



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

City Launches **PORTAGEALERT** to Enhance Emergency Notification and Communication Systems

Residents Can Register Contact Information to Receive Urgent Notifications and Important Updates

When it's critical to keep Portage residents informed of important, up-to-the minute information, the City of Portage has it covered. The city is pleased to announce the **PORTAGEALERT** mass notification system to broadcast important communications and emergency alerts. The city implemented **PORTAGEALERT** to stay connected to residents and efficiently provide direction in the event of emergency situations such as severe weather events, hazardous traffic or road conditions and any other situation that could impact the safety, property or welfare of Portage citizens.

PORTAGEALERT allows the city to send voice messages to home phones, businesses, local agencies and mobile phones in just minutes. The service will also send email, text messages and posts on Facebook and Twitter. Messages can also be sent to TTY/TDD devices for people who are hearing impaired. **PORTAGEALERT** will also be used to distribute service reminders such as snowplowing progress updates during major snow events, Spring Cleanup Program dates, Quarterly Brush Collection dates and more.

Residents interested in receiving alerts can sign up on the **PORTAGEALERT** system. Publicly available primary residential and business phones are automatically included in the system. However, to ensure the City of Portage has the most up-to-date and accurate contact information, including cell phone numbers and email addresses, residents can visit www.portagemi.gov and click on the **PORTAGEALERT** icon to provide complete contact information for the database. Users can also manage message preferences by indicating the preferred mode of contact (phone, text, email, etc.), language and message topics.

"I strongly encourage all residents and businesses to register for this excellent communication system," said Portage Public Safety Director, Richard White. "When it is necessary to provide time-sensitive, emergency information to our citizens we have found that there was no mechanism in place to contact those who needed the information and often we were too busy dealing with the event itself to do so. Portage Alert solves those problems."

PORTAGEALERT is a significant enhancement to existing means of communication and is supplemental to – not a replacement for – the systems currently in place. Television, radio and other traditional means of emergency notification will continue to broadcast important announcements during emergency situations. With the addition of

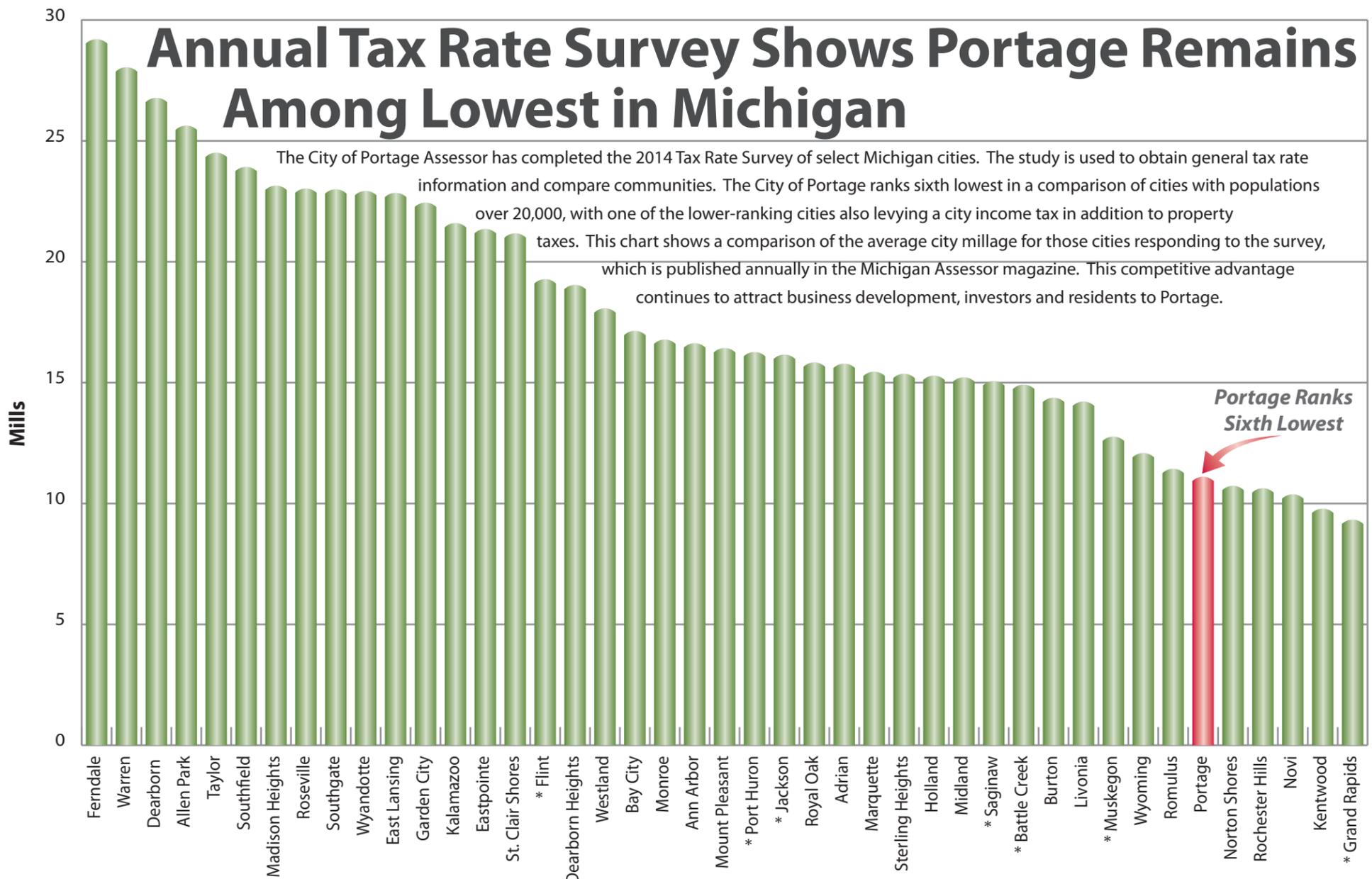
PORTAGEALERT, the City of Portage has added

another layer of communication with the goal of keeping the community more secure and more informed.



Visit www.portagemi.gov or scan the QR Code to register your contact information. Those without internet access are encouraged to call 329-4405 to provide current contact information.

Annual Tax Rate Survey Shows Portage Remains Among Lowest in Michigan



*These cities also levy an income tax.

Portage Snowplow Operators Ready to Tackle the Snow

In Michigan, the change in seasons from fall to winter brings with it the near certainty of snow. The 2013-2014 winter was one of the coldest and snowiest on record, blanketing Portage streets with more than 115 inches of snow over the course of the season. With the first major snow of the season already hitting the Midwest, City of Portage snowplow operators are standing by, ready to clear the nearly 220 miles of city streets in Portage.

When the snow hits, snowplow trucks are out as early as 3:30 a.m. plowing, sanding and salting city streets. In order to maximize the benefit to all Portage citizens, streets are prioritized for snowplowing operations in the following manner:

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, including cul-de-sacs.

PRIORITY IV: Dead end streets and cleanup of cul-de-sacs.

When 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 four to

eight hours. Once the major roads are clear, operators begin to clear 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 a major storm moves through the area, city crews will continue efforts to ensure that streets are properly plowed and de-iced.

To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of snowplowing operations, residents are reminded of the following:

- ◆ Portage Code prohibits overnight on-street parking between 2:00 and 6:00 a.m. (see related article at right).
- ◆ Portage Code prohibits residents from positioning basketball stands in the street.
- ◆ 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 rubbish containers on the curbs rather than in the actual roadways.

The City of Portage 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 & Public Services Department at 329-4444.



Overnight On-Street Parking Delays Snowplowing Operations

Portagers are reminded that city ordinance prohibits overnight on-street parking between the hours of 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. during the winter months. Observance of this city ordinance allows snowplow operators to safely and efficiently clear city streets of snow, without the risk of "plowing in" private vehicles. Vehicle owners who do not comply with this local ordinance may be cited by the Portage Department of Public Safety. The city also reminds residents that during heavy snow events, snowplows may be out plowing streets during daytime hours and keeping vehicles off streets during these events will be appreciated.

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 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 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.

City Offers Damaged Mailbox Repair Program

City snowplow operators make every attempt to avoid damage to mailboxes; however, due to the natural motion of heavy snow coming off of the plow, damage is sometimes unavoidable. The good news is that the City of Portage will repair mailboxes damaged during snowplow operations or replace it if the mailbox cannot be repaired by the city.

Residents can report damaged mailboxes to the city by calling 329-4444 or by visiting www.portagemi.gov/ReportIt. The mailbox / post will be replaced with a standard mailbox / post meeting U.S. Postal Service specifications. The standard mailbox is white or black and measures 6.5 inches wide, 19 inches long, and 8.5 inches high and has a hinged door and flag. Damaged posts will be replaced with a standard 4-inch x 4-inch wooden post meeting U.S. Postal Service specifications. Property owners desiring replacement of a specialty box or post may instead choose to be reimbursed for the cost of the standard style mailbox or post offered as part of the City of Portage Mailbox Repair Program. By choosing this option, the resident agrees to accept responsibility for any difference in cost and for installation.



Questions about repair or replacement of damaged mailboxes can be directed to the Parks, Recreation & Public Services Department at 329-4444.

January Brush Collection Includes Christmas Trees

The January Quarterly Curbside Brush Collection will begin January 5, 2015 and will include the collection of whole Christmas trees (free of tinsel and ornaments). Residents are asked to have brush and Christmas trees placed at the curb by 7:00 a.m. on the Monday of the designated week (see map at right). Materials may be placed at curbside up to, but not more than, 72 hours prior to the collection date. Please note that a small amount of debris may be left after the brush removal; citizens are asked to assist with final clean up.

How should I prepare by brush?

- ◆ Brush and branches may be any length.
- ◆ Branches must be less than 3 inches in diameter.
- ◆ Please stack brush/branches in neat piles at curbside by 7 a.m. on the designated Monday; each zone will be cleared of materials by the end of the week.

What WILL NOT be collected?

- ◆ Brush/branches from the removal of a tree with a trunk greater than 4 inches in diameter at its base.
- ◆ **No parts of a whole tree removal**, including the brush/branches from the removed tree.
- ◆ Brush/branches generated from a professional tree removal service.
- ◆ Brush/branches larger than 3 inches in diameter.
- ◆ Grass clippings/flowers/weeds/garden materials.
- ◆ Lumber/timber/building materials/railroad ties.
- ◆ Roots or tree stumps.
- ◆ Loose/bagged leaves or ornamental grasses.
- ◆ No bagged materials will be collected during the January Brush collection.

Program details can be viewed at www.portagemi.gov. Please call the Parks, Recreation and Public Services Department at 329-4444 with any questions.



Winter Fun in Your Portage Parks!

The Portage Parks and Recreation Division is ready for a winter full of outdoor fun! Come outdoors and join the nearly 7,000 people who participate in these winter recreation programs. Please refer to the Winter Recreation brochure insert or call 329-4522 for additional program details.

Free Recreation Programs!

Traditional Holiday and Tree Lighting

Saturday, December 6 7:00 p.m.

Snowshoe Nature Hike at West Lake Nature Preserve

Saturday, January 17 2:00 p.m.

Winter Jamboree at Milham Park Golf Club

Saturday, January 31 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Winter Snow Party at Oakland Drive Park

Saturday, February 7 12:00 noon - 3:00 p.m.

Snowshoe Nature Hike at Schrier Park

Saturday, February 14 2:00 p.m.



Youth Recreation Scholarships

Scholarships are available for the programs listed below! Please contact the Portage Community Center at 323-1942 for more information.

Ice Skating Lessons at The Ice Rink at Millennium Park

Saturday, January 10 and 17
 Youth Class - 9:30 a.m.
 Family/Adult Class - 10:30 a.m.
 Fee: \$20 per skater

Downhill Ski or Snowboard Lessons at Timber Ridge

January 25, February 1 and 8 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
 Fee: \$5 pre-registration plus \$60

Cross Country Ski Class at Milham Park Golf Club

Saturday, January 31 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
 Fee: \$15/person, 8-14 years & \$20/person, 15 years +



The Ice Rink At Millennium Park

280 Romence Road

This unique outdoor refrigerated rink offers a smooth skating surface, warming house, skate rental, skate sharpening and concessions!

December 11 - 19 & January 4 - March 1

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

December 20 - January 3

Daily	11 a.m. - 10 p.m.
December 24, 31, January 1	11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Christmas Day	Closed

Winter School Holidays

January 23 & February 27	2 - 10 p.m.
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Skating Fees

Open skating	\$4
Skate rental	\$3
Skate sharpening	\$3
Skate Card	\$25

Special Events

Valentine's Skate Date	
Saturday, February 14	4:30 p.m.
Twilight Skate	
Thursday, February 26	8:00 p.m.

Annual Tree Lighting & Traditional Holiday Celebration

Set your sights on holiday lights, carolling and holiday treats! Please join in an evening night of fun at the City of Portage annual Tree Lighting and Traditional Holiday Celebration. The fun kicks off at the City Centre, near the Portage District Library on Saturday, December 6 at 7:00 p.m. Thousands of lights will be illuminated in celebration of the holiday season. Then follow a horse-drawn wagon, complete with jingle bells and Christmas carolers, on a short walk down the Portage Creek Bicentennial Trail to the Celery Flats Historical Area, where the holiday celebration will take place.



Festive music will be provided by Proclamation Brass, a local brass ensemble group, and the Portage Northern High School Choir. Santa and Mrs. Claus will greet visitors at the historic schoolhouse and refreshments will be available at the Hayloft Theatre. Hot cider, hot cocoa and coffee will be available for a \$1 donation per cup - proceeds from the sales will benefit area charities. Admission is free, however, donations of food, toys and outerwear will be accepted for the Portage Community Center to help those in need. Please call 329-4522 with any questions about the event.



2015 Winter Blast Half Marathon and 5k Registration open!

www.portagewinterblast.wordpress.com

The Third Annual Winter Blast Half Marathon and 5k, presented in partnership by the Kalamazoo Area Runners and the City of Portage, will be held on Sunday, March 1, 2015 (Expo Saturday, February 28).

Join us in this extraordinary community celebration of health and wellness. Enjoy the wintery views as runners make their journey along the USAT&F certified half marathon and 5k courses which highlight the Portage trail system. The course includes a mix of mostly flat, paved bike trail and roads. All running events will start and end at Portage Central High School.

For more information or to volunteer for this event, please visit the website listed above.

Portage Recycled Art In The Park Contest Call For Artist Entries!

The 2015 Recycled Art in the Park contest will be held May 16 - 23, 2015 at the Celery Flats Historical Area. Artists are encouraged to 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 20, 2015. Event participants will be limited to the first 30 entries.

This non-juried art show is a venue for artists to express their creativity and create public awareness on recycling. 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

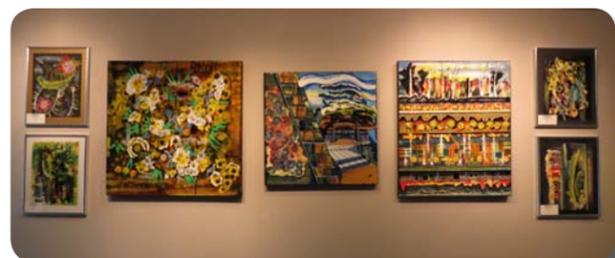
Choice award from public voting. A panel of area artists will judge the artwork based on adherence to the recycling content, with 60% for creative use of materials as they were not originally intended and 40% for overall artistry and originality.

Anyone can enter, including artists or classes. Entry forms and sponsorship information can be obtained by visiting the City of Portage website www.portagemi.gov.

The City of Portage Parks Board endeavors to promote family, health and educational oriented events to increase the quality of life in the community. For more information contact the Portage Park Board at 352-4583.

Local Artwork at City Hall

Visitors to Portage City Hall can enjoy artwork produced by local artists or view art collections on loan from local art patrons. Information about the creator is available with each exhibit and many works featured are for sale. The collections are rotated on a bi-monthly basis, with display openings starting in January 2015. Artists or collectors with a Portage connection interested in displaying their works in the City Hall lobby can contact the Office of the City Manager at 329-4400.





Department of Public Safety to be Reassessed by Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies

In order to maintain a high level of excellence, the Portage Department of Public Safety continues to maintain its status as an accredited police agency. The department is one of eight in the State of Michigan and one of approximately six hundred in the country to receive the certification from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA).

In December, as part of a reaccreditation process, a team of CALEA assessors will reexamine all aspects of the department policies and procedures, management, operations, and support services. Verification by CALEA that the Department of Public Safety continues to meet the Commission's state-of-the-art standards is part

of a voluntary process to gain reaccreditation. This will be the 5th assessment by CALEA of the Portage Department of Public Safety.

As part of the on-site assessment, Portage citizens are invited to offer comments concerning the ability of the Department of Public Safety to comply with CALEA standards. To obtain a copy of the standards visit the Portage Department of Public Safety (7830 Shaver Road) or call 329-4567. Comments will be accepted in person at a public information session on Monday, December 8, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. at Portage City Hall (7900 South Westnedge Avenue). Telephone comments will also be received on Monday, December 8, 2014 between the hours of 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. at 329-4587. Finally, written

comments can be mailed to: Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc., 13575 Heathcote Boulevard, Suite 320, Gainesville, Virginia, 20155.

The Portage Department of Public Safety must comply with approximately 400 standards in order to gain accredited status. "These standards represent the best practices in law enforcement management and operations," said Public Safety Director, Richard White. "The standards direct the department on what must be done – but not how to do it. This gives the department the ability to tailor its policies to comply with State regulations and to fit the community."

The CALEA assessors will complete their review and report back to the full Commission, which will then decide if the agency is to be granted accreditation status.

Serve on a Board or Commission

Portage City Council often relies on community volunteers for a variety of services and may ask advisory board members to review programs developed by the City Administration, make recommendations or suggest new goals for the city.

The City Council will interview applicants for Boards and Commissions on Tuesday, January 6, 2015, beginning at 5:30 p.m. Board or Commissions positions are available on the Senior Citizens Advisory Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Construction Board of Appeals, Board of Review and Historic District Commission. The meeting times and responsibilities of each of the boards and commissions vary and can be obtained, along with a Citizen Service Resume Form, by contacting the Office of the City Clerk by mail, in person at City Hall, by calling 329-4412 or on the website at www.portagemi.gov > Boards & Commissions. Learn about your city, serve the residents and make a positive contribution to the Portage community.

2014 Winter Property Taxes Mailed

The 2014 winter tax bills were mailed on November 26, 2014 and are due by 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, February 17, 2015. Payments can be made by cash, check or money order at City Hall, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. A dropbox is available 24 hours per day near the south exit of City Hall. Payments made in the dropbox are processed the next business day. Please be aware that payment by check authorizes the city to convert the check to an electronic funds transfer and that the bank account may be debited the same day the check is received by the Treasury

Office. Visit www.portagemi.gov to learn how to pay by credit card and online bill payments.

To avoid a three percent late fee, mailed payments must be postmarked by the Post Office on or before February 17, 2015. In all late-payment disputes, the city will rely on the postmark applied by the Postmaster. Failure to receive a tax bill does not relieve the property owner of the responsibility for payment of the tax and applicable fees.

Questions may be directed to the Portage Treasury Office at 329-4455.



7900 South Westnedge Avenue
Portage, Michigan 49002-5160

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City Closings

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

Christmas Day

Thursday, December 25

New Year's Day

Thursday, January 1

The next edition of the *Portager* will be published in February 2015.

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!



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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.

December

2	7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting
4	7:00 p.m.	Planning Commission Meeting
8	7:00 p.m.	Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
16	7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting
18	7:00 p.m.	Planning Commission Meeting

January (Tentative)

6	7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting
8	7:00 p.m.	Planning Commission Meeting
12	7:00 p.m.	Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
20	7:30 p.m.	City Council Meeting
22	7:00 p.m.	Planning Commission Meeting