



Sparta, Greece, 2024

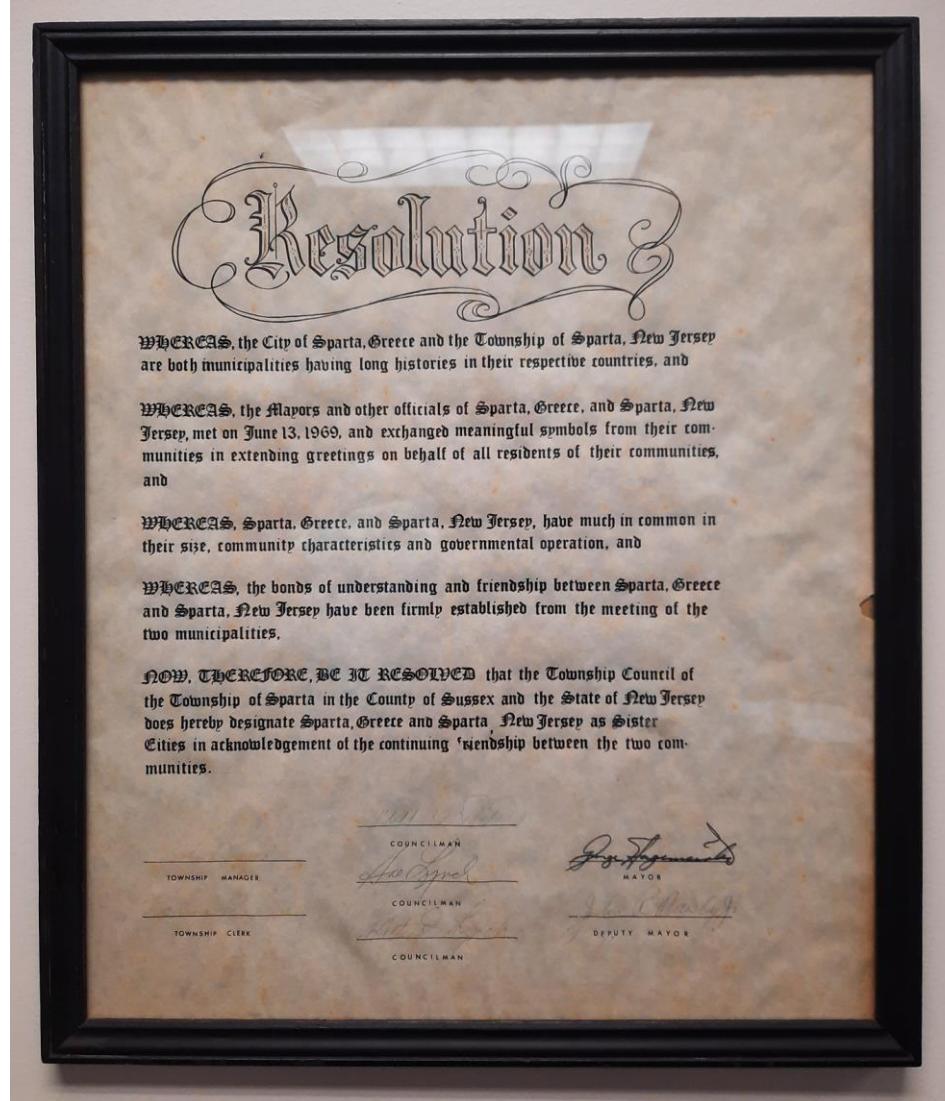
Sparta Institute Conference and Meeting with Sparta's Mayor



Background

In 1969 the Sparta NJ council passed a resolution declaring the Sparta NJ and Sparta, Greece, are **sister cities**.

In 2023 the council began exploring ways to rekindle that relationship. A connection was made with the Sparta Institute, an organization established in Sparta, Greece, to highlight and promote the culture of ancient Sparta. Then mayor Dan Chiariello was invited to speak at the 2024 conference, at which Sparta, NJ would be honored.





About Sparta, Greece



The **layout** of the city is much different than that of Sparta NJ. In the town square and on the main street and immediate arteries you can find many restaurants and shops. Throughout the town you will see four- and five-story apartment building where most of the town's inhabitants live.

The town of Sparta has a **population** of about 18,000, close to the size of Sparta NJ. In 2011 the municipality was merged with six other nearby municipalities for a total population of about 33,000.





Sparta's Government



Sparta is governed by a **mayor**, currently Michalis Vakalopoulos, who also serves as the administrator. There are nine paid deputy mayors, who function similar to department heads. There are an additional three unpaid deputy mayors who are liaisons from other towns in the township.

There are thirty-five **council members** who meet weekly.

The local **police department** consists of three officers. The primary police functions are provided by the national government.





Sparta's Economy



Tourism is one of the primary, economic drivers. However, one problem faced by the town is that the ancient sites are not as presentable as they should be to take full advantage of Sparta's history.

Farming is a very important part of the region's economy. **Olive trees** are everywhere, and have been adopted as a beloved symbol of the town. There is a museum dedicated to the olive farming.

Orange trees are also found throughout the area, and line the main boulevard in town.

There are **three universities** in Sparta, the largest of which is the University of the Peloponnese. As such, there are students who live in town.





Sparta's Ancient History



There are few remains of the **ancient Greek city state**, as much of it was built over. Also, the ancient Spartans did not build lavish structures.



The main historic section is the **Roman Agora**, from the period after the Romans absorbed the Greek city states into its empire.



Sparta's History

The ruins of the Byzantine city of **Mystras**, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is the most famous archeological site, located about five miles from the Sparta town center.



The most popular site in Sparta appears to be the **statue of King Leonidas**.



2024 Sparta Institute Conference



The Sparta Institute holds an **annual academic conference**. Each year the conference explores a different theme related to Sparta's culture and history. The 2024 subject was the economic model of ancient Sparta. Sparta, New Jersey, was proclaimed as their honored guest. Councilman Chiariello delivered the welcoming remarks.



The speakers featured university professors, **experts in the field of ancient Sparta**, from several countries, including Greece, the US, Great Britain, and Italy. After the conference, the lectures and papers they submitted become published, academic works.

This year, about seventy-five people attended the conference in person, while another 200 watched the online broadcast from LaconiaTV.



Meeting with Mayor Michalis Vakalopoulos



Many Sparta NJ organizations contributed **gifts** to our Greek sister city, including the municipality, police department, board of education, Sparta Historical Society, and the Sterling Mineral Mine Museum.

On September 9 Mayor Michalis Vakalopoulos **formally met** with Councilman Dan Chiariello, his wife, Lisa, and board members of the Sparta Institute, including president Anastasia Kanellopoulou and Georgios Kostakos. The elected officials exchanged greeting, gifts, and an excitement to work together in the future.





2026 Sparta Institute Conference



The 2026 Sparta Institute conference will be held in Sparta, NJ. The **conference theme** has not yet been determined, but it will likely explore ancient Sparta's cultural reach and significance. Another theme that we may explore is the system of laws established by the legendary lawgiver Lycurgus and their influence on modern law and the US constitution.

The Sparta Institute is also developing a **network** of municipalities around the world named after the Greek city. We aim to invite representatives from all towns and cities named 'Sparta' to attend the 2026 conference.

The 2026 conference will also include a **celebration** of Greek culture and sister city relationship.



Sister City Opportunities



The township council established a committee to plan the 2026 conference. However, a more durable goal of that committee will be to explore ways in which we may strengthen our **sister city relationship** with Sparta, Greece. This may include:

- Business opportunities
- Educational opportunities
- Student exchanges
- Art and cultural exchanges
- Tourism opportunities