

Meeting of Sparta Township Board

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

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May 14th, 2026 - 7 p.m.

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

Absent: Trustee Jason Bradford

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.
4. **Public Comment on agenda items:** None.
5. **Approval of Minutes and Treasurer's Report:**
 - a. **Approval of Minutes of April 9th, 2026:** Motion to approve the Minutes by Bill Goodfellow, second by Marcy Savage. The motion passed unanimously, with all members in favor.
 - b. **Approval of Minutes of May 5th, 2026:** Motion to approve the Minutes by Bill Goodfellow, second by Ashley Johnson. The motion passed unanimously, with all members in favor.
 - c. **Treasurer's Report:** Motion to approve the Treasurer's Report by Rob Steffens, second by Barb Johnson. The motion passed unanimously, with all members in favor.
6. **Building Department Monthly Report:** *Informational only, report not available for the meeting.*

Business Items:

1. **Approval of the Bills:** Motion by Barb Johnson with a second by Bill Goodfellow to approve the bills. The motion passed unanimously, with all members in favor.
2. **Employee Policy:** The board discussed whether to adopt a formal employee policy or handbook following recommendations from a risk control review and related HR resources. While some members felt the existing governance principles and code of conduct were sufficient for the township's small staff, others noted the value of having policies addressing personnel matters, workplace conduct, and risk management. The board agreed that any handbook would require significant customization and should not be rushed. It was also clarified that other risk management recommendations, such as facility safety improvements, would be addressed separately. The board voted 5-1 to drop the immediate pursuit of an employee policy and defer consideration of an employee handbook to a later date.

3. **Fence Quote Fairplains Cemetery:** The board reviewed two quotes for a fence project at Fairplains Cemetery. One quote from Cedar Springs Fence was for \$3,925, while the second quote from Fitz Fence and Backyard was for \$7,300. Although there was discussion about minor differences between the proposals, including the township providing dirt and concrete for one quote, the board agreed the price difference was significant. A motion was made and seconded to accept the Cedar Springs Fence quote for \$3,925. Following discussion, the motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.
4. **Election Worker Wages:** The board discussed increasing election worker pay in response to rising minimum wage rates and a review of wages paid by other municipalities, which ranged from \$15 to \$20 per hour. A proposal was made to increase election worker wages to \$16 per hour and raise the lunch and dinner relief stipend from \$75 to \$80 per day to compensate workers who cover meal breaks and make multiple trips to the polling location. Following discussion and clarification of the role of relief worker, a motion was made by Rob Steffen and seconded by Barb Johnson to approve wage increases. The motion passed unanimously with all board members in favor.
5. **Historical Commissioners Re-Appointments:** The board reviewed historical commission appointments and clarified term lengths under the ordinance requiring three-year appointments by majority vote. A motion made by Marcy and seconded by Ashley to reappoint Doug Pinkney, Jamie Brooks, Bob Cummings, Dale Bergman, Roxan Claxton, and Barb Johnson to the historical commission. The motion passed unanimously with all board members in favor.
6. **Roof Patch Up Quote:** After discussion of costs, timing, and long-term value, the board agreed that more information was needed before choosing between a patch repair and full roof replacement. A motion made by Rob Steffen and seconded by Barb Johnson to solicit formal bids for a full roof replacement based on a specification sheet, with updates completed as needed. The motion passed unanimously.
7. **Lease Agreement with Sparta Historical Friends:** The board reviewed the lease agreement with Sparta Historical Friends for museum space use. Concerns were raised regarding event usage, access between spaces, and overall contract clarity. The board agreed to table the agreement until the next meeting to allow for further clarification and review.
8. **Township Facebook Page:** The board discussed creating an official township Facebook page to share accurate public information in a controlled, one-way format without public comments or discussion. Members agreed that a formal social media policy is necessary to manage content, legal compliance, and records retention. After reviewing existing resources, the board agreed to use the Michigan Township Association (MTA) social media and website policy as a template, with modifications as needed, rather than creating a policy from scratch. A motion was made and seconded to proceed with the MTA template approach, and the motion passed 5-1.

OTHER INFORMATIONAL:

- Rob reported that he and his son completed maintenance work at Lisbon Cemetery, including cleanup of storm damage, removal of overgrown brush, and minor fence issues.

- Rob also provided an informational update on county-level farmland preservation discussions, as well as concerns about future assessor staffing shortages and rising costs as experienced assessors retire and municipalities struggle to fill those positions.
- Barb reported that she and her husband plan to resume cemetery work in Sparta around June 10th, focusing on straightening headstones and maintaining cemetery rows, with a goal of completing at least fifty stones at Greenwood Cemetery.
- Ashley reported that the township received a \$16,000 public safety grant, with guidance indicating that 75% is intended for the sheriff's department and the remaining 25% (approximately \$4,000) may be used by the township for other public safety purposes. She noted that clarification is still being reviewed and a recommendation will be brought back to the board regarding how to allocate the funds.
- Rob provided an update on the sports park, noting that recent cleanup work improved the appearance of signage and the site overall. He also reported on the ongoing drain commission project across from the park, explaining that construction delays due to rain have slowed progress, but work is continuing the approximately \$6 million project. Rob added that discussions with the project engineer suggest potential restoration of the park's parking area with gravel as part of the project completion, rather than the township covering that cost directly.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- A candidate for state representative, Lynn Afendoulis, introduced herself to the board and shared her background as a lifelong West Michigan resident with experience in journalism, business, and prior service in the Michigan House of Representatives. She highlighted her focus on limiting government growth, supporting local municipalities, and increasing civic engagement and transparency. She also noted her previous political campaigns and expressed interest in returning to public service to promote more effective and respectful governance.
- Joseph Fox, a candidate for state Senate, introduced himself and emphasized themes of faith, family, and freedom. He highlighted policy priorities including election integrity, gun rights, and limiting government oversight, and referenced his legislative and committee experience in the Michigan House. He concluded by stressing a commitment to serving future generations and promoting community-focused leadership.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn at 8:18PM by Barb Johnson, second by Marcy Savage. The motion passed unanimously, with all members in favor.

Submitted by: Sarah Fischer