

April 11, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 6:38 p.m. by Mayor Chiariello who issued the formal statement in compliance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975.

Roll call was taken and present were: Mayor Chiariello, Deputy Mayor Clark, Councilwoman Quinn, Councilman Blumetti, Interim Township Manager/CFO Grant Rome, Township Attorney Tom Ryan, and Township Clerk Roxanne Landy. Councilman Hertzberg was absent.

Open Public Meetings Act-Executive Session:

On motion by Deputy Mayor Clark, seconded by Councilman Blumetti and unanimously carried, the following resolution was duly adopted:

WHEREAS, Section 8 of the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 231, P.L. 1975, permits the exclusion of the public from a meeting in certain circumstances; and

WHEREAS, this public body is of the opinion that such circumstances presently exist.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Sparta, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. The public shall be excluded from discussion of an action upon the hereinafter specified subject matters.
2. The general nature of the subject matter to be discussed is as follows:
 - a. Personnel
 - b. Litigation
 - c. Contract Negotiations
 - d. Miscellaneous Legal Advice

It is anticipated at this time that the above stated subject matter will be made public when deemed appropriate.

This resolution shall take effect immediately.

On motion by Councilman Blumetti, seconded by Deputy Mayor Clark and unanimously carried, Council reconvened into public session at 7:30 p.m.

Salute to the Flag:

Mayor Chiariello led the assembly in a salute to the flag.

Proclamations:

Child Abuse Prevention Month:

Mayor Chiariello read a proclamation commemorating April as Child Abuse Prevention Month and called upon all citizens, community agencies, faith groups, medical facilities and businesses to increase their participation in the Township's efforts to support families therefore preventing child abuse and strengthening the community as a whole.

Police Chief McCarrick presented members from the Sussex County Prosecutor's office with the proclamation and thanked them for their unwavering efforts to protect children and to investigate and prosecute child abuse crimes.

Donate Life Month:

Councilwoman Quinn read a proclamation commemorating April as Donate Life Month and urged all citizens to consider becoming an organ donor and joining forces to increase the number of organ, eye, and tissue donors throughout Sussex County and the State.

Kelly Bonaventure accepted the proclamation, along with donors and donor recipients and spoke about the program and the many lives that have been changed as a result. She thanked Council for their support.

Earth Day:

Councilman Blumetti read a proclamation commemorating April 22, 2023 as Earth Day and encouraged all residents to honor this observance with the appropriate activities and programs.

Cara Johnson from the Green Club accepted the proclamation and spoke about the planned activities that would be held at the Municipal Building to celebrate Earth Day.

Minutes:

Deputy Mayor Clark made a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes held on February 28, 2023. Councilwoman Quinn seconded the motion.

Councilman Blumetti stated that he had a correction and an addition that he wanted to propose. He stated that the correction was on page 4, line 1, "Chairperson" should be changed to "Secretary".

Councilman Blumetti stated that he wanted the minutes to be amended to include several additional key points from a discussion that he had talked about regarding the salt shed and bond.

Councilwoman Quinn suggested attaching the Environmental Commission letter to the minutes that Councilman Blumetti had been referring to.

Councilman Blumetti made a motion to correct page 4, line 1 changing "Chairperson" to "Secretary". Deputy Mayor Clark seconded the motion and it was unanimously carried.

Councilman Blumetti made a motion that the Environmental Commission letter that he had referenced be attached to the minutes. Councilwoman Quinn seconded the motion and it was unanimously carried.

On motion by Deputy Mayor Clark, seconded by Councilman Blumetti and unanimously carried, the minutes of February 28, 2023 were adopted as amended.

Manager's Report:**Interim Manager Grant Rome gave updates to various projects and events in Sparta Township, a copy of which is attached hereto:**

I would like to thank Michael Dempsey on updating the equipment in the Council Chambers to allow live-streamed and recorded meetings, as well as assisting and educating the employees on using the new system.

The Public Works and Parks Departments completed the project of installing four (4) 25-foot parking light posts in front of Freedom Field. The fixtures are efficient using LED and also have photocell light control sensors maximizing their ability to keep the area lighted and safe during sundown hours. This project was a great collaborated effort between staff from both Departments and money was saved by not outsourcing it. I encourage everyone to stop by the field to check them out.

Parks & Recreation Department:

- The Spring/Summer Program Activity brochure has been released and registration opens to residents tomorrow, April 12th.
- The Bunny Breakfast was a big success on Saturday, April 1st. Over 100 children plus their parents attended which included pictures with the bunny as well as enjoyed the petting zoo and pony rides after the weather cleared.
- The Parks staff has finished most field preparations and the fields opened earlier than anticipated due to the cooperating weather. Recreation staff are trying to accommodate the large amount of field requests and pavilion rental requests that have started.

Utility Department:

- As the replacement of the bridge over the Wallkill River project continues, Sparta Water Utility has been successfully supplying water to the Town of Newton with minimal impact on Sparta's water system.
- The Celia Drive wastewater lift station has been completed and is fully operational.

As a reminder, the Township's Free Rabies clinic will be held on **Saturday, April 22nd**, from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. for dogs, and from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. for cats, at our Public Works Facility at 15 Prices Lane in Sparta.

For more information on any of the above items, please visit www.spartanj.org

In response to a question by Deputy Mayor Clark, Mr. Rome stated that the repair of the bridge could take up to eight weeks from the time the work is started.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that it was her understanding the work would be completed in phases and could take up to a year.

Approval of Manager's Report:

On motion by Councilwoman Quinn, seconded by Councilman Blumetti and unanimously carried, the Manager's Report was approved as presented.

Open to the Public:

No one wished to be heard and this portion of the meeting was closed.

Expenditures:

Deputy Mayor Clark made a motion to approve the expenditures. Councilman Blumetti seconded.

In response to a question by Councilman Blumetti concerning a roadway asset inventory project, Mr. Rome stated that it was an evaluation of the streets and roads in order to prioritize which ones need repair. He stated that the DPW was repairing at least ten miles of roadway each year.

There being no further questions, the motion to approve the expenditures in the amount of \$2,348,091.24 was unanimously carried and the expenditures were approved as presented.

Introduction of Ordinance:

23-03 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA RESPECTING THE DISPLAY OF FLAGS ON TOWNSHIP FLAGPOLES

Deputy Mayor Clark made a motion to introduce the ordinance and Councilman Blumetti seconded.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that she had sent out to Council members and the Manager eight recommendations for this ordinance in order to have it be more protective and to add more to it. She mentioned that the size of the proposed flags don't match up and asked about the provision for third parties.

Mayor Chiariello stated that a third party would be someone who would ask on behalf of a resident or an organization domiciled in Sparta. He stated that the ordinance required that a resident or organization from Sparta must make the request directly.

Councilwoman Quinn went over her recommendations that included a form to be filled out instead of relying on emails, the flags should only fly at town hall because of infrastructure issues, time limits, remove reference to school and team flags, remove reference to flags of other countries, make clear that Council would not entertain any request that would invite violence, and remove reference to government speech in the ordinance. She stated that Council needed to be mindful that the ordinance would remain indefinitely once adopted and stopgaps should be put into it so it could not be used for the wrong purposes moving forward.

Councilwoman Quinn made a motion to include the proposals that she outlined in the ordinance. There being no second, the motion failed.

Councilman Blumetti stated that the ordinance stated that all commemorative flags needed to be smaller in size than the American flag, NJ State flag and the POW/MIA flag. He stated also that there are times when the country does wish to support other nations similar to when the VFW flew the Ukraine flag.

Mayor Chiariello stated that the municipal building had been lit up in the Ecuadorian flag colors when a Sparta resident had competed in the Olympics under the flag of Ecuador.

There being no further comments, the ordinance was introduced by the following roll call vote:

Councilman Blumetti – Yes
Deputy Mayor Clark – Yes

Councilwoman Quinn - No
Mayor Chiariello - Yes

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Sparta that the following ordinance entitled: **AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA RESPECTING THE DISPLAY OF FLAGS ON TOWNSHIP FLAGPOLES** is hereby adopted on first reading and the same shall be considered for final passage at a meeting of the Township Council to be held on April 25, 2023 at 7:30 p.m. at the Municipal Building, 65 Main Street and the Township Clerk is authorized to publish notice of the introduction and final hearing according to law.

23-10 ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK (N.J.S.A. 40A:4-45.14)

On motion by Councilman Blumetti, seconded by Deputy Mayor Clark the ordinance was introduced by the following roll call vote:

Councilman Blumetti – Yes
Deputy Mayor Clark – Yes

Councilwoman Quinn - Yes
Mayor Chiariello – Yes

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Sparta that the following ordinance entitled: **ORDINANCE TO EXCEED THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET APPROPRIATION LIMITS AND TO ESTABLISH A CAP BANK (N.J.S.A. 40A:4-45.14)** is hereby adopted on first reading and the same shall be considered for final passage at a meeting of the Township Council to be held on April 25, 2023 at 7:30 p.m. at the Municipal Building, 65 Main Street and the Township Clerk is authorized to publish notice of the introduction and final hearing according to law.

Hearing of Ordinance:

23-05 The second and final hearing of the ordinance entitled **AN ORDINANCE AMENDING TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA CODE SECTIONS 19-14.S AND 20-3.6 REGARDING WATER AND SEWER UTILITY CAPITAL CONNECTION FEES** was given and held open for public discussion.

No one from the public wished to be heard and this portion of the meeting was closed.

On motion by Deputy Mayor Clark, seconded by Councilman Blumetti the ordinance was adopted by the following roll call vote:

Councilman Blumetti – Yes
Deputy Mayor Clark – Yes

Councilwoman Quinn - Yes
Mayor Chiariello - Yes

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Sparta that the following ordinance entitled: **AN ORDINANCE AMENDING TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA CODE SECTIONS 19-14.S AND 20-3.6 REGARDING WATER AND SEWER UTILITY CAPITAL CONNECTION FEES** is hereby adopted on second and final reading and the Township Clerk is authorized to publish said notice and the ordinance will take effect in accordance with the law.

23-06 The second and final hearing of the ordinance entitled **AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 2 “ADMINISTRATION”, ARTICLE XI, “TAXATION AND REVENUE” OF THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA, ADDING A NEW SECTION 2-62, 100% DISABLED VETERAN TAX REFUNDS** was given and held open for public discussion.

No one from the public wished to be heard and this portion of the meeting was closed.

On motion by Councilman Blumetti, seconded by Deputy Mayor Clark the ordinance was adopted by the following roll call vote:

Councilman Blumetti – Yes
Deputy Mayor Clark – Yes

Councilwoman Quinn - Yes
Mayor Chiariello - Yes

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Sparta that the following ordinance entitled: **AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 2 “ADMINISTRATION”, ARTICLE XI, “TAXATION AND REVENUE” OF THE REVISED GENERAL ORDINANCES OF THE TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA, ADDING A NEW SECTION 2-62, 100% DISABLED VETERAN TAX REFUNDS** is hereby adopted on second and final reading and the Township Clerk is authorized to publish said notice and the ordinance will take effect in accordance with the law.

23-07 The second and final hearing of the ordinance entitled **AN ORDINANCE GRANTING A PERMANENT, NON-EXCLUSIVE BRIDGE EASEMENT OVER A PORTION OF BLOCK 27004, LOT 2 ON THE OFFICIAL TAX MAP OF THE TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA TO THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX** was given and held open for public discussion.

No one from the public wished to be heard and this portion of the meeting was closed.

On motion by Councilman Blumetti, seconded by Deputy Mayor Clark the ordinance was adopted by the following roll call vote:

Councilman Blumetti – Yes
Deputy Mayor Clark – Yes

Councilwoman Quinn - Yes
Mayor Chiariello - Yes

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Sparta that the following ordinance entitled: **AN ORDINANCE GRANTING A PERMANENT, NON-EXCLUSIVE**

BRIDGE EASEMENT OVER A PORTION OF BLOCK 27004, LOT 2 ON THE OFFICIAL TAX MAP OF THE TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA TO THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX is hereby adopted on second and final reading and the Township Clerk is authorized to publish said notice and the ordinance will take effect in accordance with the law.

23-08 AN ORDINANCE GRANTING A PERMANENT, NON-EXCLUSIVE WATERMAIN EASEMENT OVER A PORTION OF BLOCK 27004, LOT 2 ON THE OFFICIAL TAX MAP OF THE TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA TO THE TOWN OF NEWTON

No one from the public wished to be heard and this portion of the meeting was closed.

On motion by Deputy Mayor Clark, seconded by Councilman Blumetti the ordinance was adopted by the following roll call vote:

Councilman Blumetti – Yes
Deputy Mayor Clark – Yes

Councilwoman Quinn - Yes
Mayor Chiariello - Yes

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Sparta that the following ordinance entitled: **AN ORDINANCE GRANTING A PERMANENT, NON-EXCLUSIVE WATERMAIN EASEMENT OVER A PORTION OF BLOCK 27004, LOT 2 ON THE OFFICIAL TAX MAP OF THE TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA TO THE TOWN OF NEWTON** is hereby adopted on second and final reading and the Township Clerk is authorized to publish said notice and the ordinance will take effect in accordance with the law.

23-09 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 2, ADMINISTRATION, ARTICLE VI, DEPARTMENTS CREATED, SECTION 2-18.4.H CLASSIFICATIONS OF APPLICANTS AND ORDER OF APPOINTMENT THEREOF, OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA

No one from the public wished to be heard and this portion of the meeting was closed.

On motion by Councilwoman Quinn, seconded by Deputy Mayor Clark the ordinance was adopted by the following roll call vote:

Councilman Blumetti – Yes
Deputy Mayor Clark – Yes

Councilwoman Quinn - Yes
Mayor Chiariello - Yes

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Sparta that the following ordinance entitled: **AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 2, ADMINISTRATION, ARTICLE VI, DEPARTMENTS CREATED, SECTION 2-18.4.H CLASSIFICATIONS OF APPLICANTS AND ORDER OF APPOINTMENT THEREOF, OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE TOWNSHIP OF SPARTA** is hereby adopted on second and final reading and the Township Clerk is authorized to publish said notice and the ordinance will take effect in accordance with the law.

Open to the Public – Resolutions:

No one wished to be heard and this portion of the meeting was closed.

Resolutions:

In response to a question by Councilman Blumetti regarding Resolution 9-3, Private Sale and Assignment of Tax Sale Certificate 19-00068 for Block 4001, Lot 37 to Woodbine Capital LLC, Mr. Rome stated that any tax sale item automatically goes out for bid and if no one submits a bid then the Township holds the lien. He stated that in this case someone was interested in the property and is willing to take on the lien.

On motion by Councilwoman Quinn, seconded by Councilman Blumetti and unanimously carried Resolution 9-5, Approving Professional Services Agreement with Forty Twenty Seven LLC was tabled.

In response to a question by Deputy Mayor Clark concerning Resolution 9-2, Introduction of Municipal Budget – Title Only, Mr. Rome stated that the budget will be available to the public on line and hard copies would also be made available.

Mayor Chiariello asked Mr. Rome to give a brief synopsis concerning the budget introduction.

Mr. Rome stated that the total budget appropriations would be \$29,600,123.03. He stated that last year's appropriation was \$30,262,158.48 so this year's budget amounted to a 2.22% decrease. He stated that if the Township receives more grants during the year, it would be included in the budget through a resolution process. Mr. Rome stated that the municipal tax rate was able to be maintained as last year so there was 0% increase. He stated that he has yet to receive the figures from the school board and the county. He stated once he receives those, he can put those figures into his calculations.

Councilwoman Quinn suggested putting the budget information on the website with a clear link to make it easier for the public to find.

Mr. Rome stated that since 2016 the Township has been able to maintain the same tax rate.

In response to a question by Mayor Chiariello concerning Resolution 9-6, Approving the Submission of a Grant Application and Execution of a Grant Agreement with the NJ DOT for the Station Road Improvement Project, Mr. Rome stated that it was an application for the repaving of Station Road from the DOT grant.

On motion by Councilman Blumetti, seconded by Deputy Mayor Clark and unanimously carried Resolutions 9-1 through 9-4, 9-6 and 9-7 were duly adopted:

9-1 Resolution for Tax Overpayments due to NJ Court Stipulation

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE Township Council of the Township of Sparta that the Tax Collector refunds the following tax over payment due to NJ State Court Stipulation

BLOCK	LOT	AMOUNT	YEAR
17001	5	\$5,868.40	2017
17001	5	\$5,778.65	2018
17001	5	\$5,871.85	2019
17001	5	\$5,871.85	2020

9-2 Introduction of Municipal Budget – Title Only

BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Sparta that the budget by title only inasmuch as the conditions set forth in N.J.S.A. 40:4-5 shall be met as follows: that a complete copy of the approved budget shall be posted in the Municipal Building and copies of said budget shall be made available to each person requesting the same prior to a public hearing to be held on a May 9, 2023.

9-3 Resolution Authorizing the Private Sale and Assignment of Tax Sale Certificate 19-00068 For Block 4001, Lot 37 to Woodbine Capital LLC

WHEREAS, by public sale held on October 21, 2020, the Township of Sparta purchased Tax Sale Certificate No. 19-00068 (the "Tax Sale Certificate") for the property located at 2 Manitou Falls Terrace, Sparta, New Jersey, designated as Block 4001, Lot 37 on the Tax Maps of the Township of Sparta and assessed to Lisa Matera; and

WHEREAS, Woodbine Capital LLC offered to purchase the Tax Sale Certificate from the Township; and

WHEREAS, the Township is authorized to sell and assign at private sale Tax Sale Certificates which it holds pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 54:5-113 et seq.; and

WHEREAS, the Township has complied with the mailing, publication, and posting requirements of notice of its intent to assign the Tax Sale Certificate pursuant to N.J.S.A. 54:5-114; and

WHEREAS, the total amount now due on Tax Sale Certificate 19-00068 as of March 29, 2023, including the original sale, together with all subsequent liens thereon is \$39,651.82; and

WHEREAS, Woodbine Capital LLC must pay the total balance owed, including all accrued taxes and interest as a condition of the sale.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Sparta Township that the assignment of Tax Sale Certificate No 19-00068 to Woodbine Capital LLC is hereby approved, conditioned upon Woodbine Capital LLC paying the Township the full balance owed for all municipal liens against the property; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Mayor and Clerk be and the same are hereby authorized to execute an Assignment of Tax Sale Certificate on behalf of Sparta Township, and the assignment shall be provided to Woodbine Capital LLC upon receipt of the payment for the Tax Sale Certificate.

In the event Woodbine Capital LLC fails to pay the full amount owed, this Resolution shall be void and of no effect.

9-4 Resolution of the Township of Sparta Approving Consulting Services Agreement for Township Manager Search Consultant

WHEREAS, N.J.S.A. 40A:11-1, et seq., the “Local Public Contracts Law” permits governing bodies to contract for certain services without competitive bidding; and

WHEREAS, the Sparta Township Council desires to contract with a Township Manager Search Consultant; and

WHEREAS, the Township’s Chief Financial Officer has certified that sufficient funds are available for this purpose; and

WHEREAS, the Local Public Contract Law (N.J.S.A. 40A:11-6.1) allows a contract to be awarded after soliciting at least two (2) competitive quotations, when the aggregate price is less than the bid threshold but fifteen percent (15%) or more of that amount; and

WHEREAS, The Township obtained multiple quotations and desires to accept the proposal provided by Steven Levinson from Assurance Consulting Associates, LLC in the amount of \$1,500.00 per month not to exceed six (6) months, which amount is less than the Township’s bid threshold.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township Council of the Township of Sparta as follows:

1. The Sparta Township Council hereby approves the Consulting Services Agreement submitted by Steven Levinson and Assurance Consulting Services, LLC, for a period not to exceed six (6) months at the rate of \$1,500.00 per month.

2. Vendors performing work for and on behalf of Sparta Township must conduct business according to the highest ethical standards. The Township recognizes the right of individuals to engage in outside activities that are private in nature and unrelated to municipal business. However, business dealings can create or appear to create a conflict between the individual and the Township's interest.

Prior to becoming a vendor for the Township, all vendors are required to disclose possible conflicts so that the municipality may assess and prevent potential conflicts. Vendors, after being engaged by the Township, shall not engage in matters that create a conflict of interest for the Township. If a potential conflict arises, a vendor is required to promptly notify the Township Manager of the possible conflict of interest. The vendor shall not take any action that will be adverse to the Township.

3. A copy of this Resolution shall be placed on file with the Clerk of the Township.
4. This Resolution shall take effect immediately, however it shall be void and of no effect in the event that the consultant fails or refuses to sign the agreement.
5. If any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase in this Resolution is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such decision shall not affect the remaining portions of this Resolution.

9-6 Resolution Approving the Submission of a Grant Application and Execution of a Grant Agreement with the New Jersey Department of Transportation for the Station Road Improvement Project.

WHEREAS, the Township of Sparta is requesting funding from the New Jersey Department of Transportation through the Local Transportation Projects Fund Program for the completion of the Station Road Improvement Project.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Council of the Township of Sparta formally approve the grant application for the above stated project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Clerk are hereby authorized to submit an electronic grant application identified as "*LTPF-2023-Station Road Improvement Project-00069*" to the New Jersey Department of Transportation on behalf of the Township of Sparta.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Clerk are hereby authorized to sign the grant agreement on behalf of the Township of Sparta and that their signature(s) constitute acceptance of the terms and conditions of the grant agreement and approve the execution of the grant agreement.

9-7 Resolution of The Township Council of the Township of Sparta, County of Sussex, Ratifying and Executing an Acknowledgement and Release Agreement

WHEREAS, the Township of Sparta has entered into a certain Acknowledgement and Release Agreement which has been negotiated between the parties in a personnel matter; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and Township Counsel have been afforded an opportunity to review the Acknowledgement and Release Agreement and the employee has executed the Acknowledgement and Release Agreement; and

WHEREAS, the Township seeks to ratify and execute the Acknowledgement and Release Agreement; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Township Council of the Township of Sparta, County of Sussex, State of New Jersey, as follows:

1. The Acknowledgement and Release Agreement between the Township of Sparta and its employee is hereby approved.
2. The Mayor and Township Clerk are authorized to sign the Acknowledgement and Release Agreement on behalf of the Township of Sparta, as well as any other documentation necessary to effectuate this settlement.
3. The Resolution shall take effect immediately.

A copy of this Resolution shall be placed on file with the Clerk of the Township.

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase in this resolution is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid, such decision shall not affect the remaining portions of this resolution.

Council Liaison Updates:

Councilman Blumetti stated that the Environmental Commission had no scheduled meetings since the last Council meeting. He stated that they had applied for a small grant for open space stewardship through ANJAC to be used for the Sparta Glen and planting seedlings and small trees.

Councilman Blumetti stated that Earth Day would be celebrated next Saturday and events would be held at the municipal building on the front lawn from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Councilwoman Quinn thanked the Recreation Department for the Bunny Breakfast event that had been held and the turnout was back to pre-pandemic numbers and all of the activities. She thanked all of the volunteers from the Recreation Advisory Committee who participated.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that Salute 07871 committee banners would be ordered on Friday. She stated that the hometown hero banners had been expanded into the Lake Mohawk Plaza area and Winona Parkway. She stated that the banners would be hung before Memorial Day and will stay up until after July 4th so that both holidays would be accommodated.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that the Senior Advisory Committee would be meeting on April 15 and she was planning to attend.

Mayor Chiariello stated that the Cultural Affairs Committee had met last week and there was one open weekend to fill for the summer concert series. He stated that donations would be greatly appreciated.

Mayor Chiariello stated that the Library Board meets tomorrow.

Unfinished Business:

On motion by Deputy Mayor Clark, and seconded by Councilman Blumetti, Landon Tanyeri was appointed as second alternate to the Zoning Board by the following roll call vote:

Councilman Blumetti – Yes
Deputy Mayor Clark – Yes

Councilwoman Quinn- Yes
Mayor Chiariello – Yes

Councilwoman Quinn stated that to her recollection there was another vacancy on the Zoning Board and she had nominated someone to fill that position.

After discussion, it was determined that all of the Zoning Board vacancies had been filled.

Mayor Chiariello stated that discussion regarding the Economic Development Committee would be tabled because Councilman Hertzberg was not present.

Mayor Chiariello asked Steve Levinson to give an update on the Township Manager search.

Mr. Levinson gave Council a synopsis of his qualifications and went over the collaborative process that he uses. He stated that he would advertise the position through the NJ League of Municipalities because it would yield more qualified candidates. He stated that if there were a limited response, then the search could be expanded at that point.

Mr. Levinson stated that once candidates have been identified, then the vetting process could begin which he would conduct and after that he would send the information to the Council for their review.

Mayor Chiariello thanked Mr. Levinson for coming and asked if he would consider candidates that did not have previous Township Manager experience.

Mr. Levinson stated that he would sit down with the Mayor and a small group to discuss it. He stated that his personal preference would be to attract people who have municipal experience in that capacity within the State, but in the end it would be Council's decision.

Councilman Blumetti asked Mr. Levinson if he could foresee any challenges. Mr. Levinson stated that he didn't see any conspicuous constraints at this point in time. He stated that in the next couple of weeks he would like to be sitting down with the Mayor and the Interim Township Manager to discuss the criteria to be incorporated in the advertisement and then placing an ad on the website of the NJ League of Municipalities which would then start the resume process. He stated that a timeframe would have to be established as to how long to keep resumes coming in once it's announced and the whole process could be two to three months.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that she assumed that each one of the Council members would have some sort of say as to the criteria, not just the Mayor.

Mr. Levinson stated that he didn't control that, but thought that it was an excellent way to proceed. He stated that he was there to facilitate what the Council chooses to do.

Mr. Rome stated that pulling people that have been in a managerial role or some kind of administrative role within the State is usually key because the accounting system and New Jersey's set up of how the government is run is completely unique from any other state.

Deputy Mayor Clark asked how long Mr. Levinson has worked with Sparta. Mr. Levinson stated that he has been working as a public health consultant for about seven years and had also been an Interim Township Manager charged with recruiting a permanent manager.

Council thanked Mr. Levinson for coming in and giving his presentation.

Mayor Chiariello stated that he was tabling an Environmental Commission appointment.

New Business:

Councilman Blumetti asked about the municipal building lights for Earth Day and when the building would be lit. He stated that he would like to see it from April 17th to April 24th.

Mayor Chiariello stated that the State Plan Endorsement Committee needed to be appointed. He stated that it was a Mayoral appointment and he was appointing Dean Blumetti as Council Representative, Class IV Planning Board member Ron Day, member of a local board committee would be Neil Sauerwein, and two members of the public being Barbara Gomes and Kathy Ebbinkhuysen

He stated that he had received a request to reform the Township's liquor license laws and he had forwarded it to Councilwoman Quinn for the Municipal Alliance Committee to weigh in.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that she had forwarded it on to the entire alliance and asked everyone to review it and it should be going to the EDC for their input because the legislation

would have a huge affect on businesses. She stated that Tammy Horsfield should also be contacted for her input as well to find out how it would affect the County.

Mayor Chiariello stated that the Glen Lake Dam Assessment report was now available to the public and could be requested at the Clerk's office.

Mayor Chiariello stated that he had received notification from the Clerk that there have been several requests for food trucks in town and it might be time to revisit the tabled 2021 ordinance to see if there were changes that might be made.

Mayor Chiariello stated that he had attended a seminar at the NJ League of Municipalities meeting on the future of fire/EMS. Mayor Chiariello had suggested that the Township commission a group to study what the future might look like for the fire department.

Open to the Public:

Tom Eisenberg, 128 Sussex Mills Road, addressed Council and stated that he was against the flag ordinance. He also mentioned that there needed to be cohesion between Council and the other boards so that new businesses would come to Sparta.

Todd Gillespie, East Shore Trail, addressed Council and read a letter from the State Commander of the Department of NJ, Veteran of Foreign Affairs that was in full support of the proper public display of any flag that represents the nation's freedom or its people and communities.

Pete Litchfield, 120 Conestoga Trail addressed Council and stated that he got the letter started because there had been talk about flying flags under the American flag and POW flag. He stated that he was fighting for the POW flag. He thanked Council for including it in the ordinance.

Joseph Wade, 44 Sagamore Trail addressed Council and talked about discharges that were given to people in the military because of their sexual orientation.

Councilwoman Quinn stated that the ordinance is not specific to one flag. She stated that she would be more comfortable if the ordinance was limited to one specific flag instead of the way it is currently written.

Deputy Mayor Clark asked Mr. Ryan if Sparta had ever been sued for any mode of expression that the Council had made.

Mr. Ryan stated that in his experience, no such law suit had ever been filed against the Township.

Mayor Chiariello stated that lighting the building, proclamations, and ribbons on flag poles were all expressions of government speech and that a flag would be no different.

Deputy Mayor Clark stated that the flag ordinance criteria was very specific and was based on legal research.

Resident of Hamburg addressed Council and stated that she represented Sussex County Pride and expressed her support for the ordinance.

Jenny Dericks, Tap Into Sparta, addressed Council and asked if there were any funds available for a master plan review.

Mr. Rome stated that it would be done as a special emergency so a resolution would be required to put the funding in place. Mr. Rome stated that the Planning Board Chairman would have to speak to him and a resolution would need to be adopted.

Councilman Blumetti stated that his understanding was that they needed to put together the scope and what the estimates would be and the funding would come from a different mechanism.

Mr. Rome stated that for a special emergency like that funding would be extended over a five year period.

In response to a question by Ms. Dericks concerning engineering costs, Mr. Rome stated that the Town was looking at recreating an engineering department in house with full staff.

No one else wished to be heard and this portion of the meeting was closed.

Adjournment:

No one else wished to be heard and no further business was brought up, motion was made by Councilman Blumetti, seconded by Deputy Mayor Clark and unanimously carried to adjourn at 10:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Roxanne Landy, RMC
Municipal Clerk