

Meeting of Sparta Township Board
Sparta Township Hall - 160 E Division St - Sparta MI 49345
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January 8th, 2026 - 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 Pinckey, Library Director MerriJo Tuinstra, Village Council Member Robert Carlstrom and Brenda Breybook, and Village President Robert Whalen, Village Manager James Lower 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:** Supervisor Dale Bergman added **Township Official's Conduct** to the meeting agenda at the request of Jim Lower, Village of Sparta Manager.
4. **Public Comment for agenda items:** None.
5. **Approval of minutes and treasurer's report:**
 - a. **Approval of minutes of December 11th, 2025:** Motion by Barb Johnson with a second by Rob Steffens. The motion passed unanimously, with all members in favor.
 - b. **Treasurer's Report:** Motion to approve the Treasurer's Report by Bill Goodfellow with a second by Barb Johnson. The motion passed unanimously, with all members in favor.
 - c. **Building Department Monthly Report:** *Informational only.* Building Department Monthly and Year-End report provided.
6. **Business items:**
 - a. **Approval of Bills:** Motion by Rob Steffens with a second by Ashley Johnson. The motion passed unanimously, with all members in favor.
 - b. **Spring Clean-Up Days:** Sparta Township is planning to host a Spring Clean-Up Day for residents at no cost. Rex Baker has volunteered to use his property located on Prospect Street in Sparta for the event. The proposed dates and times are Friday, April 17th from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Saturday, April 18th from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Service will close promptly at the designated end times; therefore, it is critical that residents are aware they must be through the line by

the posted closing time. Anyone waiting in line at the time of closure will not be serviced.

A map was provided, and details were discussed regarding acceptable drop-off items, as well as designated staging, parking, and waiting areas. Additional discussion will take place with Jim Lower to determine how best to accommodate and manage traffic flow during the event's operating hours. Marcy Savage made a motion to proceed with the Spring Clean-Up Day event and to approve all information and costs as discussed. The motion was seconded by Rob Steffens and passed unanimously, with all members in favor.

- c. **Appointment to the Fire Authority:** As part of finalizing the Articles of Incorporation with the Secretary of State following approval of the Fire Authority, the board addressed the required appointment of authority members. Current fire board members were reappointed to serve as members of the new authority. The board made a motion to approve the appointment of Dale Bergman, Bill Goodfellow, and Dean Anderson to the Fire Authority. The motion passed unanimously, with all members in favor.
- d. **Berger Property Purchase:** The board discussed a potential purchase of land owned by Nancy Burgerer, located behind Greenwood Cemetery, for cemetery expansion. The property is approximately three-quarters of an acre, fully wooded, and offered to the township at its current market value. While the land could support future burial needs, the board noted timing concerns related to budgeting and uncertainty around future cityhood. Since there is no urgency from the seller, the board agreed to express interest but defer any decision until the upcoming budget review.
- e. **Township Official's Conduct:** Jim Lower, Sparta Village Manager, appeared before the board to address concerns regarding the distribution of information and communications related to Village projects, funding, and governance. He provided context on recent meetings, shared documentation and security footage, and highlighted instances of potentially misleading information being shared publicly and privately. The discussion included clarification of property ownership, grant funding, and Village decision-making processes, as well as observations of broader patterns of behavior affecting Village -Township relations.

The board listened to the concerns presented and acknowledged the points raised. They agreed to take the matter into consideration and to explore the

potential development of formal codes of conduct or policies governing the behavior of board members and staff.

OTHER INFORMATION: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Jackie Landon, a new Sparta Township resident at 3957 15 Mile Road and co-owner of Native Edge, a landscape and environmental firm, addressed the board regarding concerns about data centers. Drawing on her background in aquatic biology, she highlighted potential negative impacts of data centers, including high water and energy usage, limited long-term job creation, and risks to local water quality and public health. She cited examples from other communities to illustrate these concerns, including contamination risks and strain on aquifers.

Ms. Landon suggested that the township proactively seeks expert guidance and consider measures such as a temporary moratorium on data center approvals to allow time for community discussion and planning. She offered resources from nonprofit organizations and other townships as examples of approaches that could help Sparta manage potential environmental and resource impacts. She encouraged ongoing engagement and careful consideration before data centers are introduced to the area.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion to adjourn at 7:46pm EST by Marcy Savage with a second by Barb Johnson. The motion passed unanimously, with all members in favor.

Submitted by: Sarah Fischer

Reviewed by: Marcy Savage