



# SPARTA

CHAMBER • DDA • EVENTS

## 2019 Annual Report

Festivals, Events & Activities of the Chamber | DDA | Events Office  
Submitted by Elizabeth Morse, Chamber/DDA Chamber Director  
Submitted February 14, 2020

# 2019 SUMMARY



4,000+ FRESH PICKED APPLES HANDED OUT AT APPLE FEST

1500+ APPLES LAUNCHED IN SLINGSHOT

200 KIDS TOSSED HAY BALES & PULLED TRACTORS

50+ APPLE OF MY EYE PACKAGES DELIVERED

52 DAYS OF EVENTS

3RD OUT OF 42 MI COMMUNITIES IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MOVED PICNIC TABLES 780 TIMES FOR GUEST SEATING

11 TOTES COLLECTED OF FOOD & HYGEINE FOR THOSE IN NEED

## **Introduction**

The Chamber, DDA, and Events had a major reorganization in 2018 which separated the operations of the events and festivals into a separate 501c3 Non-Profit Organization. The separation was tax write off purposes for donations to the entity. Additionally, the reorganization allowed boards to reprioritize and focus on their individual missions and see the overlap of each mission toward the overall benefit of Sparta – the three organizations that make up the department consist of the Sparta Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Development Authority, and the new Sparta Community Works which hosts the community events. Each organization has opportunity for two board members from the other groups to be appointed to the board for synergy and to keep the missions working toward the overall focus of making a better Sparta.

### **Mission of the Sparta Chamber of Commerce:**

Promoting Local Business Development Through Community Interaction.

### **The Mission of the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) as established by Public Act 197 of 1975 is:**

- To correct and prevent deterioration in the established DDA district
  - To encourage historic preservation
  - To acquire and dispose of interests in real and personal property
  - To create and implement development plans in the district
- And to promote the economic growth of the district

### **The Mission of the Sparta Community Works Non-Profit 501c3 board (Events):**

To support and advance the community of the Village of Sparta, Michigan, through community engagement, event hosting, and other fundraising, dedicated to the creation and support of a positive community feel, appearance, and impression, by lessening the burdens of government, building and or maintaining public buildings, monuments, and works, and otherwise combating community deterioration in and around Sparta.

The operations of the Chamber|DDA|Events department moved from the Village Office to the newly renovated 194 E. Division DeLange Harness Shop office in July 2018.



# Board of Directors

As of February 1, 2020

## Sparta Downtown Development Authority (DDA)

Tom Cheslek, President  
Hessel-Cheslek Funeral Home

Kelly Potes, Vice President  
ChoiceOne Bank

Mike Lamb  
Coldwell Banker

Kirk Jacobsen  
Jacobsen Floral & Greenhouse

Pete Bush  
Sparta School Superintendent

Kristi Dougan  
Sparta Village President

Rex Baker  
Baker Investments LLC

Robert Shangle  
LiveStatue

Doc George Freeland  
Freeland Chiropractic

Phil Potter  
Sparta Variety

## Sparta Area Chamber of Commerce (2021)

Amber Marks  
Dance with Me

Anne Pfeffer  
Northwest Optometry

Carrie Olson  
ChoiceOne Bank

Dana Quick  
Edward Jones Investments

Jordan Kowalkowski  
Compass Credit Union

Konrad Raclawski  
ChoiceOne Bank

Maryanne Wright  
Wrightway Appraisal

Robert Shangle  
LiveStatue

Tom Cheslek  
Hessel-Cheslek Funeral Home

Tom Penland  
Tom's Hometown Bakery

## Sparta Events (Sparta Community Works) 501c3

Maryanne Wright  
Wrightway Appraisal

Dana Quick  
Edward Jones Investments

Brenda Braybrook  
McDonalds

Anne Pfeffer  
Northwest Optometry

Tom Cheslek  
Hessel-Cheslek Funeral Home

## STAFF

Elizabeth Morse  
DDA/Chamber Director

Rebecca Wildeboer  
Hospitality & Events  
Coordinator

Taylor Wildeboer  
Chamber Administrator &  
Events Administrator

Natalie Davenport  
DDA & Chamber Assistant

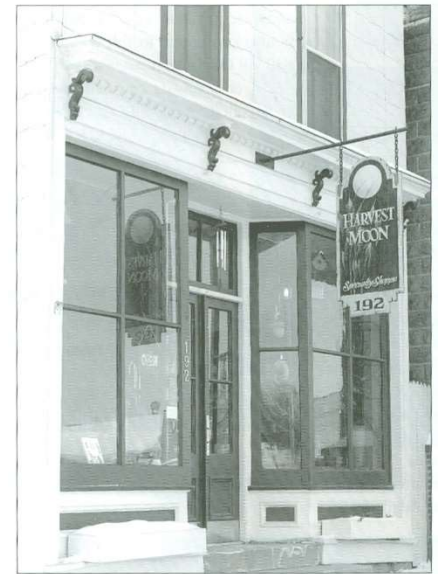


### **The DeLange Harness Shop**

Through the effort of several donations of products, services, and labor to the project, the interior of the 194 E. Division St. Building called the DeLange Harness Shop, was completed in early July 2018. The new operations opened the doors during the height of event season, but the impact of having front doors open on main street was immediate as it became an information hub during the events. The exterior improvements to the office building was approved at the regular April 2018 DDA meeting to meet the historical appearance of the building from the late 1800's and include a history of the building on the exterior which took place in 2019. An interior plaque will list the donations given to the construction and remodel of the building once the exterior construction is complete so we can include all possible donors on the interior donation plaque.

### **Building Operations**

In 2018, staff worked to create the new building operations policy and procedures, noting that this office will run like other economic development offices and has reviewed those types of structures to implement and include in our plan. The plan was adopted in October 2018 and included items such as personal cell phone use, hours to work, earned time off, and other relevant items in an office which operates as a downtown economic development driver, events coordination location, and Chamber member marketing office.



*Harvest Moon, 1996*



### **Reorganization 501c3 Events: Sparta Community Works**

The "Events" organization operated financially independent of the Sparta Chamber in 2018 and the operation officially started January 1, 2019 with a separate Events board that consists of 2 DDA appointed members, 2 Chamber appointed board members, and 2 festival representatives which currently include Town & Country Days and Apple Fest, and one member of the community at large. The entity board members operate and oversee the activities of the events held through the department, and are able to keep the mission and goals of each event in check with the mission of the DDA and the Chamber. Currently, the DDA pays the salary of the Events Coordinator and the DDA receives a stipend from the Events Nonprofit for time spent on Events by the staff person. The Events Nonprofit does not hire its own staff.

### **Capital Improvement**

The 2019 Capital Improvements include a 50/50 cost share with the Village of Sparta DPW to purchase a Toro UTV for irrigation/fertilization by hand and for use during events. This purchase was made possible by the DDA thanks to a \$5,000 grant from the Sparta Community Foundation. The DDA also purchased and installed a cross the road banner system for event banners, similar to the one that were in place prior to 2013. That pole system was removed during the Alley Project between Rogers Hardware and Dollar General but not replaced. The location ended up in front of 194 E. Division, the new DeLange Harness Shop in downtown Sparta. Banners purchased for 2019 included Town & Country Days and Michigan Apple Fest; we will add Concerts in Rogers Park and Shop Sparta banners, and evaluate adding any additional banners to hang up in 2020.



## **Parklet**

In 2018 the DDA installed a new “Parklet” that took planned improvement concepts from the 2015 Arches Master Plan and integrated the placemaking concept of a pop up park that overlooks Nash Creek along the Balyeat Pedestrian Bridge. The Parklet was a trial to activate the space, and the benefit of the temporary pop up was to evaluate how the community and visitors would utilize the space without the upfront permanent infrastructure expense that was estimated at \$384,000 and included a boardwalk over the creek. By creating the space as a temporary pop up space summer and fall, the DDA invested less than \$5,000 to get a better understanding of how people choose to utilize the space.



The parklet amenities were simple and included bistro lighting, outdoor seating, shade umbrellas, a painted floor area in the parking lot to define the space. The budget also included funds to repaint the gazebo. We were able to add the year round bistro lighting to the bridge, too, which added a new vibrant dynamic to the pedestrian bridge. The “trial” pop up parklet was met with good usage, virtually no theft or vandalism, and a general desire to see more expanded improvements to the area in 2019. The 2019 plans include higher quality seating, additional greenspace/flowers, and scheduled entertainment in the space throughout the summer that has been named, “Bash on the Nash” and will begin May 31.



In 2019, the Events held a new Bash on the Nash event on a Friday evening. The adult focused event included live music and entertainments for an adult evening out in downtown Sparta. The additions to the space were well received with the addition of temporary picnic table seating added for these pop up events, a bonfire with roasting marshmallows, and food vendors. The project intends to incorporate more dates of entertainment on both Friday evenings and Saturday daytime with children focused events to continue foot traffic in this area. In April 2019, the department entered into a Small Town Rural Development Conference

Pitch Competition to pitch an idea that would make an large impact downtown Sparta for economic development. Out of 42 communities, Sparta was chosen for 3<sup>rd</sup> place, which received recognition for the good project idea and \$2500 to kick start the project off. The Project Proposal was installing a retail incubator space, called Sparta Town Square, that would expand the parklet area into a retail incubator area that will have small, affordable spaces for retailers to start up without the extensive overhead costs of leasing a traditional bricks and mortar building in Sparta. It is physically creating new places for small, startup retail businesses to develop, transform the way we invite business to grow in Sparta, and provide assistance to those businesses to develop with the intent for successful retail businesses to grow into the bricks and mortar locations permanently. The program will provide new unique opportunity to meet the needs of small, startup retail based businesses to set up and operate in downtown Sparta with short term leases (low risk) and low overhead. The project is partnering with a private developer to incur the upfront development costs of the incubator hubs, the public amenities will belong to the DDA.

**SPARTA FARM & ARTISAN MARKET (Events)**

In 2019, it was decided to pause the market for a season and reevaluate the future of a market for Sparta. In 2020, there is intent to open the opportunity to vend market and craft to activate the Town Square area / arches parking lot with farm related entertainment. Date to be determined in Spring.

**CONCERTS IN ROGERS PARK (EVENTS)**

The 2019 Summer Concert series featured ten performances at the bandshell located in Rogers Park. The season opened with The Crane Wives, a Michigan band with a large following.

To supplement the concerts, dinners were hosted either within the Civic Center or outside. When a meal was not provided by a group or organization, a food vendor was brought in. While we would like to encourage attendees to eat locally, the convenience of having food **on site** was noted as very favorable by most of the concert goers and included requests for information in regards to the food options for after the concerts ended.



The 2019 Concert series included the addition of a beer garden, a small area on the western edge of Rogers Park where we sold beer and spritzers within a fenced off area. This seemed to be very well received by concert attendees. The roped area was unobtrusive roping (not orange fencing), so virtually not noticeable unless you were inside the beer garden area.

Sponsorship was sold as part of the I Love Summer Sponsorship instead of separate "Concerts only" sponsorships, so only \$3,000 of sponsorship revenue was specifically geared for concerts, the budget expense was

approved by the board through the I Love Summer sponsorships.

**EXP: 2019 \$5619      2018 \$7,621      2017: \$4,400      2016 \$6,075      2015 \$5497      2014 \$6,735**

\*DDA last cash contribution to concerts was in 2014; 2018 first year DDA did not contribute pay of DPW part time person for Concerts; all onsite part time staff paid through Events fundraising and expenditures

**HARRY POTTER IN THE PARK FESTIVAL (Events)**

Potter in the Park 2019 took place in Rogers Park with the addition of a food truck rally located on North Union Street. Weather was cooperative. Between the event in the park and the rally, Potter in the Park drew a crowd of approximately 4500 attendees during that Saturday. Non-profit relationships grew and were vital to the volunteer efforts as an exchange of services as well as the fandom of the fans on Facebook.



With concerns in regards to Warner Brothers copyright issues the name has been changed to Potter in the Park’s Spellbound Festival and 2019 was the last year for Potter in the Park to exist as a stand alone festival. The intent is to join the Harry Potter celebration with other fan-based themes in 2020 called Not Myself Day.

2019	REV 32,368	2018	REV 40,004
	EXP 17,614		EXP 19,499

**MOVIES IN THE PARK (EVENTS)**

In 2019 we did not host a Movies in the Park event due to the expense associated with the event and the low turn out movies has seemed to have (mostly due to the late start time of the movie).

2 movies	1 movie	2 movies	4 movies	2 movies
2018 Rev. \$500	2017 Rev. \$0	2016 Rev. \$0	2015 Rev. \$0	2014 Rev. \$0
2018 Exp. \$1400	2017 Exp. \$900	2016 Exp. \$2000	2015 Exp. \$4792	2014 Exp. \$1288

**BLOCK PARTY (Previously known as THURSDAY STREET FEST (EVENTS))**

In 2018, the Thursday Street Fest was absorbed into the 2018 Sparta Town and Country Days Thursday Farm Night. In 2019, we moved the activities to Balyeat Field due to road construction (resurfacing of Division street during fair week!). The new footprint was well received and made for a fabulous evening. Expenditures for the event were shifted to Town & Country Days budget. Planning is underway for moving the farm night back to the downtown footprint again.



**TOWN & COUNTRY DAYS (EVENTS)**

Sparta’s 2019 Town and Country Days celebration kicked off on July 17 with a concert and dinner hosted by the Sparta Lions Club in Rogers Park and the carnival opening. The event was fortunate to have two days of good weather, Wednesday and Thursday. Thursday hosted Farm Night in Balyeat Field and was very well received. Friday during the day was the kids parade and it was HOT for those kiddos! Friday night was the annual alumni entertainment tent and had a good crowd in attendance. Overnight storms came through Sparta and knocked out power for sections of town and left downed power lines along the parade route. Saturday was challenging. Several of the vendors for the Village Marketplace craft show were not in attendance because of the rain forecast.



The parade took place as planned as did the car show, however, the late afternoon Pulln’ the Ridge truck and tractor pulls in Balyeat Field were cancelled due to heavy rain and thunderstorms. This resulted in very low beer tent attendance. The two chairs of Town & Country Days have respectfully retired from their

position, leaving opportunity for new involvement in 2020 and beyond. \*The weather has such a dynamic effect on the Profit and Loss of the annual event, we are evaluating opportunity to make the event less revenue dependent on weather.



2019 Rev. \$53,824	2018 Rev. \$82,012	2017 Rev. \$119,000
2019 Exp. \$56,043	2018 Exp. \$60,706	2017 Exp. \$100,000
2019 P/L (\$2,219)	2018 P/L \$21,305	2017 P/L \$19,000

**CELTIC FESTIVAL**

The Celtic Fest created their own 501c3 and has moved away from under the Chamber. The festival was not fundraised through the Chamber | DDA | Events office in 2019. They had a dynamic weekend as the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019 celebrating volunteers who helped begin the festival once it moved to Sparta. It was a very nice event!

**MICHIGAN APPLE FEST (EVENTS)**

Michigan Apple Fest 2019 was celebrated on September 21 in the heart of downtown Sparta. The road construction was finished on Elm Street which allowed for the full day festival to take place in the street of Sparta.

The event was only possible thanks to the set up and tear down assistance of the Sparta DPW staff and their equipment, which was very important to the logistics of the street event for set up and tear down in a short, efficient manner! The weather was perfect as vendors set up in the street, food carts set up, and two stages held music entertainment with a beer garden area.



A key component in the event was the brand partnerships that are critical to the growth of the event including farm – based food retailers and donations of fresh, Michigan grown apples for distribution to the public. We commissioned a new Apple interactive display that allows us to showcase fresh, Michigan grown apples and for people to mimic “picking” an apple! This will be used throughout the year when fresh apples are available to us at events thanks to the generosity of Chad & Sons Fabrication Shop and Chuck Meek!

**REV: 2019 \$12,778    2018 \$16,110    2017 \$23,709    2016 \$13,693    2015 \$12,614    HOTR 2014 \$8,215**  
**EXP: 2019 \$11,422    2018 \$17,690    2017 \$16,316    2016 \$11,773    2015 \$13,096    HOTR 2014 \$7,889**



**SHOP SPARTA CHRISTMAS EVENT (EVENTS)**

In 2019 the Shop Sparta Christmas Event on the Friday before thanksgiving downtown Sparta was packed with people! This year, we closed down Division during the event for pedestrian safety and to host a light up parade that parked downtown. The Tree lighting event included two new s’mores fire pits, the Boy Scout hot cocoa stand, a food truck, horse drawn wagon rides, and a beautiful display of fireworks in Balyeat Field.



The DeLange Harness Shop hosted the Mistletoe Market again that sold retail items. The goal for 2020 is to increase the retail market to include more wares and additional hours (to be staffed to allow for additional open hours) to coincide with the retail businesses opening across the street.

Christmas downtown décor and lighting is budgeted and expended through the DDA, and event and special décor related expenses are managed through the Events budget. In 2019, we transformed the downtown into a winter wonderland using resurrected winter themed banners that can stay up through winter time (not Christmas themed), added snow flake décor to the cement pots, and tight wrapped the trees in white and red traditional Christmas colors. The décor was well received by the public.

**2019 Rev. \$150    2018 REV \$500    2017 Rev. \$2783    2016 Rev. \$1,880    2015 Rev. \$660**  
**2019 Exp. \$7,413    2018 EXP \$5617    2017 Exp. \$4942    2016 Exp. \$6001    2015 Exp. \$5217**

**SPARTA TODAY NEWSPAPER (CHAMBER)**

Chamber & Sparta Schools have partnered to send to entire Sparta School District by mail. The mailing cost is \$2400 per edition, printing 5 editions per year. Sparta Schools pays to print the pages they use, and covers half of the mailing charges. This has been the primary communication tool from our department to the public other than social media. The Chamber general fund has taken the burden of the expense of the publication and has dedicated its Integrity Business rebate (approximately \$2500 per year) to offset the General Fund expense.

<b>2019 Rev \$7,200</b>	<b>2018 Rev. \$11634</b>	<b>2017 Rev. \$9,051</b>	<b>2016 Rev \$10,734</b>	<b>2015 Rev \$11,485</b>
<b>2019 Exp \$12,500</b>	<b>2018 Exp. \$12,225</b>	<b>2017 Exp. \$12,500</b>	<b>2016 Exp \$ 12,816</b>	<b>2015 Exp \$ 13,179</b>

**I LOVE SUMMER MARKETING (EVENTS)**

In 2017, we comingled all of our marketing efforts into the umbrella of I LOVE SUMMER IN SPARTA. Strategically we’ve printed pamphlets, posters, date reminder stickers posted on business coffee cups and to go donut and pizza boxes, postcard reminders, I LOVE SUMMER IN SPARTA balloon handouts at events, pamphlets distributed through schools, and an extensive social media presence that included growing the Instagram page, creating targeted Facebook posts and lives, and regular website updates. Additionally, we printed over 500 T-shirts with sponsor names and handed them out at various events and to our sponsors.



<b>2019 Rev. \$48,602</b>	<b>2018 Rev. \$37,000</b>	<b>2017 Rev \$12,064</b>	<b>2016 Rev. \$0</b>
<b>2019 Exp \$26,541</b>	<b>2018 Exp. \$14,700</b>	<b>2017 Exp \$12,913</b>	<b>2016 Exp. \$4,955</b>

**SPARTA DDA PROPERTY REINVESTMENT GRANTS**

The DDA awarded one grant in 2019, to the following:  
10 Propsect St NW for \$3,898.24 for complete front exterior renovation and landscaping.  
The budget set for 2020 is \$10,000 for Reinvestment Grants.

**ANNUAL COMMUNITY STREETScape/DÉCOR PLAN 2018**

The 2019 included spring time wooden houses painted and decorated by the public to include public décor. The small wooden houses were painted and then displayed for 4 weeks before the summer flowers were planted. Summer flowers were “Paradise” pink petunias, and fall had mums and apple metal décor pieces. We had a “wet” fall, so many people chose not to participate in the concrete Cauldon décor unfortunately, but we were able to add beautiful snow flakes for the Christmas season.



Plans for 2020 include continuing to encourage community involvement in the seasonal décor as a form of public art in the spring and the Halloween season. Summer will again have potted flowers through the downtown corridor with hanging baskets on the light poles. The apples will take center stage again during the harvest season. The downtown will usher in the holiday season with a Winter Wonderland theme.