

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the  
Sparta Township Board  
160 E. Division - Sparta MI 49345  
June 30, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Supervisor Dale Bergman.

**Members Present:** Dale Bergman, Marcy Savage, Bill Goodfellow, Rob Steffens, Ashley Johnson, Barb Johnson and Jason Bradford  
Michael Homier, Attorney

**Members Absent:**

**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

**1. Nash Creek Intercounty Drain Assessments Possible Legal Action**

Drain Commissioner Ken Yonkers approached the Sparta Township Board in December 2020 and brought a petition for the board to sign. The Board was told the drain needed to be cleaned and he needed the board to sign the resolution so that the Drain Commission could start working on the Nash Creek Drain. The cost at that time was unknown. There have been a few meetings since 2020 where some numbers were given as a total cost, but nothing was given as to what the residents may owe or what the Township would be responsible for. The Supervisor called the Drain Commissioner in Feb. of 2025 to ask what the Townships portion would be, and he was told they did not know. Supervisor Bergman at that time put \$15,000 into the Townships budget for the year, the actual cost is close to \$600,000.

Attorney Homier explained to the Board that the Townships portion of the total bill is 20% at large. The only recourse for the Township currently, is to appeal at the Board of Review at probate court. The appeal would have to be proving that there was inequality or an unjust assessment of the Township. The Attorney explained that it would be an uphill battle and there wasn't a very good chance for the Township to win. The Attorney went on to explain that if the Township loses at probate court, the Township will have to pay our Attorney bills and the total cost the County incurred.

Trustee Bradford explained that in the meeting he went to, he had asked if this project could be stretched out and done in phases. He was told that it all had to be paid for, and the work done all at one time.

The Board also explained that there are 7 of these drains in the County being done right now and many others have been very surprised by the cost. This project started at about \$8,000,000.00 and the Drain Commissioner received 2,000,000 from the State of Michigan. Also, most farmers were very cooperative and gave easement to the Drain Commissioner saving the Township another 900,000.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Sam Armock-9380 Kenowa,- He said this project would not benefit anybody, and he just can afford it.

Evelyn Simons 2920 12 Mile rd. – She thinks it really stinks to make everyone pay for it.

Janet Rasch 12 Cranberry Lake Ct.- Cost is different if the Drain Commissioner does it on his own than if the Township petitions the Commissioner. Farmers are paying the majority, and the Village isn't paying hardly anything.

Joe, This is not going to benefit his land at all. And why do we have to pay interest?

Attorney Homier stated that the interest rate should be between 4 and 5 1/2 % and explained how bonds work.

Kelly Erhart 3175 11-mile rd. -Creek doesn't belong to me. I can't do anything with the creek. Why do I have to pay for it?

Lee Schnider 560 Harding St.- Retired and living on Social Security, school taxes alone are a bugger to pay for. It just hurts.

Troy Goodno- Supervisor Chester Twp, stated that Chester Twp budgeted \$20,000 and they are assessed for \$164,000.

Vince Gargagliano 8811 Peach Ridge, - How many bids did they get? If this doesn't work, will they give us a refund? I think they could renegotiate it.

David Schoeborn 5599 Harding- The whole goal is to keep the Village of Sparta from flooding. Really expensive for young farmers.

Brett Anderson 9431 Laubach- What happens if the Township defaults on their debt? Wants the Township to contact the media to change the narrative. This is a difficult time in agricultural communities' history.

Chuck Rasch 452 Harding- Asked how was the formula per acre drawn up? He doesn't understand why we are all paying engineering fees that are a quarter of the cost of the project.

Patrick Goodfellow 4546 12 Mile- He hopes the Township has learned from this experience. He wants to show what Ken Yonkers is doing to our township and others through the media. Yonkers is getting away with murder basically. He believes this could be done much cheaper. He wants our story to be told. Patrick told the residents that they should fill out a PC 701 and go together on an appeal at probate court, so it doesn't cost so much individually.

Attorney Homier- Urged the residents to reach out to their representatives to change the drain code. He also explained that each landowner can appeal their assessment if they believe it is an unjust amount according to the benefit they receive. He encouraged them to apply pressure to the Drain commission and to their state representatives.

Vince Gargagliano- Asked about a rain tax in Grand Rapids.

Jeff Vanderwerf-1455 Blackhills South Dr.-He wanted to let the residents know they are in for a treat with the drain being cleaned out. They leave an ungodly mess that will take you two months to clean up. He urges residents to reach out to Brian Postumus. He stated that someone needs to run for Drain Commissioner. He is concerned about trespassing when it becomes a trout stream.

Clerk Savage informed the public that she was going to leave very good notes to her predecessor so that this will not happen in the future to the residents of Sparta Township.

Closed Public Comment at 10:55

The Board had a discussion about how they wanted to proceed and explained that we did not get what we were told was going to happen. The board was convinced by the drain commissioner that they were just improving the drain in the village so it wouldn't flood again. At no point did the Township know how this could impact the residents or the Township as a whole. The board feels we were "taken to the cleaners". The Board also discussed if it would be prudent to go to an appeals court to have our portion of the cost of the drain reapportioned. But the concession of the Board feels that that would be unfair to the residents as the Drain Commissioner would just take our portion and distribute it to individuals.

A motion was made to not pursue any legal action on the Nash Creek Drain Assessment by Steffens and was seconded by B. Johnson. It was passed 6-1 with Goodfellow Dissenting.

Goodfellow made a motion for Sparta Township to cancel any and all support for the Nash Creek Project. The Board and the Attorney had a discussion and thought that since it was started with a resolution that our support should be withdrawn with a resolution. Goodfellow withdrew his motion. It was decided that Attorney Homier would draft a resolution for the Board to vote on at our next meeting. This resolution would just be a message to the Drain Commissioner that we do not approve with how he has handled this project and left the Township and its residents in the dark.

It was asked if the Township could apply for a grant?

It was also stated that the Township should throw some money at it and let the Drain Commissioner know he is not allowed on any of our property.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Vince Gargaliono –He has attended a lot of meetings, and they have cost him some money but they have benefited him. What are you all afraid of.

Chad Momber offered his event barn if the residents need to have a meeting to file and go to court.

Savage made a motion to adjourn the meeting it was seconded by Bradford at 11:20

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20A.M.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marcy Savage, Sparta Township Clerk