what the position will entail, to advertise and interview for the position, and finally to hire someone after appropriate background checks. This issue will be brought up again at the next Village Council meeting.

**b. Recreational Marihuana Discussion:**

The Village Manager reported that the question of whether or not to allow marijuana in Sparta cannot be placed on a ballot by the Council. To be put on the ballot in order to be voted on, that question must be petition driven: the citizens of Sparta need to initiate that action. The Village manager had previously distributed copies of various ordinances from surrounding municipalities as to how they regulated the distribution of recreational marijuana within their communities. He emphasized that we can craft our ordinance however we want. He will get with the Village Attorney to draft some potential ordinances for the Council to review.

The Police Chief said that he had reached out to the Lowell Police Chief to see what challenges they had faced once they started allowing this in their area. He said that the only increase in crime was some embezzlement and theft (of money and product) from employees of the recreational marijuana business itself. He said that there had been no increase in crime in any other category that could be tied to these particular businesses.

There was a consensus from the Council to move forward on this. Potential ordinances will be drafted, information can be inserted in the Village newsletter at some point, and then additional public input will be sought on this subject.

There has been a moratorium on the sale of both recreational and medical marijuana in Sparta for the past several years. That was done primarily because the state had not yet codified exactly how they were going to handle this issue. The Council feels that it is time to revisit this subject given how our area could benefit from the monies raised through excise and sale taxes on these businesses.

**c. 299 E. Gardner Lot Discussion**

The Village Manager reported that no good offers have been received for the sale of this property. The problem is that it's zoned residential, yet it's not really suitable for that. The Council discussed possibly changing the zoning. There is also a pole barn on an adjacent property. The Village Manager will investigate whether the owner of that property would be willing to sell it and if so, for what price. Putting those two properties together might make the Gardner property more attractive to potential buyers.

**10. Public Comment:**

Joe Jangda from Nature's Releaf and Landon Bartley from Proxima Collective were both in attendance to answer questions and to encourage Council Members to visit marijuana stores in the area. They mentioned that the Village could potentially expect to receive approximately \$60,000 in tax revenues every year from a recreational marijuana business.

**11. Council Member Announcements:**

Email etiquette was discussed by Carlstrom so as not to violate any of the Open Meeting requirements.

**12. Adjournment:**

Village President Whalen adjourned the meeting at 7:08pm.

Submitted by Katy Shelton, Village Clerk