

## Meeting of the Sparta Township Board

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

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June 12, 2025 – 7pm

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

**Also present:** Historical Society Chairman Doug Pinckney, Library Director Merri Jo Tuinstra, and Recording secretary Katy Shelton.

**Absent:** Trustee Bill Goodfellow

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:** Treasurer Johnson requested that the item “Attorney discussion” be added to the agenda. Motion by B Johnson with a second by A Johnson to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
4. **Public comment for agenda items:**  
Vince and Cynthia Giordano, both of 8811 Peach Ridge, Sparta MI, asked about the Nash Creek drain project and the watershed connected with it. In particular, they were concerned about its financing and who was paying for it.
5. **Approval of the minutes and treasurer’s report:**
  - a. **Approval of the minutes of May 8th, 2025:** Motion by Steffens with a second by B Johnson to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
  - b. **Treasurer’s Report:** Motion by Steffens with a second by Bradford to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
  - c. **Building Department monthly report:** this is informational only.
6. **Business items:**
  - a. **Approval of bills:** Motion by Bradford with a second by B Johnson to approve. Motion passed unanimously.

- b. **Historical Commission Research Facility Trade for Civic Center:** The board discussed this. Supervisor Bergman thinks it's an excellent idea and advises no delay in doing this. Some trustees would like to tour the building first and suggest delaying a vote on this until next month's meeting when the full board would be in attendance. It was noted that the Historical Society voted unanimously to accept this trade. It was noted that the Civic Center isn't currently set up with audio-visual capabilities to transmit meetings in real time. The consensus of the board was to support this trade. Treasurer Johnson suggested getting a legal opinion on this.
- c. **Food and Beverage Policy:** During elections, clerk Savage provides snacks for the election workers at the poll as well as dinner for the absentee ballot workers. The current township policy limits her to \$75.00 per election which is not enough. She asked that the board increase this to \$200.00. Motion by Bradford with a second by B Johnson to approve this change. Motion passed unanimously.
- d. **LOR Consulting Project Report:** Treasurer Johnson discussed this. She said that Cindy Dodge from LOR Consulting was in the township offices for two full days and did a full analysis. She said that the majority of her suggestions dealt with procedural items such utilizing a lot of cross checking for better oversight. Ms Dodge also discussed ways that the offices could become better organized, in particular regarding the budget and maximizing revenue.
- e. **Purchase of Receipting from BS&A:** A. Johnson request the board to again look at the receipting program from BS &A. She explained how it would make everything easier in the office when we start taking online payments starting July 1. Motion by Savage with a second by B Johnson to purchase the necessary equipment from BS&A as a price not to exceed \$6015. Motion passed unanimously.

- f. **Nash Creek Intercounty Drain Discussion:** There was an intense discussion about this issue by the board. Most of the boardmembers expressed total and complete shock over the cost (township portion \$595,123.20 – total cost \$4,100,000) and the financial impact. Supervisor Bergman stated that this will have a major impact on local farmers. He asked if the Township had any legal recourse on this issue.
- Mary O'Reilly, 1850 O'Connor, Sparta, asked about a previous hearing on this issue and about a letter that residents had received several years ago about this project.
- Cynthia Giordano spoke about the project again. She asked if the project was really worth that much money.
- Janet Rasch, 12 Cranberry Court, Conklin, asked who did the original work.
- Tom Guiles, 9633 Peach Ridge, Sparta, said that all the residents need to show up at one specified time for the Drain Commission meeting on June 26<sup>th</sup>. He also said that residents need more than 45 days to pay their assessments before incurring late fees.
- g. **Computer quote:** It was noted that no refurbished computers are available. The Township has a quote of \$5839.73 from Dell for the requested 5 computers and 2 monitor needs. Motion by Steffens with a second by B Johnson to approve. Motion passed unanimously.
- h. **Attorney change:** Treasurer Johnson brought this issue to the board. She mentioned that our current township attorney, Cliff Bloom of Bloom Sluggett, PC, is an associate with Jeff Sluggett, the Villages attorney. She said that when there is a township-village issue, the Township has to use a different attorney because of potential conflict. The Township has used Michael Homier from Foster Swift and has been very happy with him. He also came recommended by the Townships Auditor to assist the Township if the Village becomes a city. It was decided to table this issue tonight and discuss it at next month's meeting when the full board would be in attendance.

7. **Other informational:** Trustee B Johnson gave an update on the cemetery project. She said that the cemetery was looking much better with the reset headstones. She mentioned that the soffit on the west side at the top of the old school house is missing. Historical Society chairman Pinckney will check on this. Trustee Steffens said he was seeking grants to pay for the retrofitting of the township elevator due to it's high cost, but was unable to find any. The board discussed some of the recent meetings and talks regarding "cityhood" for the Village. Clerk Savage does not believe that the Village's financial numbers regarding what will happen if they transition to a city are accurate. There was concern expressed about the funding of the library, fire department, SRA, and the Historical Society if that transition occurs. Library Director Tuinstra said that if the Village transitions to a city, she is concerned of the talk of a KDL library. That will be more expensive as well as eliminating local oversight and operations of the library.
8. **Public Comment:** Historical Society Chairman Pinckney asked about the drain project and flooding. Trustee Bradford said he was supportive of the project, but asked why it had to be done all at once.. It was suggested that the township ask the Drain Commissioner to meet with the board. It was asked how the township would pay for this project. According to the auditors, the best way would be to cash out a CD and pay for it that way.
9. **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn at 8:28pm by Savage with a second by Steffens. Motion passed unanimously.

Submitted by Katy Shelton, recording secretary.

Reviewed by Marcy Savage, Clerk