

Meeting of the Sparta Township Board

Sparta Township Hall – 160 E Division St – Sparta MI 49345

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March 13th, 2025 – 7pm

Present: Supervisor Dale Bergman, Clerk Marcy Savage, Treasurer Ashley Johnson, Trustees Jason Bradford, Bill Goodfellow, Barb Johnson, and Rob Steffens.

Also present: Township attorney Cliff Bloom, Library Director Merri Jo Tuinstra, and Recording secretary Katy Shelton.

Absent: No one.

1. **Call to order:** The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.
2. **Pledge of Allegiance:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
3. **Additions or corrections to the agenda:** None. Motion by B Johnson with a second by Goodfellow to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
4. **Public comment for agenda items:**
John Kozal, 9356 Laubach, Sparta: asked about the 425 agreement update that is included in the business items. He wondered if the letter from the Kent County Administrator's office would be addressed. He was told that Clerk Savage will provide an update on this later in the meeting.
5. **Approval of the minutes and treasurer's report:**
 - a. **Approval of the minutes of February 13, 2025:** Motion by Steffens with a second by B Johnson to approve. Motion passed unanimously. Approval of the minutes of

the special workshop meeting of February 26, 2025:
Motion by Savage with a second by B Johnson to
approve. Motion passed unanimously.

b. **Treasurer's Report:** Motion by Goodfellow with a second
by Steffens to approve. Motion passed unanimously.

c. **Building Department monthly report:** this is
informational only. Trustee Goodfellow mentioned that
there were not many building permits issued.

6. **Public hearing: 2025-2026 Sparta Township Budget:**

Supervisor Bergman discussed some of the highlights in the
budget including total revenue, total expenditures, and
various township officials' salaries. He also discussed capital
outlay (elevator renovation), the fire department budget, the
SRA, the library, the Historical Commission, and
expenditures on roads and bridges. It was noted that
expenditures exceed revenue by \$134,951, which will be
easily covered by the Township's healthy fund balance.

Public hearing was opened at 7:10pm.

Fire Chief Dan Olney spoke about his department's budget.
He would like that increased by 200K for an upcoming
building renovation project that will occur over the next two
years. Supervisor Bergman spoke in support of this. Trustee
B Johnson asked about the Village's contribution to the
renovation cost. Chief Olney said that he was asking for
100K from the Village since the Fire Department is funded by
both the Township and the Village on a two thirds to one third
percentage contribution. The fire department has received a
million dollar grant for the renovation project, but it needs the

approval of their budget from both the township and the village to go further.

John Kozal, 9356 Laubach, Sparta, asked about the renovation project.

Richard Ebers, 1705 10 Mile Rd, asked how much the Township would need to contribute in order to get the grant. Chief Olney said it would be 250K. He said that the entire project would cost two million dollars.

Jim Lynema 291 Davis St, Sparta: discussed the 25K designated to go to the SRA included in the 2025-2026 township budget. He thinks that money should go to the Fire Department instead. He believes that the SRA should be funded by a millage instead of general township funds due to a previous township vote in 2012 which did not support the SRA.

Sue Blackall, 110 Indian Lake Rd, Sparta, believes that 25K budgeted to the SRA is an extremely valid and worthwhile expense due to all of the benefits that the SRA contributes to the community.

Public hearing closed at 7:20pm.

7. Public hearing to purchase with a DNR grant the property at 88 Ostman to add onto the Sparta Sports Park:

Public hearing opened at 7:21pm.

Trustee Steffens discussed this. He said that when the township parks plan was updated, it included purchasing this property for the SRA. However, due to the Fire Department needing funds for their renovation project, and the township elevator needing major safety renovations, the SRA has decided to not go forward with this purchase.

Jim Lynema, 291 Davis St, spoke against this purchase.
Public hearing closed at 7:23pm.

8. Business items:

a. **Approval of bills:** Motion by Goodfellow with a second by Bradford to approve. Motion passed unanimously.

b. **Fire Station additional funding – Dan Olney:**

Supervisor Bergman spoke in support of this additional funding. He said that the township can afford it, and the fire department needs it. Township attorney Cliff Bloom then discussed ways that the township could legally give the fire department additional monies. He said that he'd been in discussions with the attorney for the fire department about this process. Board members then discussed this issue at length and asked questions of Mr Bloom and Fire Chief Olney. Motion by Goodfellow with a second by Bradford for the township to approve an additional 200K in funding for the fire department subject to legal counsel oversight. Roll call vote was taken.

Bergman: yes. Savage: yes. Bradford: yes. Steffens: yes. B Johnson: yes. A Johnson: yes. Goodfellow: yes. Motion passed unanimously.

John Kozal asked what was involved with the renovation. Fire Chief Olney responded. He said they've been working on plans for this renovation for over two years. He said that they have "shovel ready" drawings prepared so the project can start as soon as it is approved. Mr Kozal asked if additional millage monies would be needed. He was told that they would not be.

- c. **Salary resolutions:** Supervisor's salary would be \$28,962. Clerk's salary would be \$49,311. Treasurer's salary would be \$42,998. Motion by B Johnson with a second by Goodfellow to approve the supervisor's salary. Roll call vote was taken. Bergman: yes. Savage: yes. Bradford: yes. Steffens: yes. B Johnson: yes. A Johnson: yes. Goodfellow: yes. Motion passed unanimously. Motion by Bradford with a second by B Johnson to approve the clerk's salary. Roll call vote was taken. Bergman: yes. Savage: yes. Bradford: yes. Steffens: yes. B Johnson: yes. A Johnson: yes. Goodfellow: yes. Motion passed unanimously. Motion by Steffens with a second by Savage to approve the treasurer's salary. Roll call vote taken. Bergman: yes. Savage: yes. Bradford: yes. Steffens: yes. B Johnson: yes. A Johnson: yes. Goodfellow: yes. Motion passed unanimously.
- d. **Approval of 2025-2026 Sparta Township Budget:** Motion by B Johnson with a second by Goodfellow to approve the budget with the addition of 200K for the fire department. Motion passed unanimously.
- e. **Approval of DNR grant:** no action was taken by the Board.
- f. **LOR Consulting Project Proposal:** Treasurer Johnson discussed this item. This project will involve Cindy Dodge of LOR Consulting. Ms Dodge has worked for the Michigan Township Association (MTA) for over 18 years. Her project will involve assisting the township in reviewing the financial workflow process for the treasurer and clerk's office as well as providing guidance in moving forward efficiently and productively. She will be in the township

offices for two days for an on site visit at a cost of \$80.00 an hour plus mileage. All of the board members felt that this was a very reasonable cost and would be quite useful. Clerk Savage asked that this project happen AFTER the upcoming election in May. Motion by B Johnson with a second by Goodfellow to approve this project at the cost quoted and for it to commence at a time that would be convenient for the township treasurer and clerk. Motion passed unanimously.

- g. **Electrical work library:** Library Director Tuinstra was present to discuss this issue. She asked that it be tabled for the present time in order for her to get the applicable paperwork necessary to present to the board at the next meeting.
- h. **Civic Center and Historical Commission Research Facility Swap – Doug Pinckney.** Unfortunately, Mr Pinckney was unable to be present. Treasurer Johnson said that she'd been in contact with Village Manager Lower about this. She believes that the Village supports doing this swap, but that additional discussions need to be held with all relevant personnel. Supervisor Bergman is on the Historical Commission and said that they support this swap. Trustee Goodfellow believes this is a good idea and is financially sound. No action was taken at this time.
- i. **Waterworks lawncare proposal 2025:** Motion by Steffens with a second by Goodfellow to accept the proposal and prepay for the services in order to get the discount. Motion passed unanimously.
- j. **P.A.R. plan grant for the fire department:** This is a non matching grant for the fire department of up to 5K. Fire

Chief Olney discussed this. He said that he needs a resolution approved by the township in order to apply for the grant. It would be used to update the pagers used by firefighters as well as purchase additional batteries for the pagers. The cost would be \$4,992.75 which would be covered by the grant. Motion by Bradford with a second by Goodfellow to approve. This is township resolution 25-5. Roll call vote taken. Bergman: yes. Savage: yes. Bradford: yes. Steffens: yes. B Johnson: yes. A Johnson: yes. Goodfellow: yes. Motion passed unanimously.

k. **425 agreement:** Clerk Savage discussed this. She stated that Kent County Commissioner Liz Morse forwarded a letter to the Township that was sent to Village Manager Lower stating that after legal review, they would not be forwarding this issue on to the Board of Commission. The letter further stated that at this time the 425 agreement has been proven to be legal. Clerk Savage stated that the township does not plan on doing anything else regarding this issue.

9. **Other informational:** The board discussed the upcoming township cleaning days. They will be held April 25 from 7:30am-4pm and April 26 from 7:30am-2pm. The location is 11001 N Division in Sparta which is the Old School by Camp Lake. Proof of residency will be required at entry. It was noted that since the Village is contained within the Township that Village residents can make use of this service also. Trustee Johnson asked about the timing for tree removal in the cemetery and stated that she needs additional help with her project of cleaning up the headstones.

10. **Public Comment:** John Kozal asked about the funding of the SRA and the previous vote in 2012 that turned down an increase in the millage in order to fund the Park. Jim Lynema also spoke on this issue. Supervisor Bergman and Clerk Savage both addressed funding the SRA. Library Director Tuinstra thanks the Board for approving the library budget.
11. **Adjournment:** Motion by Goodfellow with a second by adjourn at 8:10pm. Motion passed unanimously.

Submitted by Katy Shelton, recording secretary.