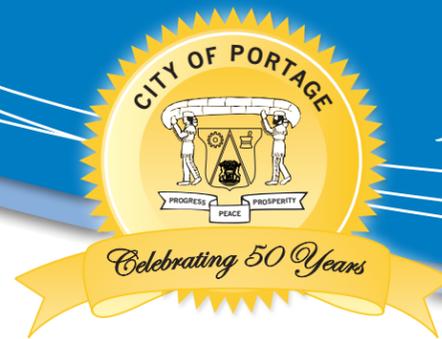


# Portager

January 2013



7900 South Westnedge Avenue  
Portage, Michigan 49002  
www.portagemichigan.gov



## City of Portage Commemorating 50 Years With a Year of Celebration Events and Activities!

On February 18, 1963, Portage Township residents voted in favor of cityhood and on December 16, 1963, approved the first City of Portage Charter. Portage Township officially incorporated as the City of Portage on December 31, 1963, making 2013 the 50th anniversary of the city's incorporation. The city's 50th anniversary plan presents a year-long program of activities and events to commemorate the 50th anniversary as a city. The plan includes elements that reflect on the past 50 years as a city, but that also refresh the commitment of the City of Portage government to, and connection with, the community. Some of the elements included in the plan are one-day celebratory events and some are multi-year initiatives that will promote healthy and active lifestyles for the future.

### Reflecting on the Past

The following activities are planned to commemorate the city's 50th anniversary and reflect on all that has transpired in the community over the last 50 years:

- ◆ A special commemorative edition of the *Portager* newsletter will be published in February 2013, highlighting major community milestones over the past 50 years.
- ◆ The February 12, 2013 City Council meeting will feature the presentation of proclamations from various local, state and representatives.
- ◆ The lobby of Portage City Hall will be home to a year-long display of Portage historical documents, photographs and memorabilia.
- ◆ City Council meetings, airing live and taped on Public Media Network channel 98 (channel 99 on U-Verse), will feature a historical video introduction.

### Recommitting to the Future

The City of Portage has many natural gifts and through the five decades as a city, has transformed these natural gifts into community assets. Nearly one thousand acres of land, including some fragile and irreplaceable ecosystems, have been protected for the public to enjoy. These assets help to set Portage apart from other cities and are continuously lauded as some of the city's most important features.

The Portage 2025 Visioning Project in 2007 and the Portage 2025 Renewal event held in 2008 reflect the desires of the community to promote healthy, active lifestyles through the use of the city's natural resources and development of sustainable, well-maintained recreational amenities. The 50th anniversary of the city presents a perfect opportunity to not only celebrate past accomplishments but to revive city efforts when it comes to its natural resources, parks and recreational opportunities and supporting active, healthy lifestyles.

At the mid-century mark of the city's incorporation, the city intends to embark on the following actions to ensure a quality community environment in the years ahead.

- ◆ The city's 50th anniversary is being used as a pivot-point to re-brand the community from 'A Place for Opportunities to Grow' to 'A Natural Place to Move' to

## Winter Blast Half Marathon & 5K to Kick Off Celebration on February 17, 2013!

Portage trails and select streets will be packed with runners navigating a 13.1 mile half marathon course and a 3.1 mile 5k course this winter! In cooperation with Kalamazoo Areas Runners (KAR), Portage is excited to feature the inaugural Winter Blast Half Marathon and 5k on Sunday, February 17, 2013. The half marathon is closed to new registrations, however registrations are still being accepted for the 5k race. Portage Central High School will be the staging location for the race start, finish line and event festivities. The 5k will begin at 8 a.m., followed by the half marathon at 8:15 a.m.

To accommodate racers, various detour routes will be in place on major Portage roads between the hours of 8 a.m. and 12 noon. Although the courses have been designed to limit impact to vehicular traffic, Portage drivers should plan for extra travel time during this period. Please drive with caution and watch for runners at intersections along the race routes. Major roadways effected include:

- ◆ South Westnedge Avenue between East Centre Avenue and Bacon Road
- ◆ East Centre Avenue between Shaver Road and Currier Drive/Mustang Drive
- ◆ Melody Avenue
- ◆ Garden Lane
- ◆ Lovers Lane, north of Garden Lane will have limited access



Furthermore, adjacent neighborhoods and local roads along the route may experience short-term road closures. All race participants are expected to exit the affected neighborhoods by 9:15 a.m. Residents in these areas will receive notification of the impact via postal mail prior to the event.

Race information and a full course map can be accessed at [www.portagewinterblast.wordpress.com](http://www.portagewinterblast.wordpress.com). Questions can be directed to Bonnie Sexton, Race Director, at [bonnie.sexton@kalamazooarearunners.org](mailto:bonnie.sexton@kalamazooarearunners.org) or at 270-5641.

reflect upon the support of active, healthy lifestyles and strong neighborhoods within the city. City marketing materials will be designed to feature and enhance the use of the city's natural resources and well-maintained recreational amenities.

- ◆ In keeping with the new brand, a commitment has been made to maintain open recreational trails in the city for the duration of the 2012-2013 winter season, allowing for year-round use. The popular Portage Creek Bicentennial Park Trail, along with the Northwest Portage Bikeway, the Shaver Road Bikeway and the Lovers Lane Bikeway, will all be cleared of snow as needed.
- ◆ Funding will be allocated for the initial development of the Eliason Nature Reserve. In 2011 through a generous donation from Linda Eliason in honor of her late husband, David J. Eliason, the City of Portage acquired a 123-acre parcel east of Shaver Road. The property is a combination of uplands and wetlands that are part of the Bishop's Bog complex, which is registered with the Nature Conservancy and classified as a "relict bog."

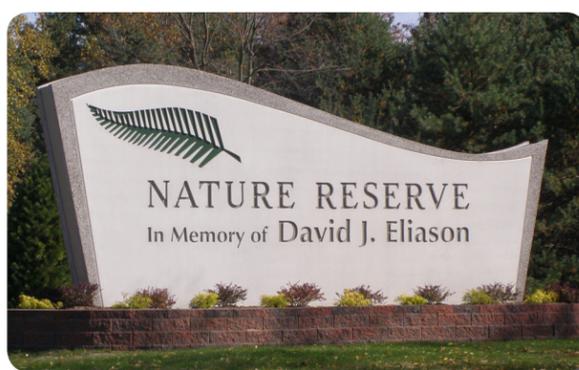
- ◆ Funds for future planned phases of the South Westnedge Enhancement Projects (SWEPs), which are determined to be unwarranted at this time, will be reprogrammed to support "complete streets," additional local and major street improvements and sidewalk, bikeway and trailway maintenance and expansion, all of which support active, healthy lifestyles and strong neighborhoods.

### Community Events

Among others still in the planning stages, the following events and activities will commemorate the city's 50th anniversary during 2013:

- ◆ The inaugural **Winter Blast Half Marathon and 5k** will be held on Sunday, February 17, 2013 (see related article above) in cooperation with Kalamazoo Area Runners and will highlight the city trailway and bikeway system.
- ◆ An exciting twist to the City Council entry in the annual **VFW Memorial Day parade** is planned.
- ◆ A special **50th Anniversary Concert** will be presented during the summer of 2013. Watch for details in upcoming *Portager* newsletters and on the city's website.
- ◆ An official groundbreaking event for Phase I development of the **Eliason Nature Reserve** is planned in July 2013.

Other events and activities to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the City of Portage are also planned, including Board and Commission activities, a display of Portage flags along South Westnedge Avenue and spring flower displays, among others.



# Do You Qualify for a Property Tax Poverty Exemption?

The City of Portage Board of Review can approve a one-year exemption from property taxes due to a resident's poverty income level. The annual property tax exemption requires the applicant to be currently receiving the Principal Residence Exemption (formerly the Homestead Exemption) and meet the 2013 Federal Household Poverty Exemption guidelines for the previous calendar year (shown at right).

The guidelines determine the eligibility of the applicant and must be supported with proper income documentation (i.e., federal and state income tax returns for all persons residing in the principal residence, including any property tax credit returns) or by filing an affidavit for all persons residing in the residence who were not required to file federal or state income tax returns for the current or preceding tax year. Household assets (maximum of \$25,000) are also considered and must be recorded with the application.

The Property Tax Poverty Exemption Application form is available at the Office of the City Assessor or online at [www.portagemi.gov](http://www.portagemi.gov) > Departments > City Assessor > Property Tax Forms & Information.

The approval process requires an in-person appointment before the Board of Review, which meets in March, July and December. To be considered, applications must be submitted to the Office of the City Assessor at least ten days prior to the Board of Review sessions. Generally, the Board of Review considers completed applications in relation to the federal household income standards, along with household assets, and determines by a simple majority vote whether to grant an exemption. Exemptions granted to residents due to poverty income levels are subject to audit by the Michigan Department of Treasury. More information can be obtained by contacting the Office of the City Assessor at 329-4433.

## 2013 Federal Household Poverty Exemption Guidelines

Household Size*	Maximum Income
1 person	\$11,170
2 persons	\$15,130
3 persons	\$19,090
4 persons	\$23,050
5 persons	\$27,010
6 persons	\$30,970
7 persons	\$34,930
8 persons	\$38,890

\* For households with more than 8 persons, add \$3,960 for each additional person.

## New/Expanding Businesses (January to December 2012)

The City of Portage remains vital, ever changing and resilient by offering business unmatched opportunity, significant public advantages and a creative and capable public sector partner. The City of Portage congratulates these new or expanded businesses in the community.

Business	Estimated # of Employees
<b>Abraxas</b> 701 East Milham Avenue	N/A
<b>Alkhamis Financial</b> 7900 Kirkland Court	5 retained
<b>American Freight of Michigan</b> 501 Mall Drive	7 new
<b>Attorneys Title Agency</b> 7127 South Westnedge Avenue	8 retained/2 new
<b>Behrens Custom Cabinetry</b> 1701 Vanderbilt Avenue, Suite B	2 new
<b>Biggy Coffee</b> 3279 West Centre Avenue	20 new
<b>Chiro Effects Chiropractic</b> 7117 South Westnedge Avenue	8 retained/1 new
<b>Community Living Options – Alcott Center</b> 543 Mall Drive	10 new
<b>Crazy 8</b> 6650 South Westnedge Avenue	10 new
<b>Edward Jones (Greg Feltner)</b> 950 Trade Centre Way, Suite 145	3 new
<b>Family Dollar</b> 5003 South Westnedge Avenue	N/A
<b>Five Below</b> 6284 South Westnedge Avenue	20 new
<b>Five Guys Burgers &amp; Fries</b> 6286 South Westnedge Avenue	40 new
<b>Francesca's Collections</b> 6650 South Westnedge Avenue	7 new
<b>Granite Works</b> 8701 Portage Industrial Drive	10 retained
<b>Great Clips</b> 5202 South Westnedge Avenue	6 new

Business	Estimated # of Employees
<b>Gold Nugget Pawn LLC</b> 7612 South Westnedge Avenue, Suite A	3 new
<b>Goodwill Industries</b> 411 West Milham Avenue	N/A
<b>Happy's Pizza</b> 6225 South Westnedge Avenue	10 new
<b>Hearing Life</b> 1930 West Milham Avenue	3 new
<b>Horizon Bank</b> 3250 West Centre Avenue	9 retained/9 new
<b>Intentional Yoga</b> 6800 South Westnedge Avenue	14 retained/8 new
<b>JAC's Cekola Pizza</b> 7640 South Westnedge Avenue	30 new
<b>Jersey Giant Subs</b> 7886 Oakland Drive	4 new
<b>Kids Gym</b> 9027 Portage Industrial Drive	24 retained
<b>Meijer</b> 8850 Shaver Road	296 retained
<b>Midwest Fasteners</b> 9031 Shaver Road	N/A
<b>Mosaic Hall &amp; Dance Center</b> 10097 Oakland Drive	7 new
<b>Mueller Plastics</b> 6700 South Sprinkle Road	1 retained/78 new
<b>Northpointe Bank</b> 3275 West Centre Avenue	5 new
<b>O'Reilly Auto Parts</b> 7300 South Westnedge Avenue	7 retained/2 new
<b>Once Upon a Child</b> 643 Romence Road	11 new
<b>Paws &amp; Claws Finishing Touch</b> 5715 South Westnedge Avenue	3 retained
<b>PharmOptima</b> 6710 Quality Way	N/A
<b>Pizza Hut</b> 6300 South Westnedge Avenue	55 retained

Business	Estimated # of Employees
<b>Plato's Closet</b> 6414 South Westnedge Avenue	18 retained/4 new
<b>Salon Pura Vida</b> 6020 Lovers Lane	17 retained/2 new
<b>Teavana Tea Store</b> 6650 South Westnedge Avenue	N/A
<b>The Industry Source</b> 271 West Centre Avenue, Suite B	2 retained
<b>The Limited</b> 6650 South Westnedge Avenue	25 retained
<b>The Sangria Shop</b> 5919 South Sprinkle Road	2 new
<b>Tim Hortons Café &amp; Bake Shop</b> 5709 South Westnedge Avenue	23 new
<b>Tradehome Shoes</b> 6650 South Westnedge Avenue	10 retained
<b>Travel Focus</b> 3810 West Centre Avenue	7 retained
<b>Urban Shine Spa and Tanning Salon</b> 7904 Oakland Drive	6 new
<b>Victoria's Secret</b> 6650 South Westnedge Avenue	N/A
<b>Vina Nails</b> 7922 Oakland Drive	N/A
<b>Wet Seal</b> 6650 South Westnedge Avenue	18 retained
<b>Yo-Go Delites</b> 6412 South Westnedge Avenue	8 new
<b>Y'OPA Frozen Yogurt</b> 165 West Centre Avenue	10 new
<b>Zumiez</b> 6650 South Westnedge Avenue	10 new

Estimated Number of Employees obtained from business representative or publication.

N/A indicates that information was not available or not provided by business representative.

## Portage: An Award-Winning Community

The City of Portage continues to garner state and national recognition for excellence in areas such as service quality, public communications, technology, transparency and budgeting. In all, the city received ten awards in 2012.

- ◆ Parks, Recreation and Public Services – Kalamazoo Bicycle Club's annual "Friend of Bicycling" award
- ◆ Parks, Recreation and Public Services – Tree City USA®, Twenty Two Consecutive Years.
- ◆ Technology Services – AVA Award Gold Winner for Website Design
- ◆ Technology Services – Sunshine Review - A+ for transparency - City Website
- ◆ Technology Services – The Communicator Award for Award of Distinction City Website
- ◆ Financial Services – Government Finance Officers Association Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting
- ◆ Financial Services – Government Finance Officers Association - Distinguished Budget Presentation
- ◆ Financial Services – Outstanding Customer Service Award, Treasury Specialist, Ingrid McGuire
- ◆ Department of Community Development – Outstanding Customer Service Award Honorable Mention, Electrical Inspector, Ron Deering
- ◆ Office of the City Manager – University of Michigan iLabs E-Cities Designation - 4 Stars

## Pair of Grants Allow City to Improve Quality of Life and Public Safety

The City of Portage is pleased to announce receipt of two grants from the State of Michigan that will support park development and an innovative crime and traffic enforcement model.

### MDNR Recreation Passport Grant

Award of a Recreation Passport Grant to the City of Portage in the amount of \$45,000 was recently announced by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR). The grant will allow the city to renovate the popular Westfield Park playground in the northwest portion of the city. The city is grateful for the grant funding, which will assist in improving the quality of life for Portage residents. Of the 82 Recreation Passport Grant applications submitted to the state, only 19 were approved by the MDNR. Recreation Passport Grant funds are made possible through the state motor vehicle registration program.

The key component of the project will be replacement of the existing play structure in Westfield Park with new creative play equipment that meets current guidelines for safety and accessibility. To further enhance accessibility, a new unitary surface will be placed under and around the new play structure, the retaining wall will be modified and new edging will be placed around the playground site. Work on this project will begin in late spring with completion by June 2013.

### Justice Assistance Grant

The City of Portage was recently awarded a \$50,000 Justice Assistance Grant by the State of Michigan to implement an operational model of Data Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety (DDACTS).



DDACTS integrates location-based crime and traffic crash data to establish effective and efficient deployment of law enforcement resources. Crime and traffic crash data have been analyzed to identify "hot spots." The Portage Department of Public Safety – Police Division strategically deploy police officers to the hot spots for high-visibility enforcement activities during peak times. This method of deployment has proven successful throughout the country. The first hot spot identified is the South Westnedge Avenue corridor, between Milham Avenue and Romence Road. Increased police presence in this area began in mid-December with the goal of reducing crime and traffic crashes.

Drivers may notice an increased police presence on South Westnedge Avenue during specified hours. The assigned officer's priority is to make citizen contact and conduct field interviews. The object is not to increase traffic citations, but to modify driver behaviors and deter crime. Of significance, enforcement action will take place for any criminal offenses encountered during the high-visibility patrols.

## City of Portage Seeking Paid On-Call Firefighters

The City of Portage is seeking qualified candidates for the paid position of On-Call Firefighter. Successful candidates must hold State of Michigan certifications of Firefighter I, Firefighter II and Medical First Responder. Successful candidates must also pass a written test, physical agility test, background investigation and post-offer physical examination. Some residency requirements apply. The starting rate for this position is \$10.75 per hour, with no benefits.

Qualified candidates are asked to submit an employment application to the Department of Employee Development at 7900 South Westnedge Avenue, Portage, MI, 49002. Employment applications can also be completed online at [www.portagemi.gov](http://www.portagemi.gov) > Quick Links > Employment. For further information, please call the Department of Employee Development 329-4533.



The City of Portage is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

## Environmental Board Seeks Input from Residents

### Your Opinion Counts

The City of Portage Environmental Board is a citizen board appointed by the Portage City Council to provide advice on issues that affect the environment. The Environmental Board is comprised of nine members of the community, as well as a youth volunteer. The purpose of the Environmental Board is to encourage balanced and environmentally-sound standards which promote and sustain a great place to live, work and play.

The Environmental Board seeks input from Portage residents.

- ◆ What environmental issues concern you?
- ◆ What do you like about the environment in Portage?
- ◆ Is there anything related to the environment in Portage you would like to see changed or improved?

Please contact the Environmental Board by attending a monthly meeting on the second Wednesday of every month at 7 p.m. at Portage City Hall. You may also e-mail your opinions to [barnesc@portagemi.gov](mailto:barnesc@portagemi.gov). Your valuable input will help the Environmental Board keep Portage a great place to live, work and play.

## Get Ready for the 2013 Summer Entertainment Series

### 25 Years of Great Entertainment!

The City of Portage is celebrating 25 years of Summer Entertainment Series (SES) events and activities! Planned highlights for the 2013 summer season include the popular children's **Lunch & Learn** series, **Shakespeare in the Park**, children's theatre, movies in the park and **Taste of Portage**. In addition, as part of the city's anniversary celebration, a special **50th Anniversary Concert** will be presented.

The SES is a self-supporting program, which means that no tax dollars are used for funding. The SES is made possible entirely through financial support from area businesses, corporations, foundations, individuals and revenues from attendees. This year, the fundraising goal is \$70,000.

As the new year begins, help keep the City of Portage a great place in which to live, work and play by making a donation to the SES. Donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. All donations received before March 9, 2013 will be recognized in the annual SES brochure, distributed to over 45,000 households in Portage and surrounding communities.

Individuals or companies interested in program sponsorship may contact the Department of Parks, Recreation & Public Services at 329-4522. To submit a donation, please complete the form below and mail it along with a check. Your contribution is critical to providing another sensational cultural arts season in 2013.

Please accept this donation to the 2013 Summer Entertainment Series.

Please print your name(s) as you would like it to appear on the SES promotional material.

Address

City

Zip Code

Amount of Donation Enclosed

**Mail to:** Summer Entertainment Series  
Portage Treasury Office  
7900 South Westnedge Avenue  
Portage, MI 49002

# Youth Advisory Committee Snow Party!

**When: Saturday, February 2, 2013 – 12 noon to 3 p.m.**  
**Where: Oakland Drive Park**  
**Admission: FREE!**



A great chance to enjoy time with your family and friends, while enjoying the white wonders of Michigan weather. There will be many activities to enjoy such as sledding, a snowman building contest and a bonfire. Build, decorate and bring your own cardboard sled! Build and dress up the biggest and fanciest snowman! "Best in Show" prizes will be awarded for the snowman and cardboard sled contests, along with a prize for the fastest cardboard sled. And for when you need a warm respite from the activities, there will be a bonfire with hot chocolate and coffee available for purchase. The event is hosted by the Portage Youth Advisory Committee and all ages are welcome.

the fastest cardboard sled. And for when you need a warm respite from the activities, there will be a bonfire with hot chocolate and coffee available for purchase. The event is hosted by the Portage Youth Advisory Committee and all ages are welcome.

# A Friendly Reminder

## Please Keep Sidewalks Free of Snow and Ice

The city reminds residents and businesses that City Ordinance (Chapter 66, Article 1, Section 66-4) requires property owners and occupants with public 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. Enforcement action for those not in compliance with this city ordinance could involve the assessment of fines. Your cooperation in keeping sidewalks on major roadways and neighborhood streets clear for use by pedestrians is appreciated.

The Portage Department of Public Safety – Fire Division asks residents to also clear snow away from any fire hydrants on or adjacent to their property. Should there be a fire nearby, it is imperative that firefighters have clear access to fire hydrants so that fire hoses can be immediately attached and used to fight the fire. Your assistance in clearing snow away from fire hydrants will make a big difference in how quickly a fire can be extinguished.



# January Quarterly Curbside Brush Collection

The Quarterly Curbside Brush Collection Program will take place in January, including the collection of Christmas trees, which can be placed at the curb whole – no trimming necessary. Trees should be free of all decorations, including disposable tinsel. Residents are asked to have brush and Christmas trees placed at the curb no later than Monday morning at 7 a.m. of their scheduled collection week but no sooner than three days prior to that day.



The following items **WILL NOT** be collected:

- ◆ Brush or branches resulting from removal of a tree with a trunk greater than four inches in diameter or any parts of a whole tree removal.
- ◆ Brush or branches generated by a professional tree removal service.
- ◆ Brush or branches in excess of three inches in diameter.
- ◆ Grass clippings, flowers, weeds, garden materials.
- ◆ Firewood.
- ◆ Lumber, timber, building materials, railroad ties.

- ◆ Roots or tree stumps.
- ◆ Yew branches or vines.
- ◆ Loose or bagged leaves and ornamental grasses.

Visit [www.portagemi.gov](http://www.portagemi.gov) > Departments > Streets & Equipment > Brush Pickup for a map of pickup zones and collection dates. Questions regarding the Quarterly Curbside Brush Collection can be directed to the Department of Parks, Recreation and Public Services at 329-4444.



7900 South Westnedge Avenue  
 Portage, Michigan 49002-5160

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POSTAL CUSTOMER

## 2013 City Council Meeting Schedule

- January 8 and 22
- February 12 and 26
- March 12 and 26
- April 9 and 23
- May 14 and 28
- June 11 and 25
- July 9 and 23
- August 13 and 27
- September 10 and 24
- October 8 and 22
- November 5 and 19
- December 3 and 17



## Portage City Council

Portage City Council meetings are held on Tuesday evenings at Portage City Hall (7900 South Westnedge Avenue) in Council Chambers at 7:30 p.m. and are open to the public.

The City Manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the city. Citizens are encouraged to contact the City Administration with concerns or complaints about city services by calling Complaint Resolution at (269) 329-4404 or by visiting [www.portagemi.gov](http://www.portagemi.gov) > Report It!



**Mayor Peter J. Strazdas**  
 327-4478  
[peter.strazdas@portagemi.gov](mailto:peter.strazdas@portagemi.gov)



**Mayor Pro Tem Claudette Reid**  
 491-9725  
[claudette.reid@portagemi.gov](mailto:claudette.reid@portagemi.gov)



**Elizabeth Campbell**  
 321-9383  
[campbell4portage@yahoo.com](mailto:campbell4portage@yahoo.com)



**Jim Pearson**  
 327-9136  
[jimpearson4@gmail.com](mailto:jimpearson4@gmail.com)



**Patricia M. Randall**  
 324-7779  
[patricia.randall@portagemi.gov](mailto:patricia.randall@portagemi.gov)



**Ed Sackley**  
 323-8119  
[edsackley@msn.com](mailto:edsackley@msn.com)



**Terry R. Urban**  
 323-8160  
[terry.urban@portagemi.gov](mailto:terry.urban@portagemi.gov)

**City Manager:**  
 Maurice S. Evans  
[evansm@portagemi.gov](mailto:evansm@portagemi.gov)

**Portager Editor:**  
 Mary Beth Block  
[blockm@portagemi.gov](mailto:blockm@portagemi.gov)

## Televised City Meetings

All City of Portage City Council, Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals meetings can be viewed live on channel 98. AT&T U-Verse customers can access the City of Portage government meetings on channel 99 and then follow the prompts to access the various meetings.

### January

3	7:00 p.m.	Planning Commission Meeting
8	7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting
14	7:00 p.m.	Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
17	7:00 p.m.	Planning Commission Meeting
22	7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting

### February

7	7:00 p.m.	Planning Commission Meeting
11	7:00 p.m.	Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
12	7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting
21	7:00 p.m.	Planning Commission Meeting
26	7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting