

# CITY COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY

December 1, 2009

## CHECK REGISTER

- ◆ Approved the Check Register of December 1, 2009, as presented.

## PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS

- ◆ Mary Balkema, 1131 Whites Road, Kalamazoo, responded to information contained in an article in the *Kalamazoo Gazette* on November 18, 2009, explained why it took two weeks to get back to a request for information from Mayor Pro Tem Sackley, outlined the efforts thus far toward an audit by the state of all of the municipalities in Kalamazoo County, read the content of the recording of a robo-call endorsing Patricia Randall in her bid for City Council and generally took exception with some of the remarks made about her at the November 17, 2009 Regular City Council Meeting. She announced that she has invited David Buick from the State of Michigan Property Services Division to provide a class sometime in January 2010 on PRE, Principle Residence Exemption, and would be inviting all of the Treasurers, Assessors and Equalization personnel in the County.
- ◆ Kalamazoo Citizens for Responsible Government Communications Director John Gisler, 9145 Arrowhead Drive West, Scotts, provided a scorecard outlining their evaluation of the on-line transparency of the 36 taxing units in Kalamazoo County, including the School Districts, KRESA, KVCC, Townships, Villages and Cities. He indicated that the City of Portage was to be commended for being only one of two entities that met all of the criteria and explained.

## REPORTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION

- ◆ Adopted the revised Charges for Documents fee schedule; the recommended fee schedules for recreation programs and park facilities for 2010; the recommended Community Development Fees for Service including: the Resolution for Community Development Fees, the Resolution Establishing Fees for Building Permits, the Resolution Establishing Fees for Electrical Permits, the Resolution Establishing Fees for Plumbing Permits, the Resolution Establishing Fees for Mechanical Permits, and the Resolution Establishing Soil Erosion Fees; and the 2010 Special Assessment Rate Resolution.
- ◆ Approved the intergovernmental cost sharing agreement with the Board of County Road Commissioners for Kalamazoo County for improvements to the West Milham Avenue/12<sup>th</sup> Street/Texas Drive intersection and authorized the City Manager to sign all applicable documents related to the agreement on behalf of the city.
- ◆ Set a Special Meeting on Tuesday, January 12, 2010, beginning at 5:30 p.m. to interview board and commission applicants.

## COMMUNICATIONS

- ◆ Received the communication from William Schwartz, Chairperson of the Portage Environmental Board, submitting the 2009 Purple Loosetrife Program Report as information only.
- ◆ Received the communication regarding the Portage Spray Park Initiative from Scott Grinder, Jim Pearson and William McCarty as information only.

## STATEMENTS OF CITY COUNCIL

- ◆ Councilmember Randall thanked Kalamazoo County Treasurer Mary Balkema for coming forward with her discussion earlier and reviewed some of the statements from citizens that she used in her campaign literature and some of the issues she had raised in her campaign, and expressed her appreciation that issues surrounding the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Customer Service had been addressed rapidly by City Council. Further, she read from the Minutes of the Meeting of the State Tax Commission of Tuesday, April 14, 2009, where the minutes of the February 2, 2009 Meeting of the State Tax Commission were adopted with one minor change after she and Christine Elluru appeared before the Commission: "The Commission received all information regarding the complaint and found some questionable practices; however, the Commission has no jurisdiction" as the basis and origin of her use of the phrase, "questionable practices." She then indicated that, in her analysis, the 14-point review would not address the issues of change in class of construction, nor adding omitted items that are not there; she said that the record cards are looked at, but are not addressed for those specific reasons. She indicated that she asked the City Manager for a list of all properties that had a change in class of construction for 2000-2009, and asked that City Council move forward and ask the difficult questions regarding this matter.
- ◆ Councilmember O'Brien empathized with the concerns expressed by Councilmember Randall and asked City Manager Evans to provide the letters received from Michigan State Tax Commission Executive Secretary Kelli Sobel, who was very adamant that she found no questionable practices with the City of Portage Assessor's Office. She apologized to Councilmember Randall for not having those letters the night she made comments regarding the use of the term "questionable practices," as she thought Councilmember Randall had gotten those letters, also. Councilmember O'Brien also expressed kudos to Vicksburg High School for producing the beetles used to control Purple Loosetrife and to the Environmental Board for maintaining that unique partnership. She invited everyone to enjoy the Tree Lighting and Traditional Holiday Celebration, Saturday December 5, 2009, at 7 p.m. in the City Centre near the Portage Public Library.
- ◆ Councilmember Campbell mentioned her amazement when she read her share of the "I Love Portage" essays and thanked all of the students who participated and the teachers who supported it. Councilmember Reid concurred.
- ◆ Mayor Pro Tem Sackley expressed his appreciation to Chief Information Officer Devin Mackinder and the staff of the Office of the City Clerk for cataloging and uploading all of the information on the city website. City Clerk Hudson acknowledged the yeoman efforts of Deputy City Clerk Adam Herringa with regards to the city website and reminded citizens that they can use the website to volunteer for the city.
- ◆ Mayor Strazdas announced that the winners of the "I Love Portage" Essay Contest are: Ben Palmer, Portage Central Middle School, and Gabi Kizer, Moorsbridge Elementary School. With that, he asked Councilmember Reid to read the essay written by Noah Simpson, 12<sup>th</sup> Street Elementary School.

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**COMPLETE MINUTES OF EACH CITY COUNCIL MEETING ARE AVAILABLE ON THE CITY WEBSITE AT PORTAGEMI.GOV, IN CITY HALL AND IN THE DISTRICT LIBRARY. MINUTES OF CITY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST FROM VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS.**

