

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES FROM APRIL 9, 2013

The Regular Meeting was called to order by Mayor Strazdas at 7:30 p.m.

At the request of Mayor Strazdas, Portage United Church of Christ Member Don Werme gave the invocation and the City Council and the audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

The City Clerk called the roll with the following members present: Councilmembers Elizabeth A. Campbell, Jim Pearson, Patricia M. Randall, Edward J. Sackley and Terry R. Urban, Mayor Pro Tem Claudette S. Reid and Mayor Peter J. Strazdas. Also in attendance were City Manager Maurice S. Evans, City Attorney Randy Brown and City Clerk James R. Hudson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motion by Reid, seconded by Sackley, to approve the March 26, 2013 Regular Meeting Minutes as presented. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 5 to 0 with Councilmembers Campbell and Urban abstaining.

* **CONSENT AGENDA:** Mayor Strazdas asked Councilmember Urban to read the Consent Agenda. Motion by Urban, seconded by Reid, to approve the Consent Agenda motions as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE OF APRIL 9, 2013:** Motion by Urban, seconded by Reid, to approve the Check Register of April 9, 2013. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

REPORTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION:

PRESENTATION OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2013-2014 PROPOSED BUDGET: City Council received the Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2013-14, Supplemental Budget and Detail Line Item Budget. At the request of Mayor Strazdas, City Manager Evans presented the proposed 2013-14 Fiscal Year Budget to City Council and indicated that he is presenting it in accordance with the requirements of the Portage City Charter, as well as the City Council Goals and Objectives, and that a conservative approach was utilized in formulating this balanced proposed budget that provides for the core services of Police, Fire, Water and Sewer, for Fiscal Year 2013-14.

He indicated that the total budget is \$62.59 million that includes the General Fund, the Capital Improvement Fund, Curbside Recycling Fund, Leaf Pick-up Fund, Spring Clean-up Fund and the Municipal Street Fund. He pointed out that this proposed budget maintains the overall city tax rate (millage) at 10.7778 mills, the same as Fiscal Year 2012-13, and the incorporation of an approximate 2 percent reduction in property tax revenue, combined with an approximate 4 percent increase in state revenue sharing, and the Economic Vitality Incentive Program (EVIP) payments from the State of Michigan. He reviewed the major categories of the city budget and indicated that they are supplemented where possible by Federal Highway Funds, the Municipal Street Fund revenue as well as transfers from the General Fund. He indicated that remaining elements of the original South Westledge Enhancement Projects (SWEPs) have been deferred or eliminated and significant resources previously obligated to these projects have been redirected to other primary street related capital improvements. He reviewed how the city plans to address improvements in municipal sanitary sewer service, treatment of "Tier 1," "Tier 2," and "Tier 3," street construction areas, water utility improvements and the *Placemaking* initiative undertaken in order to capitalize on past infrastructure investments directed to bikeway and trailway development; specifically, the initial development of the Eliason Nature Reserve as a major addition to the many park and recreation opportunities in the city.

He listed the top five projects in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). He noted that this budget reflects a reduction in debt and has some service adjustments to address continuing constricted revenue as well as to ensure compliance with the Affordable Care Act (ACA). He indicated that support for human service programs remains at the Council-prescribed policy level of 0.55 percent of the General Fund and that the ending fund balance is at 25 percent of General Fund expenditures. Lastly, he indicated that the City of Portage continues to remain in the lower 25 percent of all Michigan cities of greater than 25,000 in population in terms of millage level. He said he anticipates that the proposed budget would be on the city website by the end of the week and provided notice of the City Council Budget Work Sessions, open to the public, on Thursday, April 11, 2013, from 4:30 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. and on Tuesday, April 30, 2013, from 4:30 p.m. until 8:30 p.m., Conference Room Number one. Discussion followed. At the request of Councilmember Randall, Mr. Evans agreed to provide City Council with an itinerary of each of the meetings and to post them on the city website. Discussion followed.

* **TAX EXEMPTION FOR SPRING MANOR APARTMENTS:** Motion by Urban, seconded by Reid, to accept for first reading an ordinance amendment to the Codified Ordinances of the City of Portage to modify an existing Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) for the Spring Manor Apartments located at 610 Mall Drive; and take final action on April 23, 2013, at 7:30 p.m. or as soon thereafter as may be heard. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **SPECIAL MEETING WITH BOARD AND COMMISSION APPLICANTS:** Motion by Urban, seconded by Reid, to set a Special Meeting on Tuesday, May 14, 2013, beginning at 5:15 p.m., to interview board and commission applicants. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **TREE CITY USA TREE PLANTING AND PROCLAMATION:** Motion by Urban, seconded by Reid, to receive the communication from the City Manager regarding the Tree City USA Tree Planting and Proclamation as information only. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **CLOSED SESSION:** Motion by Urban, seconded by Reid, to hold a closed session immediately following the regularly scheduled City Council Meeting of April 9, 2013, to discuss a City Attorney communication. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

COMMUNICATION:

PORTAGE PLANNING COMMISSION: After discussion, motion by Sackley, seconded by Campbell, to accept the communication from the Planning Commission regarding the City of Portage FY 2013-2023 Capital Improvement Program. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

* **EASEMENT RELINQUISHMENT REQUEST, BURT DRIVE (LICENSE AGREEMENT):** Motion by Urban, seconded by Reid, to relinquish the northerly and southerly 12 feet of an existing easement for drainage, sewage and other public purposes over a previously vacated section of Burt Drive and authorize the City Manager to sign the License Agreement to locate an Accessory Structure in the easement area. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

ICE RINK DISCOUNT CARD PROGRAM: City Manager Evans provided some background of the request for action regarding the Ice Rink Discount Card Program. At the request of Mayor Strazdas, City Attorney Brown indicated that it is up to City Council whether to receive and/or take action on the communication from the Park Board Chair. Discussion followed. Motion by Sackley, seconded by Campbell, to receive the communication from the City Manager regarding a report from Park Board Chair Susan Williams concerning the Ice Rink Discount Card Program for information only and asked the Administration to proceed with the preparation for a discount card for next season consistent with the recommendation in the Park Board Report. Discussion followed. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **MINUTES OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:** City Council received the minutes for the following boards and commissions:

Portage Public Schools Board of Education Special and Regular of February 25, Special of March 4, Special and Committee of the Whole Work Session of March 11, and Policy Governance of March 14, 2013.

Portage Park Board of March 6, 2013.

Portage Human Services Board of March 7, 2013.

Portage Youth Advisory Committee of March 11, 2013.

AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORTS:

LAKE CENTER BUSINESS COMMITTEE: Councilmember Sackley reviewed his communication provided to City Council dated March 27, 2013, and provided background information on the designation of an area, zoned commercial, on both sides of Portage Road just north of Centre Avenue south to Clarence Drive as a Commercial Revitalization Area under the City of Portage Comprehensive Plan. He reviewed the planned reconstruction of Portage Road in this area during the 2014 construction season, including: roadway improvements, pedestrian refuge islands and sidewalk upgrades and noted that undergrounding of utilities is not in the planned project at this time.

He referenced the City Council Retreat discussion of the need for discussion among business owners, property owners, area residents and Portage citizens in general at this time since it does affect the city-at-large and the stakeholders in that area. He indicated that the goals of the Committee are to hear from stakeholders regarding the proposed capital improvements in the area scheduled for 2014, any potential changes and/or additions to the proposed work under the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and potential expansion of the project into other items. He mentioned that the Committee discussed the prospect of overlay zoning plans in the area as a means of providing stability and certainty for property owners and businesses that may not be in compliance with city codes as many of the structures were in place before Portage was a city and before the city had a code of ordinances for zoning which makes it difficult for property owners to make changes to the property. He also said that this area of the city has many unique characteristics as the oldest commercial and retail area of the city and is preserved as such.

He explained that the State of Michigan has expanded the Office of Urban and Metropolitan Initiatives and now has a local Representative, Andrew Haan, based downtown Kalamazoo at Southwest Michigan First, who is familiar with the area, is from the area and has confirmed his availability to assist. He reviewed the date, time, place and cost of the meeting of the Committee for discussion among business and property owners, area residents and Portage citizens in general as mentioned. Discussion followed regarding the challenges of this unique area of the city owing to its age and character. Discussion followed.

Motion by Sackley, seconded by Reid, to receive the presentation from Councilmember Sackley regarding the recent activity of the Lake Center Business Committee and scheduled a stakeholder meeting, Tuesday, April 23, 2013, at 2 p.m. at Bucky's Café, 8675 Portage Road, at a cost not to exceed \$500 with no cost for facilitation. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

SIGN ORDINANCE COMMITTEE: Councilmember Sackley announced a Business Sign Forum that will take place at 8:30 a.m., Saturday, April 13, 2013, in City Council Chambers. He discussed cost and the intent to retain the services of Tim Fallon, who has met with the Sign Committee and staff in the past. He explained the proposed content and format of the meeting and potential attendees and contributors with the purpose of the meeting to listen to citizens to see if there is a need to make adjustments to the Portage Sign Ordinance or leave it as it is. He invited all to attend and Mayor Strazdas concurred and expressed his appreciation to Community Development Director Vicki Georgeau as a facilitator. Discussion followed.

In response to Councilmember Pearson, Councilmember Sackley explained that the agenda and workflow is for the participants and staff. Mayor Strazdas offered him any information he might need and asked Ms. Georgeau to accommodate him. Discussion followed.

After thanking the Planning Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals of their assistance, motion by Sackley, seconded by Reid, to receive the presentation from Councilmember Sackley regarding the recent activity of the Sign Ordinance Committee, ratified the retention of Tim Fallon at a not to exceed amount of \$2,750 and approve \$100 for refreshments. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

BID TABULATION:

* **EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT INSTALLATION – FORD F-250 TRUCK:** Motion by Urban, seconded by Reid, to approve the low bid for emergency equipment and installation of equipment on the Battalion Chief Vehicle to Emergency Vehicle Products of Kalamazoo, Michigan, in the amount of \$23,971.22, and authorize the City Manager to execute all documents related to this matter on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

CLOSED SESSION: 8:29 p.m.

RECONVENE: 8:54 p.m.

OTHER CITY MATTERS:

STATEMENTS OF CITY COUNCIL AND CITY MANAGER: Councilmember Sackley extended congratulations and praise to the Kalamazoo Area Math and Science Center (KAMSC) students who swept the first, second and third places of the ACM High School Programming Contest and indicated that the winners were all from Portage Northern and Portage Central High Schools. He said there was Portage High School representation in the Computer Science and the Engineering Competitions at the University of Michigan Dearborn Engineering & Computer Science Experience, and KAMSC students in the Web Design Competition.

As a promotion to Bike Week, May 11 through 18, 2013, Councilmember Randall announced a Bike Rally among Portage City Council, Kalamazoo City Commission and the Kalamazoo Area Bike Club at 9 a.m. on Saturday, May 18, 2013, starting in Portage, *A Natural Place to Move*, at Portage Celery Flats, Garden Lane, and progressing north to Mayors' Riverfront Park, 251 Mills Street, and "loop back" for a total of 16 miles with promotional details to follow and be posted on the respective websites. She mentioned that she has approached some Kalamazoo County Commissioners, also.

Mayor Pro Tem Reid indicated that the absentee ballots for the May 7, 2013 Special Election with the Renewal of the Transit Millage issue have gone out, encouraged voters to vote and that registered voters can take home an absentee ballot Saturday before the election from 8 a.m. until 2 p.m., can obtain and vote an absentee ballot in City Hall the Monday before the election from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. and can obtain an absentee ballot on Tuesday, May 7, 2013, in the case of an emergency until 4 p.m.

Mayor Strazdas thanked City Council for all they are doing for the City of Portage, asked for positive changes to continue in Portage city government, and requested citizen input at the Business Sign Forum that will take place at 8:30 a.m., Saturday, April 13, 2013, in City Council Chambers and encouraged everyone to voice their opinions. He referenced the budget as the most significant responsibility of City Council, asked Portage citizens for input as a challenge to City Council and the Administration to make sure we are doing the right thing for our city because it starts with the dollars and it is important that we all focus on that.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Strazdas adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

James R. Hudson, City Clerk

***Indicates items included on the Consent Agenda.**