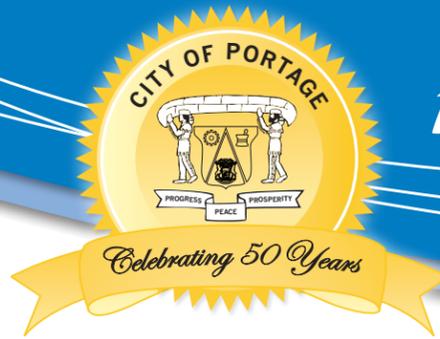


Portager

December 2013



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



2013-2015 City Council Seated

The 2013-2015 Portage City Council was seated November 19, 2013. Mayor Peter J. Strazdas was re-elected to a fifth two-year term. Councilmembers Claudette Reid and Terry Urban were re-elected for new four-year terms and Councilmember Nasim Ansari was elected for a new four-year term. One vacancy remains unfilled; a two-year unexpired term resulting from a recent Council resignation. The City Council plans to interview applicants for the vacant seat on Monday, December 16, 2013, with final action and appointment of a new Councilmember on Tuesday, December 17, 2013.

The Council acts as the legislative and policy-making body of the city, while 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 329-4404 or by visiting www.portagemi.gov > Report It!



**Mayor
Pete Strazdas**
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**Councilmember
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**Councilmember
Jim Pearson**
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**Councilmember
Patricia Randall**
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**Councilmember
Claudette Reid**
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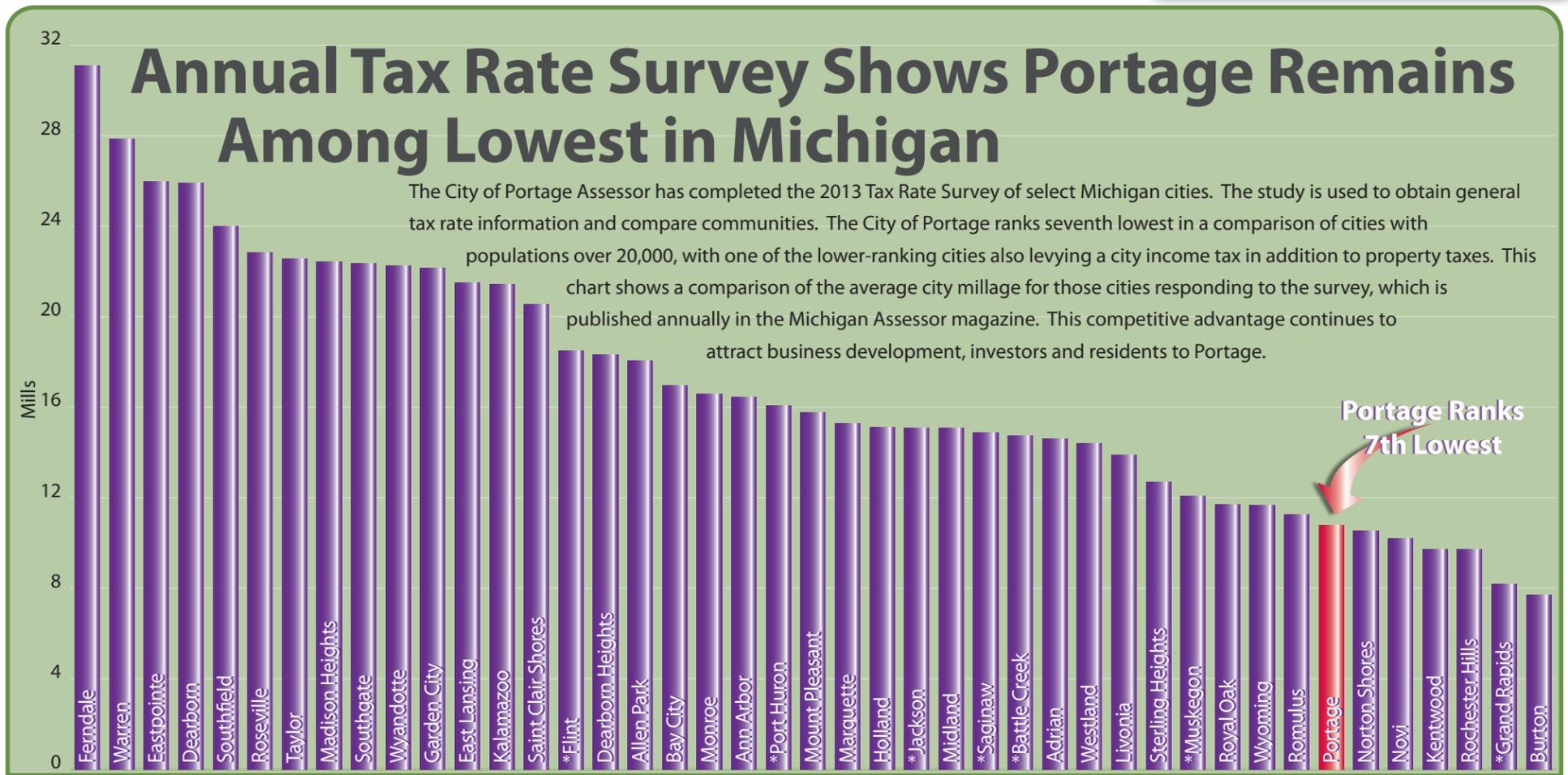


**Councilmember
Terry Urban**
323-8160
terry.urban@portagemi.gov

Portage City Council 2014 Meeting Schedule

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| ◆ January 7 | ◆ July 8 |
| ◆ January 21 | ◆ July 22 |
| ◆ February 11 | ◆ August 12 |
| ◆ February 25 | ◆ August 26 |
| ◆ March 11 | ◆ September 9 |
| ◆ March 25 | ◆ September 23 |
| ◆ April 15 | ◆ October 7 |
| ◆ April 29 | ◆ October 21 |
| ◆ May 13 | ◆ November 4 |
| ◆ May 27 | ◆ November 18 |
| ◆ June 10 | ◆ December 2 |
| ◆ June 24 | ◆ December 16 |

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



* These cities levy an income tax in addition to property taxes.

2013 Customer Service Awards Presented

The 2013 Customer Service Awards were announced on November 13, 2013 at an annual customer service event attended by City of Portage employees. Nominations for the Outstanding Customer Service Awards were made by city employees and Portage residents. The award winners were selected by the city's Customer Service Task Force and City Manager Maurice Evans.

Honorable Mention

Police Officer Kyle Doster was nominated by a Portage resident who said, "He made me feel like we're a team working toward the same goal." The resident commended Officer Doster for his patience, professionalism and dedication.

Michael West, Assistant City Planner, was nominated by a co-worker in the Department of Community Development. Mike was recognized for treating everyone equally and with respect and was also acknowledged by several customers for his helpfulness and professionalism.



City Manager Evans (second from right) congratulates (l to r) Kyle Doster, Adam Herringa and Mike West.

Outstanding Customer Service Award

Adam Herringa, in his role as Deputy City Clerk, has the opportunity to connect with many customers every day. Adam plays a key role in preparing for and conducting city elections, including the training of election officials. The comments received from election officials about Adam's good efforts in this area are too numerous to mention. Also very notable is Adam's success working with and providing leadership to the Youth Advisory Committee which is made up of 32 youth. He offers encouragement and ignites enthusiasm in these young people to develop and sponsor several events every year. Adam delivers superior customer service with each encounter, always in a calm, straight-forward and articulate manner and for these reasons was awarded the 2013 Outstanding Customer Service Award.

The City of Portage congratulates the 2013 Customer Service Award winners and pledges a continued commitment to providing superior customer service to all residents and customers.

City Snowplow Crews Ready for Old Man Winter

The City of Portage provides a comprehensive snow removal program each winter along 219 miles of city streets to ensure the maximum degree of safety to the motoring public. As early as 3:30 a.m., snowplow operators are plowing, sanding and salting city streets. In order to maximize the benefit to Portage citizens, streets are prioritized for snowplowing operations according to how heavily the streets are traveled:

Priority I: All Major Streets (examples include South Westnedge Avenue, Oakland Drive, Milham Avenue, Kilgore Road, Shaver Road, Lovers Lane, etc.)

Priority II: All Primary "Feeder" Streets (leading into various residential neighborhoods, including access streets to all schools)

Priority III: All Interior Neighborhood Streets

Priority IV: Cul-de-sac and Dead End Streets



While a snowstorm is in progress, every effort is made to keep Priority I and II streets clear. Typically, snowplow operators can clear all Priority I and II streets in 4 to 8 hours. Once the major roads are clear, snow plow operators address the Priority III and

IV streets, usually requiring 24 to 48 hours to clear. De-icing materials are applied as needed throughout the duration of a storm with major streets, bridges, intersections, hills and curves receiving priority attention. As conditions warrant, snowplow operators may be required to return to Priority I and II streets before Priority III and IV streets can be completed.

To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of snow-plowing operations, residents are asked to abide by these city ordinances and state laws:

- ◆ Portage Code of Ordinances prohibits residents from having basketball stands in the city right-of-way. Basketball stands impede safe snowplowing operations and can damage equipment on the trucks.
- ◆ Portage Code of Ordinances prohibits vehicle parking on the streets between 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. from October 15 to April 15. Vehicles parking on the streets during this time period interfere with snowplowing activities and may be ticketed.
- ◆ Michigan State Law prohibits residents and private snowplow operators from depositing snow from private driveways, parking lots and sidewalks onto any public roadway.
- ◆ During trash and recycling removal days, citizens are asked to keep their containers on the curbs rather than on the actual roadways. This action allows snowplow operators the opportunity to clear the entire neighborhood street.

The snow removal program is designed to keep city streets clear and safe in the most efficient manner possible. Questions about snow removal operations can be directed to the Parks, Recreation, and Public Services Department at 329-4444.

Mailbox Repair Program

City snowplow operators make every attempt to minimize damage to mailboxes, but at times this type of damage is beyond the control of the operator. The City of Portage has a program established to repair or replace damaged mailboxes due to snowplow operations. If a mailbox is damaged and cannot be repaired by the city, the mailbox and/or post will be replaced with a standard U.S. Postal mailbox and/or post. The standard mailbox will be white or black and measure 6.5 inches wide, 19 inches long and 8.5 inches high and will have a hinged door and flag. Damaged posts will be replaced with a standard U.S. Postal 4-inch x 4-inch wooden post with cross arm.



Those residents desiring replacement of a specialty box or post will be reimbursed for cost of a standard style box or post. It will then be the responsibility of the resident to pay for any cost difference and also installation of the specialty box or post. Questions about repair or replacement of damaged mailboxes can be directed to the Parks, Recreation, and Public Services Department at 329-4444.

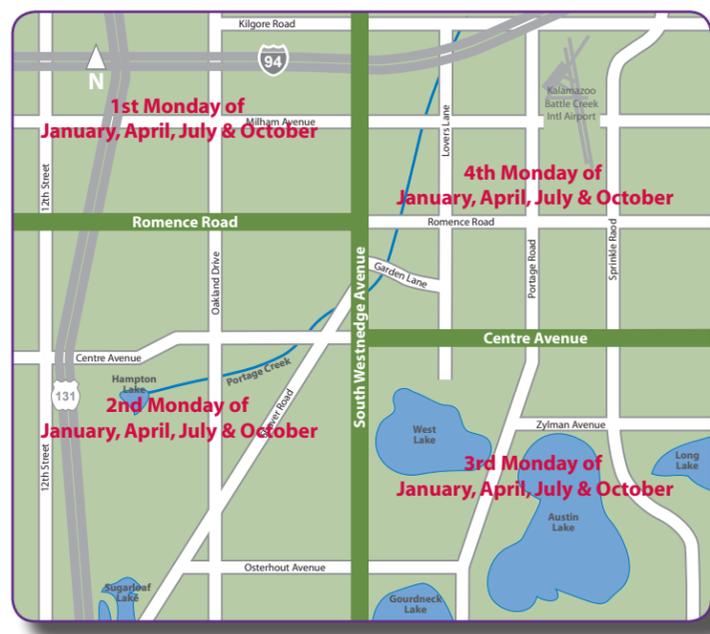
Quarterly Curbside Brush Collection Reminder

The next Quarterly Curbside Brush Collection will begin on Monday, January 6 and **will include the collection of Christmas trees** (free of tinsel and ornaments). Residents are asked to have brush and Christmas trees at the curb by 7 a.m. on Monday of the designated week (see map below). Materials may be placed at curbside up to, but not more than, 72 hours prior to the designated Monday.

What Will Not Be Collected?

- ◆ Brush/branches that were generated from the removal of a tree with a trunk greater than 4" in diameter at its base
- ◆ **No parts of a whole tree removal will be collected, including the brush/branches from the removed tree. This includes trees removed due to wind / storm damage.**
- ◆ Brush/branches generated from a professional tree removal service
- ◆ Brush/branches in excess of 3" in diameter
- ◆ Grass clippings, flowers, weeds, garden materials
- ◆ Firewood
- ◆ Lumber, timber, building materials, railroad ties
- ◆ Roots or tree stumps
- ◆ Yew branches or vines
- ◆ Loose and bagged leaves and ornamental grasses

Visit www.portagemi.gov > Departments > Streets Maintenance Division > Brush Pickup for complete program details. Please call the Streets Maintenance Division at 329-4444 with any questions.



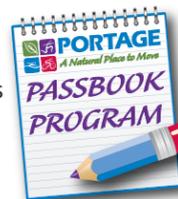
Lake Center Business Area Focus Group Meeting

As part of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan update, a "subarea" plan for the Lake Center Business Area, located along Portage Road between East Centre Avenue and East Osterhout Avenue, will be developed. During the Focus Group meeting, the city's planning consultant, LSL Planning, Inc., will present the initial market analysis and recommendations for the area that are intended to spur revitalization efforts within this important business corridor. The Lake Center Business Area Focus Group meeting will be held on **December 12, 2013 from 4 to 6 p.m.** in the Portage City Hall Council Chambers, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. Business owners, property owners, developers, area residents and other interested citizens are invited to attend the meeting and provide feedback. For additional information regarding this event, please contact the Department of Community Development at 329-4477.



It's not too late to participate in the Portage Passbook Program!

In celebration of the City of Portage 50th anniversary and in recognition of 50 years of business in the City of Portage, the Portage Planning Commission introduced the Passbook Program in July 2013. Through the program, participants collect stamps or signatures from two Portage businesses in each of three categories and are entered to win a gift from a participating Portage business.



have the opportunity to participate in the final month of the program! Visit the city website and click on the **PASSBOOK PROGRAM** icon to view program details, print a "passbook" or register to be a participating business for the month of December. Completed passbooks can be returned to City Hall (7900 South Westnedge Avenue) by December 31, 2013 to be included in the final drawing.

The Passbook Program ends on December 31, 2013 but individuals and Portage businesses still

congratulations to the previous Passbook Program winners and thank you to all the participating Portage businesses!

Let's Pull Together

The Portage Environmental Board will undertake an aggressive plan to rid the City of Portage of invasive plant species such as Purple Loosestrife, Garlic Mustard, and Phragmites. In order to execute this plan fully, the Environmental Board will need many volunteers to help pull invasive species out of city parks and other locations throughout the city. The Environmental Board plans to schedule several "pulls" in the spring and summer of 2014. Interested volunteers are encouraged to contact the Portage Environmental Board at ruth1281@att.net to request additional information.



Experience the Sights and Sounds of the Season!

Annual Tree Lighting and Traditional Holiday Celebration

The City of Portage will host the annual Tree Lighting and Traditional Holiday Celebration on **Saturday, December 7, 2013, from 7 to 8:30 p.m.** The festivities begin with the ceremonial lighting of trees and decorations in the Portage City Centre. A horse drawn wagon filled with carolers will lead participants along the Portage Creek Bicentennial Park Trail to the Celery Flats Historical Area where the Traditional Holiday Celebration will continue. The event is free to the public and will feature music and caroling, with hot apple cider and hot chocolate for sale for a \$1 donation per cup to charity. The Portage Northern Songleaders Chorale and the Proclamation Brass ensemble will perform. A special guest from the North Pole will greet children in the

schoolhouse. To close the evening, the doors of the Hayloft Theatre will open with free refreshments, courtesy of area businesses.

The City of Portage encourages the public to enter into the holiday spirit by donating gifts for needy families. The Portage Community Center will accept donations of new winter hats, gloves, mittens, toys and non-perishable food items. Monetary donations will also be accepted.

Parking is available at City Hall, the Portage District Library and the Celery Flats Interpretive Center. For more information, contact the Parks & Recreation Division at 329-4522.



Winter Recreation Programs Promise Outdoor Fun

Historically, the month of January is the coldest and snowiest month of the year and provides great opportunities for outdoor fun! Come outdoors and join the nearly 7,000 people who participate in winter recreation programs sponsored by the Portage Parks and Recreation Division. Please refer to the Winter Recreation brochure insert or call 329-4522 for additional program details.

Free Recreation Programs!

Winter Wonders Walk at West Lake Nature Preserve
Saturday, January 18 2 p.m.

All ages welcome to this interpretive hike through the beautiful West Lake Nature Preserve. Explore trails rich in wildlife habitat with your nature guide, Dan Keto of the Kalamazoo Nature Center.

Winter Snow Party at Oakland Drive Park
Saturday, February 1 12 noon to 3 p.m.

Hosted by the Portage Youth Advisory Committee, this fun event will attract the young and young at heart! Build and bring your cardboard sled to the cardboard sled contest or bring your supplies and build and dress up the fanciest snowman. Warm up with a hot chocolate or coffee or escape the cold near the bonfire. Cardboard sled contest begins at 1 p.m., with snowman building immediately following.

Snowshoe Nature Hike at Schrier Park
Saturday, February 8 2 p.m.

Bring your own snowshoes or let Lee's Adventure Sports outfit you with a demo pair, on site. Kalamazoo Nature Center Lead Interpretive Naturalist, Dan Keto, will lead you on this winter adventure through the Schrier Park forest as you learn animal track identification tips and observe the plant and animal life that tough out the cold winter temperatures.

Youth Recreation Scholarships!

Please contact the Portage Community Center at 323-1942 to inquire about available youth recreation scholarships for the programs listed below.

The Ice Rink at Millennium Park

Opening December 12

This unique outdoor refrigerated rink offers a smooth skating surface for open skating, warming house, skate rental, skate sharpening, concessions and locker rental.



Open Skating Hours

Sunday 12 noon to 9 p.m.
Monday-Wednesday Closed
Thursday 3 to 9 p.m.
Friday 3 to 10 p.m.
Saturday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Open daily 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. between December 21 and January 4. Holiday hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on December 24, 31 and January 1. Closed Christmas day.

Ice Skating Lessons at The Ice Rink at Millennium Park

Saturday, January 11 and 18

Youth Class - \$20 per person 9:30 a.m.
Family / Adult Class - \$20 per person 10:30 a.m.

This learn-to-skate program is presented in cooperation with the Greater Kalamazoo Skating Association and will cover the early fundamentals of ice skating to allow beginners to discover the joy of outdoor skating. The \$20 fee includes skate rental and instruction. Pre-registration is required by calling 329-4522.

Cross Country Ski Class at Schrier Park

Saturday, January 25

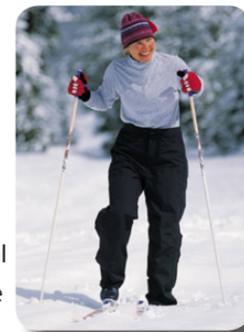
Family Class - \$15 per person 9 a.m.

This is an excellent opportunity for youngsters to learn the correct way to cross country ski. This introductory class will emphasize safety, proper use of equipment and how to traverse a variety of winter terrain.

Adult Class - \$20 per person 1 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.

Pre-registration and fees are due in advance at Breakaway Bicycles or Lee's Adventure Sports. Bring your own equipment or arrange for rental equipment through Lee's Adventure Sports.



Downhill Ski or Snowboard Lessons at Timber Ridge

January 26, February 2 and 9 2 p.m.

Group downhill ski and snowboard lessons will be taught by professional instructors at Timber Ridge in Gobles.



A pre-registration fee of \$5 per individual or \$10 per family is required at the Portage Parks and Recreation Division by January 24, plus \$55 payable at Timber Ridge on January 26. Fee includes equipment rental, instruction for three weeks and lift ticket valid until 8 p.m. on each lesson date.

2nd Annual Winter Blast Half Marathon and 5K Set for March 2, 2014

Registration now OPEN! www.portagewinterblast.wordpress.com

Join in this extraordinary community celebration of health and wellness as Kalamazoo Area Runners and the City of Portage present the 2nd annual Portage Winter Blast Half Marathon and 5k! Enjoy the wintery views as runners make their journey on the USAT&F certified courses through the Portage trail system and along local roads. Post race refreshments, entertainment and awards will be available at the Portage Central High School commons area. The start / finish line will be at Portage Central High School with parking available at Portage Central Middle School, Portage Central Elementary School, the Portage Community Center, the Portage District Library and Portage City Hall. For more information or to volunteer for this event, please visit the website noted above.



Portage Recycled Art in the Park Contest Call for Artist Entries!

Calling all artists! Submit sculptures using materials that would normally be thrown away and recycle the objects into your own original work of art! The deadline for entries is Friday, March 14, with the event to be held May 10 -17 in Celery Flats Park. Artwork will be displayed outside. The event is limited to the first 30 entries. Public voting and judging will be conducted with prizes awarded on the last day of the event. Cash prizes will be awarded in a variety of categories, including a Popular Choice from public voting. A panel of area artists will judge the artwork based on adherence to the recycling content for eligibility, with 60% for creative use of materials as they were not originally intended and 40% for overall artistry and originality.

The non-juried art show, sponsored by the Portage Park Board, was created as a venue for artists to express creativity and create public awareness about recycling.

Entry is open to anyone, including individual artists and group / class submissions. Express your creativity and give unused items a new life in art! Entry forms and sponsorship information can be obtained by visiting the City of Portage website www.portagemi.gov and clicking on the Art in the Park icon. For more information about this event, please contact the Portage Park Board at 352-4583.



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 Fire Department 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.

2013 Winter Property Taxes Due February 14, 2014

The 2013 winter tax bills for the City of Portage were mailed to property owners on November 27, 2013 and payment is due by 5 p.m. on Thursday, February 14, 2014. Property owners who do not receive a winter tax bill by December 13, 2013 are asked to contact the Portage Treasury Office. Failure to receive a tax bill does not relieve the property owner of the responsibility for payment of the tax and applicable fees.

Payments can be made by cash, check or money order.

Please be aware that payment by check authorizes the city to convert the check to an electronic funds transfer and that your bank account may be debited as soon as the same day the city receives your check payment.

- ◆ The Treasury Office (7900 South Westnedge Avenue) is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with the exception of Wednesday, December 25, 2013 and Wednesday, January 1, 2014.
- ◆ Mailed payments must be postmarked by the Post Office on or before February 14, 2014 and received no later than February 21, 2014 to avoid a 3 percent late fee. The Portage Treasury Office strongly recommends that taxpayers choosing to mail tax payments on or after February 10, 2014 hand-deliver payments to the US Post Office and witness a clerk postmark the payment. In all late-payment disputes, the Portage Treasury Office will rely on the postmark applied by the Postmaster.
- ◆ A drop box is available 24 hours per day near the south exit of City Hall. Payments made in the drop box will be processed the next business day.

Payments can be made by credit card.

Call 1-800-272-9829 and follow the instructions on the front of the property tax statement. When using this payment method, a convenience fee will be added.

Payments can be made by online banking.

Use the parcel number as the account number. Payments should be made no later than February 7, 2014 to ensure timely delivery of funds to City Hall to avoid late fees.

Questions regarding tax bills may be directed to the Portage Treasury Office at 329-4455. Updated property tax information is also available at www.portagemi.gov > Quick Links > Property Information. Taxes that remain unpaid on March 1, 2014 will be turned over to the Kalamazoo County Treasurer for collection where additional fees will be added.

PORTAGE
A Natural Place to Move
7900 South Westnedge Avenue
Portage, Michigan 49002-5160

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ECRWSS

POSTAL CUSTOMER



City Closings

Non-emergency city offices will be closed in observance of the following holidays:

Christmas Day

Wednesday, December 25

New Year's Day

Wednesday, January 1

The next edition of the *Portager* will be published in February 2014.

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Portager Editor: Mary Beth Block
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Citizen Input is Key to City Council Decisions

Residents Needed to Serve on Boards and Commissions



The Portage City Council, as the legislative and policy-making body of the city, relies on input from Advisory Boards and Commissions when considering recommendations from the City Administration and requests from the public and when determining public policy.

The Council will interview applicants interested in serving on the Board of Review, Zoning Board of Appeals and any other Advisory Board or Commission where vacancies may arise.

The interviews will take place on Tuesday, January 7, 2014. A

citizen interested in serving on a Board or Commission must be a registered voter of the City of Portage. Board of Review applicants must be Portage property owners.

Meeting times and the responsibilities of each Board or Commission vary. Additional information about each Board and Commission can be found at www.portagemi.gov > Boards & Commissions. An application to serve can be also be obtained by visiting the city website or by contacting the Office of the City Clerk at 329-4412. Completed applications must be returned to the City Clerk by December 16, 2013.

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.

December

3	7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting
5	7:00 p.m.	Planning Commission Meeting
9	7:00 p.m.	Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
17	7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting
19	7:00 p.m.	Planning Commission Meeting

January

2	7:00 p.m.	Planning Commission Meeting
7	7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting
13	7:00 p.m.	Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
16	7:00 p.m.	Planning Commission Meeting
21	7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting