

**VILLAGE OF SPARTA**  
Kent County, Michigan  
**Village Council Meeting**  
**Monday, February 17, 2025 at 7:00 PM**  
**75 N. Union St. (Sparta Civic Center)**

**Present:**

President Robert Whalen, Council Members Brenda Braybrook, David Cumings, Tom Peoples

**Absent:** Robert Carlstrom, Courtney Mais, and Bill Taylor

**Also Present:**

Village Manager James Lower, DPW Supervisor William Hunter, Police Chief Andrew Milanowski, Sgt. David Price, Airport Manager Mike Krzciok, Village Clerk Kristen Phelps, Conrad Bowman (WWTP)

**1. Call to Order**

The Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by President Robert Whalen.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

The Pledge was recited.

**3. Roll Call**

Formal Roll call was taken. Attendance is noted above.

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

Consent Agenda:

- *Approve Regular Village Council Meeting Minutes of January 17, 2025*
- *Approve Fire Board Meeting Minutes of January 23, 2025*
- *Approve DDA Meeting Minutes of January 14, 2025*

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

The Consent and Business Agenda were approved as presented.

Motion: Braybrook moved to approve the consent agenda Cumings support. **Motion Carried 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.

- Jim Vanderwilp from 520 Atkinson, sent in a letter and is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Marcy Savage, Township Clerk is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Eric Dykeama, 9657 Baumhoff Twp., is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Travis Ward, 2169 Sparty Lane Twp., is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Richard Hiaeshutter, 9617 Baumhoff Twp., is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Sam Griswold, 2150 Sparty Lane Twp., is opposed to Res. 25-04.

- Rob Steffens, 4344 13 mile Rd Twp., sent in a letter and is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Jason Bradford, 11910 Sparta Ave Twp., is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Elizabeth Antor, 9341 Laubach Ave. Twp., is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Adam Vanoveren, 9351 Laubach Ave Twp., is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Ken Hammerlin, 1144 12 Mile Rd. Twp., is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Mark Ecker, 566 13 Mile Rd Twp., is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Tom Guiles, 9633 Peach Ridge Ave.Twp., is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Ricky Johnson, 29 Centennial Village, is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Kevin Biehl, 9736 Laubach Ave Twp., is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Josh Eickelberg, 9655 Laubach Ave Twp., is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Sue Johnson, 105 Orchard Village, is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Don Doyle, 9185 Baumhoff Twp., is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Kristi Caine, 8795 Baumhoff. Twp., is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Andrew Siesema, 9471 Laubach Ave Twp., is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Aaron Jurries, 217 Grove St. Village, is opposed to Res. 25-04.

#### 7. Public Hearing

- None.

#### 8. Old Business

- None.

#### 9. New Business

- Village Complex Demo Bid Award
  - Motion: Cumings moved to approve proposal as presented, supported by Peoples.  
**Motion passed 4-0.**
- Village Complex Construction Bid Award
  - Motion: Braybrook moved to approve proposal as presented, supported by Cumings.  
**Motion passed 4-0.**
- Waste Water Treatment Plant Design Build Contract Approval
  - Motion: Peoples moved to approve proposal as presented, supported by Braybrook.  
**Motion passed 4-0.**
- BS&A Cloud Service Agreement
  - Motion: Cumings moved to approve proposal as presented, supported by Braybrook.  
**Motion passed 4-0.**
- Town Square Easement Approval
  - Motion: Peoples moved to approve proposal as presented, supported by Braybrook.  
**Motion passed 4-0.**
- Local Bridge Funding Update/Proposal
  - Motion: wait and see what we can do. As long as it safe.

- Res. 25-04 A Resolution of Intent to Alter the Village Boundaries
  - Letter from Council member Carlstrom (see attached)
  - President Whalen answered some of the questions that the public had.
  - Chad Momber spoke sewer and water on his property.
  - Motion: Braybrook moved to approve proposal as presented, supported by Cumings.  
**Motion passed 4-0.**

#### 10. Executive Session

- None.

#### 11. Village Manager & Department Reports

The Village Manager provided an update on various topics and ongoing developments within the Village.

#### 12. Communications

- Civic Center Future Discussion
- Discussion:
- Village Manager to explore moving on from the Civic Center building at the end of the year. A draft RFP process will be presented to the council at a future meeting. Notice will be given to city church of the villages intent to not renew their lease.

#### 13. Payment of Bills

##### January Payables

PAYABLES	
(101) General Fund	\$173,695.42
(202) Major Street Fund	\$5,944.75
(203) Local Street Fund	\$13,790.68
(581) Airport	\$7,562.86
(590) Sewer Department Fund	\$58,920.13
(591) Water Department Fund	\$27,138.46
(661) Equipment Rental Fund	\$11,487.57
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$298,539.87</b>

Informational:

(206) Fire Department	\$15,746.04
(208) SRA Park Fund	\$223.54
(248) Downtown Development Authority	\$15,272.20
Total	\$31,241.78

**Motion:** Peoples moved to approve the payables as presented, supported by Braybrook. **Motion passed 4-0.**

**14. Public Comment**

- Doug from Historical commission is opposed to Res. 25-04.
- Marcy Savage spoke
- Barb Johnson spoke

**15. Council Member Announcements**

- No announcements

**16. Adjournment**

- Meeting Adjourned at 8:55 pm

## **Statement in Support of Annexation Resolution**

The Village has made multiple attempts to work with the Township on a 425 agreement for this property, but the Township has refused to engage in discussions. After it became clear that the Township was not interested in a 425 agreement, the property owner requested direct annexation into the Village.

I support this action for the following reasons:

**1. Smart Growth Preserves Farmland**

The best way to preserve farmland is through responsible, planned growth. Allowing a small number of very expensive homes on land zoned AG-2 does not preserve farmland—it removes it from agricultural use for good. Extending water and sewer to this property will allow for a range of housing options, making homeownership accessible to working-class families. Sparta should be a community where families of all income levels can live and thrive.

**2. Environmental and Public Health Considerations**

Extending water and sewer service to this property is the responsible choice given its proximity to the contaminated waste disposal site on Laubach Avenue. Without this infrastructure, the land would be filled with septic systems that will inevitably fail over time, creating environmental and public health risks.

**3. Alignment with Community Goals**

Community input during the Master Plan survey indicated strong support for this type of development. This project addresses the "missing middle" housing gap, providing attainable homes rather than limiting development to high-cost estates.

**4. The Township's Approach Undermines Farmland Preservation**

Recent actions by the Township contradict claims of farmland preservation. The Township has allowed AG-2 farmland to be subdivided into large residential lots for very expensive homes, permanently removing it from agricultural use. Additionally, the Township rezoned a prime AG-1 parcel to AG-2, opening it up for development with minimal public discussion or scrutiny.

There are steps the Township could take to genuinely preserve farmland, such as:

- Limiting the number of land divisions allowed in agricultural zones.
- Increasing the minimum lot size for AG-2 parcels without public water/sewer access.
- Collaborating with the Village on 425 agreements when property owners wish to develop.

## **Conclusion**

I fully support this annexation resolution because it prioritizes responsible development, protects the environment, and secures the future of Sparta as a community where families can afford to live and work.

**Robert Carlstrom**