



7900 South Westnedge Avenue
Portage, Michigan 49002
www.portagemi.gov
(269) 329-4400

2015-2017 City Council Seated

The 2015-2017 Portage City Council was seated November 17, 2015. Mayor Peter J. Strazdas was re-elected to a sixth two-year term. Councilmembers Richard Ford, Jim Pearson and Patricia Randall were elected for new four-year terms. "Congratulations to Mayor Strazdas and Councilmembers Ford, Pearson and Randall," stated City Manager Laurence Shaffer. "I look forward to an extremely productive relationship with our Portage team."

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 about city services by calling Complaint Resolution at 329-4404 or by visiting www.portagemi.gov > Report It!



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Portage City Council 2016 Meeting Schedule

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|----------------|
| ◆ January 12 | ◆ May 10 | ◆ September 6 |
| ◆ January 26 | ◆ May 24 | ◆ September 20 |
| ◆ February 9 | ◆ June 14 | ◆ October 4 |
| ◆ February 23 | ◆ June 28 | ◆ October 18 |
| ◆ March 8 | ◆ July 12 | ◆ November 1 |
| ◆ March 22 | ◆ July 26 | ◆ November 15 |
| ◆ April 12 | ◆ August 9 | ◆ December 6 |
| ◆ April 26 | ◆ August 23 | ◆ December 20 |

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 always open to the public.

Annual Customer Service Awards Presented

The 2015 Customer Service Awards were announced by City Manager Larry Shaffer on November 11, 2015 at an annual customer service event attended by City of Portage employees. The event also included a customer service training seminar presented by David DeFord of Fred Pryor Seminars. Nominations for the annual Customer Service Awards were made by Portage residents and city employees. The award winners were selected by the city's Customer Service Task Force and City Manager Larry Shaffer.

Outstanding Customer Service Award

In her position as Senior Program & Volunteer Coordinator, **Denita Demler** interacts with a steady stream of residents, volunteers and members of the Portage Senior Citizen Center on a daily basis. Denita is characterized as the epitome of friendliness. She makes senior citizens feel welcome, important and needed and she can be counted on to be caring, helpful, happy and smiling. Denita seeks new ideas, plans programs and seems to know the answers to all of the questions that come up. Providing outstanding service is an ongoing, everyday thing with Denita. Several nominations were received highlighting the outstanding customer service that Denita consistently provides in her position at the Portage Senior Citizen Center. These attributes earned Denita the **2015 Outstanding Customer Service Award**.

Honorable Mention

Park Ranger **Julie Grevenstuk** was recognized by a Portage resident who was injured in a bicycle accident on Westnedge Avenue. The resident noted that not only did Julie stop to render assistance, she immediately took command of the situation; from ice packs and calling for an ambulance to making arrangements for storage of the citizen's bike. Julie's caring demeanor and actions insured that the resident was well cared for. The resident said "your natural talent was evident and Portage is fortunate to have you." Julie was recognized with an **Honorable Mention Award**.

Department of Public Services Laborer, **Bill Miner** was also presented with an **Honorable Mention Award** for the assistance he rendered by identifying and assisting a missing person. Bill (along with OnStaff employee Zach Stoyanoff) spotted the gentleman who fit the description of the missing person and stopped to make contact with him. The gentleman, who had left on foot from his daughter's home and was located nearly four miles away, could not speak English. Bill and Zach utilized language translation technology on a mobile device in order to assist in communication efforts. Contact was then made with the Department of Public Safety staff, who sent officers to assist. The efforts of Bill and Zach ensured that the man was returned safely to his family.

Teamwork Award

Providing great customer service is not always an individual effort – it takes teamwork. This year, a special award was presented to three individuals representing three different departments who worked together to help a man, who resides in California, restore water service to his rental home he owns in Portage. A special **Teamwork Award** was presented to Deputy Director of Building & Housing Services, **Terry Novak**, Treasury Specialist, **Ingrid McGuire** and Utilities Engineer, **Kendra Gwin**.

This group of employees helped the owner identify the problem, find a local contractor to fix a faulty water pump, receive the appropriate permits, facilitate the necessary payments to the city and even deliver an excavator to the site in order to access the water pipe to identify the issue. "I cannot adequately express how grateful I am to the great team at the City of Portage. I could not have asked for a better group of people to help me achieve my goal. I live in a small town of about 35,000 people in Southern California and firmly believe that I would not have received better service here than I did from my 'second city.' The City of Portage far exceeded my expectations!" This is an excellent example of employees from different departments working together to achieve a common goal...providing quality service to all customers.

City Manager Shaffer said, "The Customer Service Awards represent the values and commitment of the entire City of Portage team. Service is the standard by which we measure performance." The City of Portage congratulates the recipients of the 2015 Customer Service Awards and pledges a continued commitment to providing superior customer service to all residents and customers.



L to R: Julie Grevenstuk, Kendra Gwin, Ingrid McGuire, Bill Miner, Terry Novak and Denita Demler

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Snow Plow Operators Ready for Whatever Winter Brings



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

Clean-up of cul-de-sacs and dead end streets.

When a snowstorm is in progress, every effort is made to keep Priority I and Priority II streets clear. Typically, snow

plow drivers can complete all Priority I and Priority II streets in four to eight hours. Once the major roads are clear, drivers will begin clearing the Priority III and Priority IV streets, usually requiring 24 to 48 hours to clear. Deicing 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 see that streets are properly plowed and deiced.

To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of snow plowing operations, residents are asked to review the following:

- ◆ The Portage Code of Ordinances prohibits residents from having basketball stands in the city right-of-way. Basketball stands impede safe snow plowing operations and can damage equipment on the trucks.
- ◆ The Portage Code of Ordinances prohibits on-street parking between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. from November 1 to April 15. Vehicles parking on the streets during this time period interfere with snow plowing activities.
- ◆ Michigan law prohibits residents and private snow plow 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 curb rather than in the actual roadway. This action allows snow plow 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 may be directed to the Department of Public Services at 329-4444.

Mailbox Repair Program

City snow plow operators make every attempt to minimize damage to mailboxes, but at times this damage is beyond the control of the operator. The City of Portage established a program 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 mailbox meeting U.S. Postal Service specifications (white or black, 6.5” wide, 19” long, and 8.5” high with a hinged door and flag). Damaged posts will be replaced with a standard 4” x 4” wooden post which meets U.S. Postal Service specifications.



Those residents desiring replacement of a specialty mailbox and/or post may choose to be reimbursed \$44 for the cost of the standard style mailbox/post offered as part of the City of Portage Mailbox Repair Program. By choosing this option, the resident will be responsible for any cost difference and also for the installation.

To notify the city of damage to a mailbox, please call the Department of Public Services at 329-4444 or visit www.portagemi.gov/reportit.aspx.

City Crews Focus on Trimming Street Trees

Trees are a valued resource in the City of Portage, increasing property values and contributing many environmental benefits to our community. The City of Portage, named a Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation for 25 consecutive years, strives to maintain the health of the urban forest and identify street trees in the right-of-way that pose safety risks to Portage citizens, motoring vehicles along the roadway and city equipment. Staff from the Department of Public Services are currently pruning trees that have been identified as a risk to safety throughout the city. Work will continue, as time and weather permit, until March 2016. The trimmings and limbs produced from this work will be removed by city crews as work is completed at each location. If you have any questions about this work, or street trees in general, please contact the Department of Public Services at 329-4444.



Curbside Recycling Helpful Hints

Wow! Great job, Portagers! Thanks for doing your part to make the transition from the old dual stream recycling program to the new single-stream recycling program a success! The city appreciates your patience during the process and offers the following helpful hints:

- ◆ Place your recycling cart at the curb no later than 7 a.m. on the morning of your collection day.
- ◆ Position your recycling cart at the curb with the arrows on the lid facing toward the street. Leave two to four feet between your recycling cart and other items, such as garbage carts, mailboxes, trees, etc. This will ensure enough space for the automated arm on the recycling truck to collect your recyclables.
- ◆ Remember that collection occurs only once every two weeks rather than once a week.
- ◆ Please discontinue use of the old 18-gallon bins. If you need a new wheeled cart, please visit www.portagemi.gov > Departments > Public Services > Curbside Recycling Program to request a cart and select a cart size.



Questions about the Curbside Recycling Program can be directed to the Department of Public Services at 329-4444.

January Brush Collection Includes Christmas Trees

The January Quarterly Curbside Brush Collection will include the collection of whole Christmas trees (free of tinsel and ornaments). To ensure the collection of your items, residents are asked to have brush and Christmas trees placed at the curb by 7 a.m. on the Monday of your designated collection week. Materials may be placed at curbside up to, but not more than, 72 hours prior to the designated Monday. Please note that a small amount of debris may remain after the brush is removed; citizens are asked to assist with clean-up. The map at right indicates the collection week for brush collection zones.



- ◆ 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.

Complete details regarding the Quarterly Curbside Brush Collection Program can be located at www.portagemi.gov > Departments > Public Services > Brush Collection or by contacting the Department of Public Services at 329-4444.

Note: The Quarterly Curbside Brush Collection Program is not performed for commercial establishments, churches or schools. Collection takes place on private streets where every property owner has signed an indemnification form. Please call 329-4444 with questions about receiving collection services on private streets.



Winter Recreation Programs Promise Outdoor Fun

When the temperatures drop and the snow starts to pile up, venture out in to your Portage Parks and enjoy the many opportunities for outdoor winter fun! Come outdoors and join the nearly 7,000 people who participate annually in winter recreation programs in Portage. Kendall Klingelsmith, Director of Parks, Recreation & Senior Citizen Services, is pleased to present the inserted Winter Recreation Brochure. A few highlights are noted below:

Traditional Holiday and Tree Lighting Celebration **FREE!**

December 5 at 7 p.m. (see details below)
City Centre Area and Celery Flats Historical Area

The Ice Rink at Millennium Park Opens!

December 10 (see information at right).

Ice Skating Lessons* \$22 / Person

January 9 and 23
The Ice Rink at Millennium Park

Snowshoe Nature Hike **FREE!**

January 16 at 2 p.m.
West Lake Nature Preserve

Downhill Ski or Snowboard Lessons* \$65 for Three Lessons

January 24, 31 and February 7 at 2 p.m.
Timber Ridge Ski Area, Gobles, Michigan

Winter Snow Party **FREE!**

January 30 at 12 noon
Oakland Drive Park

* Youth recreation scholarships available through the Portage Community Center at 323-1942.

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!

Open Skating Hours

December 10 - 18 & January 3 - March 6

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

Holiday Hours

- December 19 - January 2
- Daily 11 a.m. - 10 p.m.
- December 24, 31, January 1 ... 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
- Christmas Day Closed

School Holidays

- January 29 & February 26. 2 - 10 p.m.



Fees

- Open skating \$4
- Skate rental \$3
- Skate sharpening \$3
- 10-Skate Punch Card \$25

Special Events at the Ice Rink

- Valentine's Skate Date** \$16 / Person
Sunday, February 14 at 4:30 p.m.
Reservations due by February 11 at the Ice Rink
- Twilight Skate** \$3 to \$5
Thursday, February 25 from 8 to 11 p.m.

Traditional Holiday and Tree Lighting Celebration Set for December 5!

Set your sights on holiday lights, carolling and holiday treats! Please join in an evening of fun at the City of Portage annual Traditional Holiday and Tree Lighting Celebration. The fun kicks off at the City Centre, near the Portage District Library on Saturday, December 5 at 7 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, visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus and refreshments will all be part of the celebration. Hot cider and hot cocoa 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 Traditional Holiday and Tree Lighting Celebration.

2016 Winter Blast Half Marathon, 10k and 5k Registration Open!

www.portagewinterblast.wordpress.com

The Fourth Annual Winter Blast Half Marathon, 10k and 5k, presented in partnership by Kalamazoo Area Runners and the City of Portage will be held on Sunday, February 28, 2016 (Expo Saturday, February 27). The 10k event is new for 2016!



Join us in this extraordinary community celebration of health and wellness. Enjoy the wintery views as runners make their journey along the the USAT&F certified half marathon, 10k and 5k courses which highlight the Portage trail system and include 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.

Have You Checked Out the Portage Senior Center?



The Portage Senior Center (PSC) is open all winter to help you keep in shape for summer fun! Keep your range of motion limber with Yoga, pound "drums" to the beat of music from the 50's and 60's, dance to stirring rhythms that inspire you to get moving in the PSC Zumba class, or sign up to learn the mind/body connection of practicing Tai Chi. Open walking times are offered through Portage Public Schools when facilities are available.

All this and more is available to persons aged 50 years and better, right at the heart of City Centre – by the Portage District Library. Stop in and check it out! 320 Library Lane. For more information call 329-4555.

Bring Your Grandchildren to Visit Santa!

Saturday, December 12, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.
Sponsor: United Nursing

In cooperation with United Nursing, a "Grandparent/Grandchild" event will be held at the Portage Senior Center on Saturday, December 12, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon. Participate at no charge – just bring your grandchildren for visits with Santa, cookie decorating and other activities. Refreshments provided courtesy of MediLodge of Portage. Call the Reception Desk at 329-4555 by Monday, December 7 to RSVP.

Countdown to Kwanzaa: Celebrating Family, Culture, and Community

Thursday, December 17, 1:15 - 3:15 p.m.
Presenter: Monifa Jumanne

From lighting the first Umoja candle to honoring the ancestors to tasting the spicy Jollof Rice, Kwanzaa offers an array of family and community activities. Celebrated December 26 - January 1, Kwanzaa combines African customs with African American values and traditions. Its core is the Nguzo Saba, seven principles for daily living accompanied by seven candles. Kwanzaa celebrations include history, drumming, dancing, music, libations, readings, reflections, candle-lighting, artistic performances and a communal feast. Join the fun with Kwanzaa veteran Monifa Jumanne, other PSC members and special guests as PSC celebrates the heritage of African Americans. Register at the Reception Desk by Monday, December 14.

Watch Your Mailbox for Your 2015 Winter Property Tax Bill

The 2015 winter tax bills for the City of Portage were mailed on November 25, 2015. Payments are due by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, February 16, 2016. Property tax information is updated daily and can be viewed at www.portagemi.gov – click on the Access My Gov icon.



Property owners who have not received a winter tax bill by December 7, 2015 are asked to contact the Portage Treasury Office at 329-4455. Failure to receive a tax bill does not relieve the property owner of the responsibility for payment of the tax and applicable fees. Late payments are assessed a three percent (3%) late fee. All 2015 taxes that remain unpaid on March 1, 2016 will be turned over to the Kalamazoo County Treasurer for collection, where additional fees will be added.

- ◆ The Treasury Office in City Hall (7900 South Westnedge Avenue) is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with the exception of Christmas Eve, December 24 (closed at 12 noon), Christmas Day, December 25, 2015 and New Year's Day, January 1, 2016.
- ◆ A 24-Hour Drop Box is located near the south exit of City Hall; payments deposited in the drop box are processed on the next business day.
- ◆ Mailed payments must be postmarked by the U.S. Post Office on or before February 16, 2016 to avoid the late fee. In all late-payment disputes, the Portage Treasury Office will rely on the postmark applied by the Postmaster (metered postmarks are not accepted).

Payment Options	Payment Type Accepted					
	Cash	Check	Money Order	Credit Card	Debit Card	EFT
Treasury Office	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
24-Hour Drop Box		✓	✓			
U.S. Mail		✓	✓			
Pay Online				✓	✓	
Pay by Phone				✓	✓	
Online Banking						✓

Payment by check authorizes the city to convert the check to an electronic funds transfer; the bank account may be debited as soon as the same day the city receives the check payment.

- ◆ Pay online at www.portagemi.gov – click the "Access My Gov" icon.
- ◆ Pay by phone by calling 1-866-270-5701.

Payments made via credit/debit card will include a three percent (3%) convenience fee, charged by and paid to Point & Pay, a third-party credit card processor.

- ◆ Schedule an online banking payment through your bank no later than February 7, 2016 to ensure timely delivery of funds to the City of Portage to avoid late fees. Use your parcel number as the account number.

Please contact the Portage City Treasurer's Office at 329-4455 with any questions about your 2015 winter tax bill.

December Board of Review Will Meet December 15

The December Board of Review will meet Tuesday, December 15, 2015 beginning at 10 a.m. to address clerical errors and mutual mistakes of fact related to real and personal property assessments. Poverty Exemption requests and Disabled Veterans Property Tax Exemption requests will also be heard at the December Board of Review meeting. Visit www.portagemi.gov > Departments > City Assessor > Property Tax Forms & Information to view exemption requirements and download the relevant application. Qualifying property owners must submit a completed application to the Office of the City Assessor (7900 South Westnedge Avenue) by December 1, 2015. Applications are considered by the December Board of Review on a first-come, first-served basis. Please call the Office of the City Assessor at 329-4433 for additional information.

Note: Exemption requests previously denied by the March or July Board of Review will not be heard by the December Board of Review. The December Board of Review is prohibited from hearing disputes related to property valuation. Appeals related to property valuation are heard at the March Board of Review, which meets annually beginning the second Monday in March.

Purchase Dog Licenses at City Hall

Kalamazoo County dog licenses can be purchased or renewed at the Treasury Office in City Hall during the months of December, January and February. To purchase a **renewal license**, bring the pre-printed renewal form issued by Kalamazoo County Animal Services & Enforcement (KCASE) and proof of current rabies vaccination if it shows expired on the renewal form. To purchase a **new license**, bring proof of current rabies vaccination and proof of spaying/neutering (if applicable) from your veterinarian.

- ◆ \$10 for dogs that are spayed/neutered or less than one year old
- ◆ \$40 for dogs that are not spayed/neutered

Questions about dog licenses can be directed to KCASE at 383-8775.

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

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POSTAL CUSTOMER



City Closings

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

Christmas

Thursday, December 24 at 12 noon
Friday, December 25

New Year's

Friday, January 1

The next edition of the **Portager** will be published in January 2016

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Winter Weather Reminders



The city reminds residents and businesses that City Ordinance 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 City of Portage also has a winter parking ordinance that is in effect from November 1 through April 15 of each year, stating that it is unlawful for any person to park any motor vehicle within five feet of the main traveled portion of the roadway between the hours of 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. This restriction is in effect whether or not there is snow present. The City of Portage recommends that in times outside those restrictions when snow is present, residents make an effort to not park on the street if at all possible. This ensures that city snow removal equipment can complete the snow clearing process as rapidly and effectively as possible.



The Portage Fire Division asks residents to 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.

Televised City Meetings

All City of Portage City Council, Planning Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals meetings can be viewed live on channel 190 and via live streaming at



<http://www.publicmedianet.org/watch-live>. 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

- | | | |
|----|-----------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | 7:30 p.m. | City Council Meeting |
| 3 | 7:00 p.m. | Planning Commission Meeting |
| 14 | 7:00 p.m. | Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting |
| 15 | 7:30 p.m. | City Council Meeting |
| 17 | 7:00 p.m. | Planning Commission Meeting |