

Community Survey Results Reveal Satisfaction

Results of the 2009 Portage Community Survey, the twenty-fourth annual citizen survey conducted by the Kercher Center at Western Michigan University, were received by the City Council at their annual Goal Setting Session on December 11. For the second year, the survey was conducted in mail format rather than a random-digit dialing (phone) survey, which resulted in a response rate of 42.5 percent - much higher than with the traditional phone survey.

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with several services provided by the city. In addition, respondents were questioned about major areas of concern. Highlights of the survey results include:

Satisfaction

- ◆ An overwhelming majority of survey respondents (85.1 percent) feel they are receiving good services for their tax dollars.
- ◆ Of those respondents having direct contact with a city employee over the past year, 77.7 percent expressed satisfaction with the quality of service received from the employee. It is noteworthy that only 6.7 percent of respondents reported being dissatisfied with the quality of service received from the employee.
- ◆ Satisfaction with Bikeways/Trailways, the Condition of Parks and Curbside Recycling are ranked highest with 93.5 percent, 93.7 percent and 92 percent of the respondents indicating satisfaction with these services, respectively. As in previous years, satisfaction with most all city programs/services was high, so that even those services ranked lowest by respondents (Snow Removal at 73.5 percent and Neighborhood Streets at 71.8 percent) were still well regarded.
- ◆ The level of fire protection is not a pressing concern to residents, as 95.3 percent of those surveyed do not perceive a problem in this service area. The level of police protection, as well, is not perceived as a problem according to 82.6 percent of those surveyed.
- ◆ A new question for the 2009 survey asked citizens how they obtain information about what is going on

in Portage city government. The results show that the Portager newsletter, the Kalamazoo/Portage Gazette, and local television or radio are most utilized for obtaining information.

- ◆ The Portager newsletter continues to be well received, with 95 percent of those surveyed believing the Portager is an important source of information for happenings in Portage city government. Similarly, 80 percent of respondents feel that the City of Portage website is a very or somewhat important source of information about what is going on in Portage city government.
- ◆ Regarding city efforts in economic development, 65.1 percent of respondents believe the city is doing "just enough" to encourage economic development in Portage. On a related note, 54.6 percent of respondents feel the city is doing enough to encourage the redevelopment of existing commercial and industrial properties.

Concerns

- ◆ With a recent focus on teen substance abuse, 24.7 percent of respondents perceived a problem with illegal drug use in their neighborhood while 22.1 percent reported a concern with underage drinking. Interestingly, approximately 40 percent answered "don't know" to these questions.

- ◆ Traffic on South Westnedge Avenue remains the top concern, as 73.5 percent of respondents perceive traffic on the street as a problem.
- ◆ Of the respondents, 70.3 percent perceived a concern with the condition of pavement on roads and streets in Portage, making it again the second-highest concern.
- ◆ With regard to traffic on Oakland Drive, 52.1 percent of respondents perceived a traffic problem, making it the third-highest concern of respondents.
- ◆ Even though the condition of neighborhood homes and yards was perceived as a severe or moderate problem by only 9.7 percent of respondents, the results show that 16.2 percent of respondents felt the condition of their own neighborhood had become worse and 17.6 believed the condition of other neighborhoods had declined.

Responses to the 2009 survey are encouraging and consistent with past survey results. The high level of satisfaction continually demonstrated by the results of the annual survey indicates that the city has a well-defined understanding of the issues important to the Portage community and supports the concept that the city provides an excellent level of service. The complete 2009 Community Survey can be viewed at www.portagemi.gov.

Council Sets Goals and Objectives for 2010-2011

The Portage City Council adopted goals and objectives for Fiscal Year 2010-2011 at the December 15, 2009 City Council meeting. Each year, the Council establishes goals and objectives at the beginning of the budget development process. The goals and objectives are used by the City Administration, along with the results from the annual Portage Community Survey, to aid in establishing budget priorities and determining the allocation of resources. The Mission Statement of the Portage City Council serves as the basis for the goals and objectives document. The following are among the list of goals developed by the City Council:

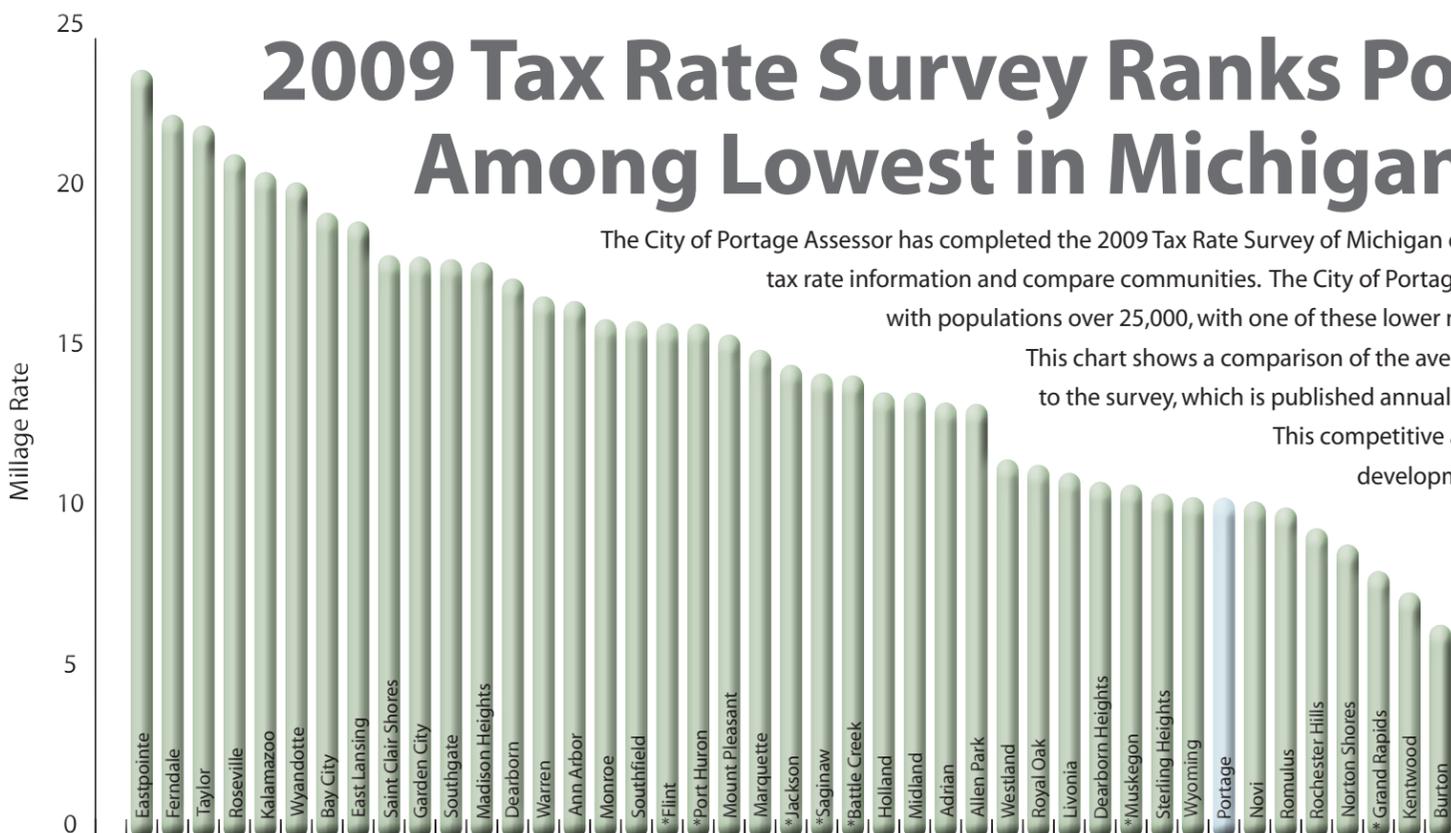
- ◆ Promote quality of life in Portage.
- ◆ Demonstrate a commitment to quality economic growth and development.
- ◆ Continue to plan and implement improvements to move people and commerce safely and effectively through the community.
- ◆ Promote excellent customer relations.
- ◆ Continue to improve the infrastructure to meet demonstrated needs.
- ◆ Enhance environmental quality and protect natural resources.
- ◆ Continue to provide high-quality effective and cost-efficient municipal services.
- ◆ Maintain the financial health of the city.

2009 Tax Rate Survey Ranks Portage Among Lowest in Michigan

The City of Portage Assessor has completed the 2009 Tax Rate Survey of Michigan cities. The study is used to obtain general tax rate information and compare communities. The City of Portage ranks 8th lowest in a comparison of cities with populations over 25,000, with one of these lower millage cities also levying a city income tax.

This chart shows a comparison of the average city millage for those cities responding to the survey, which is published annually in the *Michigan Assessor* magazine.

This competitive advantage continues to attract business development, investors and residents to Portage.



Portage Ranks Eighth Lowest

* These cities also levy an income tax.

Source: Portage City Assessor

New/Expanding Businesses (January to December 2009)

The following businesses have either opened or expanded in Portage during the last calendar year, bringing to/retaining in Portage an estimated 741 jobs*.

Business / Address	# of Jobs	Business / Address	# of Jobs	Business / Address	# of Jobs
Advanced Micro Endodontic 440 West Centre Avenue	4 new	Fast Freddy's Pit Stop 9017 South Sprinkle Road	4 new	Plunkett Cooney 950 Trade Centre Way	8 new
Albion Financial/Sami Investments 440 West Centre Avenue	2 retained/1 new	Garcia Engineering Solutions 3275 Cooley Court	2 new	Portage Pharmacy 7966 Lovers Lane	16 retained
All Season Window 7840 Portage Road	5 retained	Granite Works 8661 Portage Industrial Drive	8 new	Pro Build 8400 Shaver Road	10 retained
Angel Nails 8850 Shaver Road	4 retained	Great Lakes Endodontist 950 Trade Centre Way	6 new	Rapid Repair 2328 Winters Drive	12 new
America's Best Contacts & Eye Glasses 6800 South Westnedge Avenue	12 new	Great Lakes Plastic Hand Surgery 7971 Moorsbridge Road	10 new	Ross Medical 6235 South Westnedge Avenue	15 new
Avon 7061 South Westnedge Avenue	1 new	GSA Census Bureau 5250 Lovers Lane	35 new	Sakura Restaurant 6749 South Westnedge Avenue	30 new
B&B Fishtails 10330 Portage Road	2 new	HQ Salon and Spa 401 West Kilgore Road	10 new	Scottrade 7055 South Westnedge Avenue	4 new
Blue Avenue 915 West Milham Avenue	10 new	Hope Cafe 2333 Helen Avenue	5 new	Second Childhood 7105 South Westnedge Avenue	5 new
Bud's Service 9008 Portage Road	3 new	Hospice of Southwest Michigan 2255 West Centre Avenue	22 new	Singer Medical 1906 West Milham Avenue	7 new
Business Intelligence Associates 950 Trade Centre Way	50 new	Kalamazoo Nerve Center 2750 Old Centre Road	5 new	Sonic Restaurant 401 Romence Road	20 new
Charter Communications 4176 Commercial Avenue	30 retained	Kellogg Community Federal Credit Union 499 Romence Road	7 new	Soup R Heroes 7886 Oakland Drive	5 new
Cole Gavlas 2301 West Centre Avenue	14 new	Knowlton, Johnston, Kehoe Financial 721 West Centre Avenue	7 retained/2 new	Sprinkle Road Beer Mart 7907 South Sprinkle Road	4 new
Consumers Credit Union 1065 West Milham Avenue	7 retained	Liberty Mutual 7894 Oakland Drive	4 new	The Canary Gift Shop 8847 Portage Road	1 new
Computer Guild 5721 South Westnedge Avenue	4 new	Lovers Lane Storage 6800 Lovers Lane	2 retained	Tom's Card Shoppe 10071 Shaver Road	2 new
DOC Popcorn 6650 South Westnedge Avenue	6 new	Mann+Hummel 6400 South Sprinkle Road	240 retained	Triple C Auto Repair 10028 Shaver Road	4 new
Double Exposure 7067 South Westnedge Avenue	4 new	Peake Agency Insurance 10087 Shaver Road	2 new	Vanguard Fire & Security 7646 South Sprinkle Road	10 retained
Eliason Corporation 9229 Shaver Road	68 retained	Planet First 6118 South Westnedge Avenue	3 new	Vic's Liquidation Station 10075 Shaver Road	2 new
				White Velvet Yogurt 3940 West Centre Avenue	8 new

* Estimated by the Department of Community Development

New Business Profile

Consumers Credit Union

Originally founded in 1951, Consumers Credit Union is pleased to announce the opening of their newest location at 1065 West Milham Avenue. With 12 full service offices and over 100 ATMs located throughout Southwest Michigan, Consumers is readily able to serve those who matter most – the customer. Prepared for success, Consumers newest location provides the latest in technology and customer services by offering an online banking center and member service area, coffee bar, children's play area, free wireless internet access, three drive thru lanes and a drive thru ATM. "Our new Milham Office offers members and employees an added level of comfort knowing where they bank and work is strong and growing," observed Consumers Credit Union President and CEO, Kit Snyder.

Location: 1065 West Milham Avenue

Size: Approximately 6,000 square feet

Jobs: Approximately 7 employees

Market Value: Approximately \$995,000



Winter Programs Promise Outdoor Fun

The month of January is normally the coldest and snowiest month of the year and it provides great opportunities for outdoor fun. The City of Portage Parks and Recreation Department sponsors several winter recreation programs that are enjoyed by over 8,000 people annually at the Millennium Park Ice Rink, Timber Ridge Ski Resort and at Schrier Park. Contact the Portage Parks and Recreation Department at 329-4522 for more information about the following activities.

Schrier Park Winter Sports Fest

Saturday, January 16, 2010, 12 noon to 4 p.m.

The Winter Sports Fest at Schrier Park provides a great opportunity to try out the new technique of Nordic fitness walking and snowshoe equipment with assistance from Lee's expert instructors. Equipment demos and instruction will be held between 12 noon and 4 p.m. Kalamazoo Nature Center staff will be on hand to conduct outdoor adventure walks at 12:30 and 2:30 p.m. The Schrier Park pavilion and fireplace will provide a welcome respite and free refreshments will be provided. The Winter Sports Fest is free of charge and no advance registration is required. Come on out and rediscover winter this year at Schrier Park!

Note: A minimum snow cover of four inches is required for this event.

Learn to Ski in Three Easy Steps at Timber Ridge!

Group downhill ski lessons for area residents will be provided at Timber Ridge Ski Resort, 7500 23-1/2 Street near Gobles. These beginning lessons will be offered on



three consecutive Sundays, beginning January 17, 2010 for adults and children 8 years and older. The fee of \$55 includes equipment rental, lift ticket and instruction for three weeks and is payable on January 17 at Timber Ridge. A separate pre-registration fee is required for this program. To pre-register send \$5 per person, \$10 per family to the Portage Parks and Recreation Department (checks payable to the City of Portage), 7900 South Westnedge, Portage, MI 49002 prior to January 15, 2010. Classes start promptly at 2 p.m. and end at 3:30 p.m. and you can ski until 8 p.m. on January 17, 24 and 31!

Cross Country Ski Classes at Schrier Park

850 Osterhout Road between Oakland Drive and South Westnedge Avenue.

Participants must provide their own equipment for Cross Country ski classes. Pre-registration and fees are required in person at Breakaway Bicycles, 185 Romence Road (324-5555) or Lee's Adventure Sports, 311 Kilgore Road (381-7700).

Youth Cross Country Ski Class – Saturday, January 23, 2010, 9 to 11 a.m.

This is an excellent opportunity for youngsters age 8 to 12 years to learn the correct techniques to cross country ski. This introductory class will emphasize safety, proper use of equipment and how to traverse a variety of winter terrain. A minimum class size of 8 students is required with a maximum class size of 15 students. Fee: \$15 per person.

Adult Cross Country Ski Class – Saturday, January 23, 2010, 1 - 3 p.m.

This class will teach the diagonal stride with opposite and double poling, moving and stationary turns, uphill-downhill techniques and how to choose and use various cross-country equipment and clothing. In addition, personal safety and recommendations on local, regional and state ski destinations are covered in this comprehensive introduction to cross-country skiing. A minimum class size of 8 students is required with a maximum class size of 20 students. Fee: \$20 per person.

Note: A minimum snow cover of four inches is required for cross country ski classes.

2009 Tree Lighting and Traditional Holiday Celebration a Great Success!

On a picturesque early winter evening, more than 700 residents attended the City of Portage annual Tree Lighting and Traditional Holiday Celebration. A light early season snow cover provided a festive atmosphere for the December 5 event.

The Portage Northern Song Leaders performed seasonal favorites in the Point Garden site, setting the stage for the tree lighting. "I Love Portage" essay winners Gabi Kizer and Ben Palmer assisted Mayor Strazdas with switching on the lights to the Mayor's Tree, followed by the decorative illumination of the City Centre Area with thousands of lights. A horse drawn wagon, filled with the Song Leaders led the "parade" of participants along the Bicentennial Trail to Celery Flats for the Traditional Holiday Celebration, singing carols along the way. Visitors were greeted with music by the Proclamation Brass Ensemble, bonfires and hot cider, followed by additional carols from the Song Leaders. A highlight for all was the arrival of Santa and Mrs. Claus who greeted children in the One Room Schoolhouse. The evening concluded with refreshments in the Hayloft Theatre while the Proclamation Brass Ensemble performed on the Hayloft stage.



The Proclamation Brass Ensemble entertains the crowd at the 2009 Tree Lighting and Traditional Holiday Celebration

The City of Portage would like to thank the many local and area businesses that donated cookies, brownies and other treats to the Traditional Holiday Celebration.

Portage Police Say "Drive Safely This Winter!"

Winter weather conditions often make operating a motor vehicle challenging. The Portage Police Department offers the following recommendations to promote safe winter driving:

- ◆ **Prepare** for the trip;
- ◆ **Protect** yourself; and
- ◆ **Prevent** crashes on the road.

PREPARE

- ◆ **Maintain Your Car:** Check battery and tire tread, keep your windows clear, check your antifreeze.
- ◆ **Have On Hand:** Flashlight, jumper cables, abrasive material (sand, kitty litter, even floor mats), shovel, snow brush and ice scraper, warning devices (like flares) and blankets. For long trips, add food and water, medication and a cell phone.
- ◆ **Stopped or Stalled:** Stay with your car, don't over

exert, put bright markers on antenna or windows, and shine dome light; and, if you run your car, clear exhaust pipe and run it just enough to stay warm.

- ◆ **Plan Your Route:** Allow plenty of time (check the weather and leave early if necessary), be familiar with the maps/directions, and let others know your route and arrival time.
- ◆ **Practice Cold Weather Driving!** During daylight, rehearse maneuvers slowly on the ice or snow in an empty lot. Steer into a skid. Know what your brakes will do: stomp on anti lock brakes, pump non-anti lock brakes.
- ◆ **Don't idle** for a long time with the windows up or in an enclosed space.

PROTECT YOURSELF

- ◆ **Buckle up** and use child safety seats properly.

- ◆ **Never place a rear-facing infant seat** in front of an air bag.
- ◆ **Children 12 and under** are much safer in the back seat. Effective June 2009, a new law now states that all children less than four years of age must ride in the rear seat when the vehicle is equipped with one and must be in an appropriate child restraint seat.
- ◆ **Sit back 10 inches** from an air bag.

PREVENT CRASHES:

- ◆ **Drugs and alcohol** never mix with driving.
- ◆ **Slow down** and increase distances between cars.
- ◆ **Watch for pedestrians** walking in the road.
- ◆ **Avoid fatigue** - get plenty of rest before the trip, stop at least every three hours, and rotate drivers if possible.



What's up at the PSC!

Mindful Eating with Kristi Stender-Weessies, Certified Eating Coach, Borgess Health and Fitness Center – Tired of diets? Mindful Eaters are more successful in stabilizing blood sugars, keeping cholesterol levels in check and reducing blood pressures.

Meanwhile, learning the art of mindful eating reduces stress, aids in weight loss and creates a natural sense of wellbeing. Examine common eating patterns and learn mindful eating to maximize your enjoyment of food, while achieving a healthy weight. This really works! Free, but pre-registration required. Call 329-4555 to reserve your spot today!

Friday, January 8, 10 a.m.

Just for Fun Poker Night – Stop by the Portage Senior Center for some friendly, no-cash poker. Participants “wager” with poker chips (no cash-value), and enjoy playing a variety of “Dealer’s Choice” poker games. No fee or pre-registration required. Participants are welcome to bring a dish to pass if desired.

Tuesday, January 12, 6:30 p.m.

Line Dance Classes – Have fun, get fit and learn the latest line dances while you’re at it! Line Dancing is a great way to meet new friends, tone up your muscles, and improve your coordination. The **Beginning** class will start with the basics and progress on to simple routines. In the **Beginners Plus** class, the instructor will *gradually* build in a few more steps to the routines learned in the Beginning class. Finally, the **Intermediate** class will build on the steps and patterns developed in the Beginner Plus session and have you kicking up your heels in no time! Instructor: Deb Snell. Fee: \$20 for members/\$25 for non-members (6-week class).

Thursdays, January 14 – February 18

Beginner: 3 - 4 p.m., Beginner Plus: 2 - 3 p.m., Intermediate: 1:15 - 2:15 p.m.

Body Rebound – This non-aerobic class is designed for folks who may be just getting started with exercise. Get fit at a pace that is comfortable and safe. Instructor: Helene Thompson. Fee: \$30 for members/\$40 for non-members (8-week class).

Monday, Wednesday and Friday from January 18 – March 12, 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Call the City of Portage Senior Center at 329-4555 for more information on these and other available programs.

Mailbox Replacement Policy

The City of Portage snow removal program is designed to keep city streets clear and safe in the most efficient manner possible. While plow trucks normally travel through heavy snow at speeds of only 15 to 25 mph, the weight of the snow coming off the plow can easily damage mailboxes and/or knock posts and mailboxes completely over.

So what is a resident to do when this happens? Call the City of Portage Streets and Equipment Department at 329-4444 or use the “Report It” tool on the city website (www.portagemi.gov/government/report_it.asp) to report the damage. City staff will schedule either repair of the damage or replacement of the box and post, as necessary.

Replacements will be in the form of a standard U.S. Postal mailbox and/or post. The standard mailbox is either white or black and measures 6.5 inches in width, 19 inches in length and 8.5 inches in height. The mailbox has a hinged door and flag. Damaged posts will be replaced with a standard 4” x 4” wooden cross-arm U.S. Postal post.

Residents will have the option of receiving the standard replacement mailbox installed by the city or receiving a payment of \$44 (the cost of a standard box and post and labor). If payment is desired, the resident will be asked to sign and return a release form from the city and will be responsible for purchase and installation of the mailbox of their choosing.

If you have any questions concerning the Mailbox Replacement Program, please contact the Streets & Equipment Department at 329-4444.

Quarterly Brush Pickup Takes Place in January



The Quarterly Curbside Brush Collection Program takes place in January, April, July and October. The January collection also includes collection of Christmas trees.

Trees should be free of all decorations, including disposable tinsel, and placed at the curb by 7 a.m. on the Monday of the week of your scheduled Curbside Brush Collection.

Visit www.portagemi.gov/government/curbside.asp for a map of pickup zones and additional details.

CITY OF
PORTAGE
A Place for Opportunities to Grow
7900 South Westnedge Avenue
Portage, Michigan 49002-5160

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PERMIT NO. 33

ECRWSS

POSTAL CUSTOMER

A Friendly Reminder Please Keep Sidewalks Free of Snow And Ice

The city reminds residents and businesses of the importance of keeping sidewalks clear of snow and ice. Your cooperation in keeping sidewalks on major roadways and neighborhood streets clear for use by pedestrians is requested. City ordinance (Chapter 66, Article 1, Section 66-4) requires property owners and occupants with sidewalks adjacent to their properties to clear the sidewalks within 24 hours of a snowfall and within 12 hours when ice has formed on the sidewalks. Please contact the Department of Community Development at 329-4477 for more information.



Portage City Council

Upcoming City Council Meetings:

- ◆ Tuesday, January 12, 2010 @ 7:30 p.m.
- ◆ Tuesday, January 26, 2010 @ 7:30 p.m.



Mayor Pro Tem Ed Sackley
Term Expires 2013
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Councilmember Elizabeth Campbell
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Councilmember Margaret E. O'Brien
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Councilmember Patricia M. Randall
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Councilmember Claudette Reid
Term Expires 2013
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Councilmember Terry R. Urban
Term Expires 2013
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Mayor Peter J. Strzadas
Term Expires 2011
327-4478

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Televised City Meeting Schedule

The following City of Portage meetings can be seen on Portage Cable Access Channel 19. All meetings are held in the City Council Chambers at City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue and are open to the public.

January 2010

7	7 p.m.	Planning Commission (rebroadcast January 14)
11	7 p.m.	Zoning Board of Appeals (rebroadcast January 18)
12	7:30 p.m.	City Council (rebroadcast January 19)
21	7 p.m.	Planning Commission (rebroadcast January 28)
26	7:30 p.m.	City Council (rebroadcast February 2)

Cable Access channel 19 is available as live video streams on the Portage Cable Access home page (www.portagecableaccess.org) and the City of Portage Community Learning Resources page (www.portagemi.gov/learning).

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