

Meeting of Sparta Township Board

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

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October 9, 2025 - 7pm

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

Also present: Historical Society Chairman Doug Pinckney Library Director MerriJo Tuinstra, and Recording Secretary Sarah Fischer.

Absent: None

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:** Dale Bergman requested to add the Myer's Cemetery as the fifth item on the agenda. Motion by Barb Johnson and seconded by Bill Goodfellow. The motion passed unanimously, with all members in favor.
4. **Public Comment for agenda items:** None.
5. **Approval of minutes and treasurer's report:**
 - **Approval of minutes of September 11th, 2025:** Motion by Rob Steffens with a second by Bill Goodfellow. The motion passed unanimously, with all members in favor.
 - **Treasurer's Report:** Motion by Bill Goodfellow with a second by Barb Johnson. The motion passed unanimously, with all members in favor.
6. Building Department Monthly Report: this is informational only.

Business items:

- A. **Approval of Bills:** An added invoice of \$1,962.75 was received from Buist for evaluating proposed work at the Township office, beyond the originally approved \$2,933. Bill Goodfellow presented an email from the contractor telling him no other fees would be charged. A copy of the email will be sent to dispute the added charge. A motion to approve all bills including the payment of \$2,933 was made by Barb Johnson, seconded by Bill Goodfellow, and passed unanimously.

to use a small backhoe next spring to help level and clear around the headstones. More volunteers are needed at Greenwood and other cemeteries to help manage the work.

- Rob shared that significant work is underway at the Sports Park, including excavation of a large pit behind fields three and four to hold silt being pumped from the pond off Elkan. The removed fill, consisting of high-quality sandy soil, has been used to level and compact the future parking area. The silt removal and water reclamation process will begin soon, with ongoing grading and leveling to bring the area up to field level. This project is expected to improve the site's drainage and overall usability.

Public Comment:

- Robert Carlstrom, addressed the board on disruptive and disrespectful behavior by several members during public meetings over the past year.
- Lauren Crowell addressed the board on an untruthful comment made by Township Treasurer.
- Michelle Crowell at 155 Liberty Street, addressed the board in response to untruthful statement made by Township Treasurer.
- Lori Whalen at 273 River Road, spoke out against slanderous comments made by Township Treasurer during a public village meeting.
- Village President Robert Whalen at 273 River Road provided multiple comments.
Correction & Apology: He opened by apologizing for his earlier outburst and misattributing a comment to the wrong board member.

Peterson Property Concerns: Shared concerns about the board drafting a 425 agreement when the property owner never requested it. Additionally, raised concerns about a board member with potential conflicts of interest voting on the matter.

Response to Ashley Johnson's Comments: Condemned Treasurer public comment of his minor granddaughter..

Additionally, Robert expressed his concerns about the Township's financial management.

- Courtney Mias at 313 Hill Valley Lane expressed strong disapproval of Treasurer behavior.
- MerriJo Tuinstra at 100 Orchard Drive, Sparta Library Director, said thank you to board members and community members who attended the library's open house. She shared that the event was well-received and highlighted updates to the space, including new colors and shelving.
- Historical Society Chairman Doug Pinckey disputed Village members' claims of township bankruptcy.

- B. **Update on Petition for Annexation of Peterson Property:** The Township Board and attorney support proposing a 425 Agreement for the Peterson Property. A draft agreement was presented for the Board's vote to send it to the Village of Sparta and the County. A public hearing will be scheduled, and final documents prepared. Marcy Savage moved to send the draft to the Village and County, seconded by Barb Johnson. The motion passed unanimously.
- C. **Fairplain Cemetery Fence Issue:** The Township previously replaced fencing along the Cemetery border without conducting a land survey, unintentionally installing the new fence sixteen feet onto adjacent private property. The Board discussed two options: compensating the property owner for the land or removing and reinstalling the fence within Cemetery boundaries. The decision was tabled pending a discussion with the property owner to decide on an acceptable offer, which will be weighed against the cost of moving the fence.
- D. **Locks and Keys Replacement Quotes for Township Hall:** The Board agreed to move forward with replacing the locks and keys for the Township building. Earlier quotes had been reviewed, with an added quote of \$590.00 from Hoogerhyde Safe & Locks, Inc. presented at this meeting. After discussion, Bill Goodfellow moved to approve the Hoogerhyde quote and award them the work, seconded by Barb Johnson. The motion passed unanimously.
- E. **Meyer's Cemetery Trees:** Dale Bergman reported trimming and maintenance concerns at the cemetery, including overgrown brush and sunken gravestones. He received a quote from Beaver Tree Service, LLC and suggested obtaining a second quote for comparison. He requested Board approval for up to \$1,500 and will go ahead with the lowest bid. If both quotes are equal, he recommended selecting Beaver Tree Service. Motion moved by Rob Steffens to grant Supervisor Dale Bergman approval for this work up to the amount of \$1,500.00, with a second by Jason Bradford. The motion passed unanimously.

Other Information:

- Dale asked the Board to consider potential locations for Clean-up Days before next month's meeting. Scott Gardner, owner of American Classic—the company that managed last year's event—is interested in returning but has requested a new location.
- Marcy provided the Board with an updated budget, noting it has been a while since they reviewed one. She included explanations for certain items, such as two \$9,000 elevator payments offset by a \$10,000 grant. She recommended the Board review the budget before the next meeting, as some budget amendments—particularly related to the drain bill—will need to be discussed.
- Barb and her husband have been volunteering their time at the Greenwood Cemetery, straightening, and repairing about 165 headstones this year despite weather and scheduling challenges. A volunteer from Barb's church has offered

- Chad Momber 1423 Lake Shore drive, expressed frustration over slow progress on a development plan he first gave eight years ago. Chad also shared upcoming community events at his venue, including a Make-A-Wish fundraiser, the Sparta 300 event, and announced that his venue will host a televised Governor debate.

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn at 8:04pm by Barb Johnson with a second by Marcy Savage. The motion passed unanimously, with all members in favor.

Submitted by: Sarah Fischer

Reviewed by: Marcy Savage