



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

City Council Approves Fiscal Year Budget Slight Millage Increase Will Supplement Major Roadway Projects

The fiscal year 2014-2015 budget is a balanced budget, in accordance with the requirements of the Portage City Charter. As the city is in a period of management transition, the fiscal year 2014-2015 budget generally focuses on maintaining current levels of service, with the exception of enhanced attention to improving the condition of the roadway system (see related article below).

Highlights of the fiscal year 2014-2015 budget include:

- ◆ Maintenance of a low, but slightly increased overall city tax rate of 10.9256 mills to account for costs associated with major and local street improvement projects that impact upon the Municipal Street Fund millage.
- ◆ An approximate 3 percent increase in State Revenue Sharing.
- ◆ Incorporation of Economic Vitality Incentive Program payments from the State of Michigan.
- ◆ Continuation of General Fund support for the Capital Improvement Program, the Major Street Fund and the Local Street Fund, as well as support for the Downtown Development Authority Fund in fiscal year 2014-2015.
- ◆ An expanded focus on street infrastructure improvement.
- ◆ A less than one percent increase in total property taxable value growth.
- ◆ Incorporation of funding necessary to ensure compliance with taxation and fee requirements of the Affordable Care Act.
- ◆ A slight reduction of the City Council prescribed fund balance for the General Fund from 25 percent to 24

percent of General Fund expenditures.

- ◆ Maintenance of the City of Portage position in the lower 25 percent of all Michigan cities of greater than 25,000 population in terms of millage level.

The fiscal year 2014-2015 budget includes a total city expenditure of \$65.3 million. The major categories of the city budget include the General Fund, the Capital Improvement Program Fund, Curbside Recycling Fund, Leaf Pickup/Spring Cleanup Fund and the Municipal Street Fund. These funds are supported primarily through the local property tax base with the General Fund, in specific, being supplemented by state shared revenue and service fees. The Capital Improvement Program Fund is supplemented by Federal Highway Funds and Municipal Street Fund revenue, as well as transfers from the General Fund. In addition, as noted above, Roads Risk Reserve Funds are also being made available this year to support roadway improvement projects. Other major budget categories include the Utility Funds, which

are supported through ratepayer service charges, and the Major and Local Street Funds, which are supported through intergovernmental revenue (i.e., Act 51 revenue) and transfers from the General Fund. Several other fund categories represent the balance of the total city budget and include the Community Development Block Grant Fund, Cable Television Fund, West Lake Weed Management Fund and the Equipment Fund.

The total property tax levy in the fiscal year 2014-2015 budget is 10.9256 mills, which is a slight increase from the 10.7778 mills levied to support the fiscal year 2013-2014 budget. The millage includes a General Fund levy of 7.5000 mills and a Capital Improvement Fund levy of 2.0000 mills. The total millage also includes the levy of 0.3455 mills for the brush and leaf pickup/spring cleanup programs, the levy of 0.3049 mills for operation of the curbside recycling program and the levy of 0.7752 mills of the Municipal Street Fund millage. A comparison of the 2013-2014 millage and the 2014-2015 millage is provided in the table below.

Average Single Family Residence	Millage Allowed	2013 Taxable Value - \$74,074		2014 Taxable Value - \$74,686		2014 Inflation Adjusted Taxes	
		Mills	Taxes	Mills	Taxes	Mills	Taxes
General Fund	7.5000	7.5000	555.55	7.5000	560.14	7.5000	551.32
Capital Improvement Fund	2.0000	2.0000	148.14	2.0000	149.37	2.0000	147.02
Curbside Recycling Fund	0.5000	0.3049	22.58	0.3049	22.77	0.3049	22.41
Leaf Pickup/Spring Cleanup Fund	0.4000	0.3455	25.59	0.3455	25.80	0.3455	25.39
Municipal Street Fund	1.0000	0.6274	46.47	0.7752	57.89	0.7752	56.98
Total Millage/Taxes	11.4000	10.7778	798.33	10.9256	815.97	10.9256	803.12

City to Undertake Aggressive Major Road Repair Program



The 2013-2014 winter weather severely impacted city roadways, leaving many in very poor condition. The City of Portage is pleased to announce an aggressive major street repair program for the 2014 construction season.

More than \$1,000,000 will be expended for "mill and fill" repairs to 61 segments of deteriorated roadway pavement throughout the community. Mill (removal of the top layer of asphalt) and fill (repavement of the surface layer with new hot asphalt) is a cost-effective means to improve safety and ride-ability of city streets that have a four or more years before scheduled reconstruction. More than \$200,000 of the project costs were received from the State of Michigan winter roadway maintenance appropriation.

Construction has already begun on these "mill and fill" projects and is expected to continue through June. This pro-active repair work, in addition to planned reconstruction projects scheduled on portions of Portage Road, South Westnedge Avenue and Oakland Drive, highlight the commitment of the City of Portage to the provision of quality transportation facilities for residents.

Work Zone Safety

City Urges Caution When Driving Through Construction and Roadside Work Zones

The City of Portage is committed to ensuring the safety of city employees and contracted laborers working on roadway and roadside construction projects. Motorists are reminded to be attentive where road work is being performed and exercise caution when approaching and traveling through these areas.

Work zones may be marked with orange cones or barrels, traffic control devices and/or moving vehicles with flashing lights. City employees are required to wear high-visibility clothing, including a bright yellow, green or orange vest.

Please keep your eyes on the road, obey special signs or instructions from workers (traffic regulators), refrain from using cell phones and do not stop or slow down to watch the road work. The support of motorists in these areas is greatly appreciated and will provide a safe environment for employees and workers providing critical repairs and improvements to city streets.



2014 Comprehensive Plan Update Draft Plan Ready for Review and Comment

Following several months of meetings and public input sessions, the City of Portage Planning Commission, with assistance from LSL Planning Inc. and the City Administration, has completed a draft update of the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that guides future decision making related to land use, community development and public improvements. A draft copy of the 2014 Comprehensive Plan is available for review on the City of Portage website at www.portagemi.gov, in the Department of Community Development at City Hall or at the Portage District Library.

The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on the adoption of the plan on Thursday, June 19, 2014 at 7 p.m., or as soon after as may be heard, in the City Council Chambers of Portage City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue. Residents, business owners and other interested citizens are encouraged to review and comment on the draft Plan. Public participation is important to ensure the success of the Plan.

For more information, please feel free to contact the Department of Community Development at 329-4477.

City Adopts New and Improved Business Sign Provisions

Over the past two years, City Council and the City Administration studied extensively the issue of business sign regulation within the community. As a result of the public input received, it was determined that minor sign regulation amendments were appropriate in the areas of wall signs, non-conforming signs, electronic message display signs, banner signs, temporary signs and the definition of "sign" to permit more flexibility and creativity, including new provisions to permit murals.

Of particular interest to business owners within the community, a number of options to advertise promotions and special events are now available through the use of signs.

Temporary Signs

A new provision permits businesses to utilize a 40-square-foot temporary sign for one display period (up to seven consecutive days) during any calendar year.

Temporary Pedestrian Oriented Signs

A new provision permits a six-square-foot pedestrian-oriented sign to be located within 10 feet of the main customer entrance during normal business hours.

Banner Signs

Banner sign provisions have been modified to permit 20-square-foot banner signs (on a permanent freestanding pole) in any zoning district. Once the initial sign structure and banner is approved, banner signs can be changed at any time to advertise various promotions and events.

Special Event signs

The provisions for special events, or outdoor promotional events, have been revised to permit one 40 square foot temporary sign to be displayed during the event.

To assist citizens, business owners and sign industry representatives in better understanding the intent of local sign regulations and the types of signs permitted within the community, a Summary Guide to Business Signs has been developed and is available on the city web site at www.portagemi.gov > Quick Links > Permits and Informational Forms.

For more information regarding City of Portage sign regulations, please contact the Department of Community Development at 329-4477.

Financial Assistance Available for Home Improvement Projects

Spring and warmer weather have finally arrived and it's a great time for home improvement projects. If you own and occupy a home located in the City of Portage, the following home improvement programs are available to income-eligible families and individuals:

Housing Rehabilitation Program

Up to \$15,000 per housing unit is available for a variety of home repairs, including furnace repair and replacement, roofing repair and replacement, weatherization activities, sewer and water connections, plumbing upgrades, electrical upgrades and other necessary interior and exterior repairs. Funding is provided through no-interest or low-interest deferred loans. The interest rate is dependent on household income and deferred loans require no payments as long as the house remains the principal residence of the owner.

Emergency Repair Grant Program

Up to \$1,000 per housing unit is available to complete household repairs that pose an immediate threat to the health, safety and welfare of the residents. The City of Portage is prepared to quickly assist homeowners who have an emergency situation.

Eligibility for both programs is based on the maximum income limits established annually by the U.S.

Department of Housing and Urban Development (shown in the table to the right).

To obtain more information, or to request an application for a City of Portage Housing Assistance Program, please call the City of Portage Department of Community Development at 329-4477.



Household Size	Maximum Income Limit
1 Person	\$33,200
2 Person	\$37,950
3 Person	\$42,700
4 Person	\$47,400
5 Person	\$51,200
6 Person	\$55,000
7 Person	\$58,800
8 Person	\$62,600

Prepared for a Flood?



City of Portage Participates in National Flood Insurance Program

The City of Portage has been an active participant in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for more than 30-years. The NFIP is a federal insurance program that allows individuals to obtain flood insurance through private insurers for property that is located in a flood hazard area. Participation by the City of Portage in the NFIP benefits homeowners and businesses located in the community by reducing vulnerability to costly flooding events through proactive flood reduction programs and flood insurance.

The City of Portage Department of Community Development maintains information and maps that signify areas with the potential or that are subject to flooding. Flood related information and maps are also available at the Portage District Library. The

material is provided to assist property owners in determining if their property is located in or near a flood hazard area and what actions they can take to help protect their investment. Ground elevation certificates and letters of map amendment, applicable to properties within the City of Portage, are maintained by the Department of Community Development. Assistance is also provided by the Department of Community Development to property owners seeking flood hazard area map changes as appropriate.

Most homeowner's insurance policies do not cover damage from floods. Property owners without flood insurance may wish to discuss coverage with an insurance agent. Flood insurance is only available to property owners in communities that participate in the NFIP. Because Portage participates in the NFIP floodplain management program, Portage residents may qualify for flood insurance at a reduced cost.

Useful information can also be found at the Floodplain Management in Michigan Quick Guide website: http://www.michigan.gov/documents/deq/lwm-quickguide_202673_7.pdf

Please contact the Department of Community Development at 329-4477 for assistance or with questions about the National Flood Insurance Program.

Experience Summer Fun in the Portage Parks!

Now is the perfect time of year to explore the outdoors! Many exciting options can be found right here in your Portage Parks!

- ◆ Ramona Park beach is open seven days a week beginning June 7, and offers a sandy, lifeguarded swim area, beach volleyball courts, picnic areas, a fishing dock and one of Portage's most loved playgrounds!
- ◆ Parks Discovery Programs are offered at various parks throughout June and July. Explore these plant and animal habitats alongside a Naturalist from the Kalamazoo Nature Center.
- ◆ School of FISH day camps will teach our kids about all the joys associated with fishing and environmental conservation. Camps are open to various ages and skill levels and provide expert instruction, hands-on activities, tackle crafting, knot tying and of course lots of fishing!
- ◆ Kayak lessons, demonstrations and stand up paddle board yoga classes are hosted by Lee's Adventure Sports and take place at Ramona Park.



See the Summer Recreation Programs brochure in this edition of the *Portager* for further details on these recreation programs and many more.

Youth Recreation Scholarship Funds Available!

Portage youth, ages 18 and under, living in a household meeting the federally-established income guidelines may be eligible for financial assistance through the Youth Recreation Scholarship Program, a partnership between the Portage Community Center and City of Portage. Eligible youth may receive financial assistance with the following recreation programs:

- ◆ Youth Sport Camps
- ◆ School of Fish Day Camps
- ◆ Ramona Park Beach Annual Pass

Please refer to the Summer Recreation Program brochure in this edition of the *Portager* for details. Scholarship applications are available at the Portage Community Center - 323-1942.

Portage Park Board Summer Events

The Portage Park Board, comprised of ten citizen volunteers appointed by the Portage City Council, will sponsor two major community events this summer.



Celery Flats Music Fest

Enjoy an afternoon of Bluegrass and Americana music provided by the *K'zoo Folklife Organization*. The **Celery Flats Music Fest**, a kickoff event for a newly-established *Friends of the Park* group, will include entertainment from ten talented bands and performers from the greater Kalamazoo area from 12 noon to 4:30 p.m. at Celery Flats. The event is free, but donations will be accepted to assist with the establishment of the Friends of the Park group to benefit City of Portage parks.

Get Active Portage

On June 9, 2014, Ramona Park is the site for **Get Active Portage** – a celebration of health and wellness in the Portage Community, including a Youth Triathlon, Health Fair and free Kayak demos (See related article to the right.)

Additional information on these and many other activities are found in the 2014 Summer Recreation Programs brochure insert found in this edition of the *Portager*.

Get Active Portage!

Youth Triathlon / Health Fair
Saturday, August 9 at Ramona Park

The Portage Parks Division announces "Get Active Portage! 2014" sponsored by the Portage Park Board, Spirit Racing LLC and Lee's Adventure Sports. "Get Active Portage!" is a celebration of health and wellness in our community and will take place at Ramona Park, located at 8645 Sprinkle Road.

The event begins with the **Kids Get Active Triathlon** at 8:30 a.m., an event that will challenge young athletes age 6-13 in swimming, biking and running. All courses are within Ramona Park and closed to vehicular traffic for the race duration, providing for a safe and controlled environment. Complete course maps are posted at the event web site. Take time with your kids this summer to run through the courses in advance. All athletes must be pre-registered using the online system linked at the event web site - www.kidsgetactive.us

The **Ramona Park Health Fair** runs from 9 a.m. to 12 noon and will provide opportunities for interaction with area health and wellness vendors to promote healthy lifestyles. Participants can also try out a kayak or stand up paddle board courtesy of Lee's Adventure Sports, or join in a great outdoor workout with expert instruction from Jazzercise Portage Fitness Studio!

Ramona Park is home to public swimming, beach volleyball, a fully accessible playground structure and many other family facilities. Come and enjoy the fun! Take advantage of free parking on the day of the event by clipping the permit below.



2014 Late Summer Adult Softball Program

Summer softball is well underway and the Late Summer Softball Program registration is just around the corner! If you missed the summer league deadline or if one season isn't quite enough for you, now is the time to start getting a team together! Late Summer Softball Program offerings include Co-ed and Men's leagues on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.



Registration begins in late June and closes on August 3. Visit portagemisoftball.leaguetoobox.com for more details or contact Adult Softball League Coordinator Ashton Anthony at 329-4435 during the hours of 3 to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

City Launches Mobile App!



The City of Portage recently launched a new multi-purpose app available at the Apple Store as **MI.Portage** and at the Google Play Store as **PortageMi**. The new app allows mobile users to connect to the city in a number of ways – view

news and events, look up parks information and maps and connect to the full City of Portage website. In addition, mobile users will be able to report a concern (potholes, streetlight outages, etc.) with the Report It! tool and upload a photo and GPS location (of a pothole, for example). Best of all, **MI.Portage** and **PortageMi** are both free downloads. The new app is only available for smart phones and will not work on tablets. Give the new app a try! Feedback is welcome at webmaster@portagemi.gov. This app was developed by Technology Solutions of Kalamazoo.

Portage Police Caution Residents: Beware of Unsolicited Computer Repair Phone Calls

A number of Portage citizens have reported receiving a telephone call from a person posing as a computer technician and requesting information to access the citizen's personal computer. The scam involves the caller claiming that the computer has a virus or infection, which he or she offers to remove. The scammer will ask questions about the computer system, which will allow the computer to be remotely accessed and vulnerable to hacking.

In some cases, the caller will lock up the computer, preventing the unsuspecting victim from accessing the computer, and then charge the victim hundreds of dollars to access the computer. In other cases, the suspect is asked to install software to capture passwords and other personal information.

Citizens should be aware that the unsolicited callers are misrepresenting themselves as being affiliated with a well-know computer or technology company. Residents are cautioned against releasing any information to this or any other type of unsolicited caller.

Charter Channel Lineup Change Affects City Meeting Broadcasts

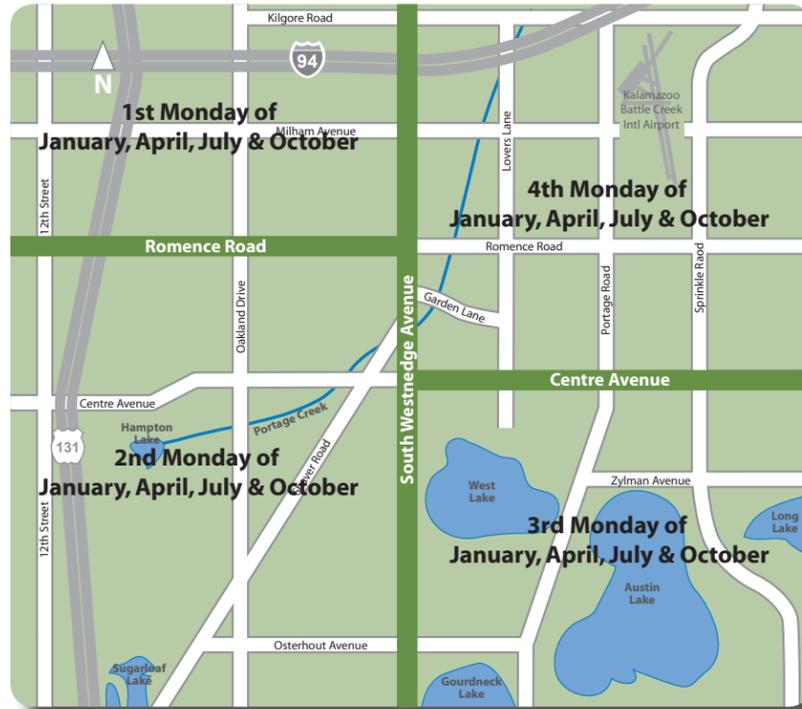
The City of Portage partners with Public Media Network (PMN) to record, broadcast live and re-broadcast City Council, Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals meetings. These meetings can also be viewed in the City of Portage Media Center on the city website.

Charter Communications has announced that the company is converting to digital service its cable system serving the greater Kalamazoo metro area on June 10, 2014. This digital switch over means that video and audio quality on PMN channels should improve; however, the PMN public, education and government channels will move to channels 187-191 from their current channels 95-99 on the Charter system. City of Portage governmental meetings will be broadcast on Charter channel 190 beginning on June 10, 2014.

The digital switchover with Charter Communications will not affect AT&T U-Verse customers. U-Verse customers can still view PMN channels by going to channel 99 and following the drop-down menu system.

For more information please visit PMN at www.PublicMediaNet.org.

Curbside Brush Collection Reminder



The next Quarterly Curbside Brush Collection will begin July 7, 2014. To ensure your items are collected, residents are asked to have brush out to the curb by 7 a.m. on the Monday of your designated week. Materials may be placed at curbside up to, but not more than, 72 hours prior to your designated Monday.

Additional details regarding the Quarterly Curbside Brush Collection Program – including what will be collected and what will not be collected – can be located on the city website at www.portagemi.gov.

Residents may also contact the Streets & Parks Maintenance Division at 329-4444.

Note: The Quarterly Curbside Brush Collection Program is only provided at residential properties on public streets. Collection will not be provided on private streets or for commercial establishments, churches or schools.

Help Keep Portage Litter Free

Nothing makes a community look better than litter free streets, yards and public areas. Portage residents are encouraged to assist with keeping our city clean and green. Here are a few simple ways we can all do our part:

- ◆ If you see litter, pick it up. Even if it's one chip bag or straw wrapper – that's one less piece of litter on the street.
- ◆ On windy days, be sure items in recycling bins are secured so they don't blow away. When possible, wait until the morning of your pickup to set bins at the curb.
- ◆ If running, walking or bicycling along the many streets and trails, please don't discard trash or drink bottles along the way.
- ◆ Never throw trash out of your car window. Place a bag in your car to collect personal trash (or recyclables).
- ◆ Cleanup after your dog – yes, that's litter too.
- ◆ Coordinate group litter pickup projects along streets or open spaces in your neighborhood.

Please help do your part to protect the environment by keeping Portage litter free.



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Portage, Michigan 49002-5160

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City Closings

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

Independence Day

Friday, July 4, 2014

Labor Day

Monday, September 1, 2014

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

Visit www.portagemi.gov to view current news and event listings.

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 > Report It!



Mayor Peter J. Strazdas
327-4478
peter.strazdas@portagemi.gov



Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson
327-9136
jimpearson4@gmail.com



Nasim Ansari
327-0016
nasim.ansari@portagemi.gov



Richard Ford
616-560-8328
richard.ford@portagemi.gov



Patricia M. Randall
324-7779
patricia.randall@portagemi.gov



Claudette Reid
491-9725
claudette.reid@portagemi.gov



Terry R. Urban
323-8160
terry.urban@portagemi.gov

Acting City Manager:
Laurence Shaffer
shafferl@portagemi.gov

Portager Editor:
Mary Beth Block
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 190. 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.

June

5	7:00 p.m.	Planning Commission Meeting
9	7:00 p.m.	Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
10	7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting
19	7:00 p.m.	Planning Commission Meeting
24	7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting

July

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