

# **VILLAGE OF CALEDONIA**

County of Kent, Michigan

## **Minutes Village Council Workshop Monday, April 22nd, 2024, 7:00 p.m. 250 S. Maple St. SE, Caledonia, MI**

Call to order – 7:02PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll call – All present – Lindsey, Erskine, Schuler, Miller, Soest, Hahn, Niles

Others Present – Attorney Stegink, Chief Siler, Jon Moxey – F&V, Media, Citizens, Clerk Segard

This meeting will be recorded and posted on the Village website. Citizens invited to speak at the podium or from their chair.

Swearing in of Village Clerk – Lisa Segard by President Lindsey.

Open discussion to gain information of Rental Registration / Inspection Ordinances

Public comments & open discussion:

- Andrew – 203 E Main – Not small business friendly, any additional red tape is the opposite of that.
- Jeff K – Announcing candidacy for Village Trustee. Against any rental registry or inspection. We do not need another ordinance to cover the ordinances that we already have. New construction has existing procedures. Any change or improvement to any structure, existing ordinance & codes prevail. Any one of us, owner or tenant, who believes or knows that something in their building, home or apartment is not safe or healthy, or presents a danger in their building, there are existing ordinances & codes to handle them. All depend on officials in their capacity to follow & enforce existing laws & codes.
- President Lindsey – we do not currently have an ordinance before us to adopt. Tonight is for information gathering. To see if we even want to pursue this.
- Clare(?) – owns 203 E Main – Friends who are landlords state discoveries by inspectors cause ongoing repair requirements & increased expenses, which cause rents to go up. Against rental inspections
- Michael C – owns 203 E Main – Owns other rental properties within the county. Inspections are unconstitutional, must be voluntary. Rental inspection companies, an arm of the government, cannot search without permission. Takes tenant privacy seriously. Are inspectors mandated reporters of crimes? Safety ordinances & codes already exist. No statistics supporting the need for inspections. Some contractors will not work on properties in areas with rental inspections. Have inspectors passed background checks, are they bonded? This is a money grab.
- Jack M – Has had rental properties in the Village for nearly 50 years. Thinks landlords have done a pretty good job. No complaints, nothing that couldn't be worked out with the owner, tenant or neighbors. To add something like this would be more of a deterrent than a help.
- Keely S – Opening a store at 230 E Main – Speaking as a citizen, not a landlord. Importance of standing up for our freedoms & rights. Quoted Thomas Jefferson.
- President Lindsey – Asked Chief Siler & Jon Moxey for input. Both replied that they were here to answer any question.
- Attorney Stegink - Pulled examples of smaller communities' ordinances. BY adopting one of these ordinances, they would adopt the Michigan Housing Law (over 10,000 population) or Michigan Housing Code which does not apply to single family or 2 family homes. Could be a Village employee or an agency. Registry of owners is optional. Inspection, if adopted, basis is required to inspect if it receives a complaint from a lessee or a tenant. Other basis, percentage of units or complaint basis. Periodic or ownership change. Inspector must request & receive consent of lessee to inspect. Exception if there was an administrative warrant obtained. Or emergencies. Or Owner provides permission. Compliance prior to occupancy, reinspection, reasonable fees required. Voting not necessary to not adopt an ordinance. Just if an ordinance is brought to Council for a vote.

# VILLAGE OF CALEDONIA

County of Kent, Michigan

- Trustee Schuler – We do not need an ordinance. We could just have a complaint driven process. Asking landlord to repair repeatedly with no results. Why are we asking this question.
- President Lindsey – Previously, Village residents came to Council asking to limit the number of rentals in the Village. We cannot do that. Asked for help to get properties cleaned up. Is there something beyond tickets & fines to accomplish this.
- Trustee Soest – Tenants were cited but landlord was not apparent. LLC vs an individual makes it difficult to contact owners.
- ? - Existing ordinance to solve problem.
- Trustee Erskine – Addresses problem but does not solve the problem
- ? – Would this ordinance solve the problem?
- Attorney Stegink – Registration was meant to address the problem of how to contact owners.
- Jeff K – We don't need another ordinance; we need to apply what we have. When you have tenants who don't obey the law, it is up to the landlord to take the action & use the legal channels. If landlord is not obeying the law, it is up to the local officials to do that. Investigate the process of implementing existing ordinances.
- ? – List of complaints over last several years?
- President Lindsey – Anonymous complaints.
- Michael C – Inspections are to determine the interior is safe. Why just renters, why not every home?
- Trustee Schuler – Renter may not feel that they cannot speak up because they are afraid of losing housing.
- Michael C – Inspections only generate money; costs will trickle down to tenants.
- ? - Tenants have contractual agreements with owners that can be enforced. Can go to court to have properties repaired.
- President Lindsey – Asked if anyone is a tenant & do you want to weigh in?
- ? – Lived here 32 years. What concerns above trash? Does not find this appealing to add to mounting rental requirements.
- ? – Lived in the same place for 17 years. Encourages talking with your neighbor vs registering complaints. Wouldn't have lived here that long if it had to be inspected every 3-5 years. If I have an issue, if something was unsafe, has never had a landlord that was unwilling to address something that needed to be solved. Complaint basis based on someone else's opinion of your yard. Uncomfortable with people creating ordinance that don't apply to them. Some neighbors are unpleasable. There is a degree of bravery required to address your concern directly with a neighbor.
- Spike B – Fair housing practices in the State of Michigan supersede Village. There are other avenues.
- Trustee Niles – Does anyone even want inspections in this room? (many voices – “no”)
- Trustee Schuler. We wanted to know what people thought & I think we got our answer.
- Steven – We are all free to choose. Renters & tenants are responsible for the choices they make. Council & residents need to be responsible for choices that others make that do not cross the threshold. If they don't want to obey the ordinance, it's not going to happen.
- Trustee Erskine – Has several samples to review. Middleville, Cedar Springs, Sparta, others. Not a lot of fun to carry someone out of a burning house that didn't have a smoke alarm. It's a lot different on this side of the dais than on the other.
- Trustee Niles – As a Village, we need everyone's input. This is what we like to do before we make any changes.
- Sharon H – Regarding complaints & citations referenced Village Ordinance Section 8.12 Public Nuisances. Village's duty to clean it up if the people don't do it. To penalize all rental owners is wrong.
- Kathy G – Owns 232 Lake – Inspections are for the benefit of the renter. There are real dumps (not in Caledonia). Most rental homes in Caledonia are great. If tenants are uncomfortable with addressing their

## VILLAGE OF CALEDONIA

County of Kent, Michigan

landlord with concerns, perhaps they should move. Something should be in place where if a renter has made complaint to “get at” the landlord and there wasn’t anything wrong, that the renter should pay for that inspection. Has had this building over 30 years, as landlords they are there right away to fix it. Inspectors have a lot of power. (Experience outside of Village.) Requiring electrician to be on site for inspection, waited all day & inspector never showed up. If you call & complain, what will happen the next time that inspector comes out. They could make it even harder for you next time. We don’t buy properties where inspections are required. We don’t want the hassle. If it’s not broke, don’t fix it. If someone is making anonymous complaints, completely ignore them. If they are not willing to put their name on it, it isn’t a true complaint.

- President Lindsey – No further public comment. Asks for Council comments

Village Council member comments and announcements.

- Trustee Erskine – We have a whole book of ordinances. Before we waste any more of anyone’s time. Smaller communities with or without rental ordinances. We don’t really need it.
- Trustee Schuler – Thank you all for coming out. Interesting how information is passed along. We didn’t have nor had we started on an Ordinance. We just wanted to know how people felt & we certainly got that. We want to do what you want us to do.
- Trustee Miller – We didn’t go looking for this, it was brought to us.
- Trustee Niles – We are looking for a new Village Manager who will work with the people, more communication. I agree with all of you.
- Trustee Hahn – We have good landlords who care about their properties & tenants. There are a very few who only want the money. Thankful you all came. We have ordinances in place, and wonder why aren’t they enforced?
- Trustee Soest – House I referred to previously, there were no less than 8 dumpsters of debris removed from that property. Destroyed a perfectly good house. Next owner had to go through & redo everything. There are ordinances on the books that need to be updated & reworded but we are in the process, and it is a slow process. But we are working on it. If you want our jobs, feel free. Please don’t get mad when we are trying to do our best. Thank you all for coming & listening to both sides. I hope things go better from here on out.
- President Lindsey – Thank you for reaching out & had conversations on this. In full transparency We had no plan, we had no ordinance. This was more of listening & hearing what you want. We got the information that we wanted. Thank you for coming & speaking out & telling us what you want. We don’t know if you don’t tell us.

Adjournment – Motion by Miller, supported by Schuler.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lisa Segard  
Village Clerk