



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

## City of Portage Adopts Non-Discrimination Ordinance Nearly 150 Residents Attended a City Council Public Hearing

The City of Portage has joined at least 40 other Michigan communities in adopting a local non-discrimination ordinance. After several months of research and review, and in response to a request from City Council, the Human Services Board worked closely with the City Administration and the City Attorney to prepare a non-discrimination ordinance that considered best practices among other Michigan municipalities to determine the appropriate scope of the ordinance, including core protections to be included in a local ordinance.

Based on this research, the ordinance provides core protections in three areas: 1) Housing, 2) Employment and 3) Public Accommodations. The intent of the ordinance is that no person be denied equal protection, enjoyment of civil rights or be discriminated against because of their actual or perceived:

- ◆ Race
- ◆ Color
- ◆ Religion
- ◆ National Origin
- ◆ Sex
- ◆ Age
- ◆ Height
- ◆ Weight
- ◆ Marital Status
- ◆ Physical or Mental Disability
- ◆ Family Status
- ◆ Sexual Orientation
- ◆ Gender Identity



In addition to a public hearing held by the Human Services Board on May 26, 2016, the City Council held a public hearing on June 28, 2016 that lasted three and a half hours. More than 150 residents attended the public hearing and nearly 40 provided comments, most in support of the non-discrimination ordinance. Following the public hearing and

Council discussion, the ordinance was approved and will go into effect on August 2, 2016.

The new City of Portage non-discrimination ordinance includes protections for persons covered under current state and federal civil rights statutes, as well as protections for sexual orientation and gender identity. The ordinance is intended to supplement, not preempt, federal or state laws prohibiting discrimination. The new ordinance also provides a simplified approach to enforcement. After a written complaint is filed with the City Manager, and if an investigation establishes that a violation of the ordinance occurred, the City Manager will attempt to resolve the matter through an agreement between the parties or refer the matter to a conflict resolution service. Only if an amicable resolution cannot be reached will the matter be referred to the Department of Public Safety or the City Attorney for prosecution.

In addition to providing protections and remedies for victims of discrimination, the non-discrimination ordinance provides benefits to the community at-large by positioning the City of Portage as a welcoming place to live, visit and do business.

To review the specific provisions of the non-discrimination ordinance, please visit the Human Services Board web page at [www.portagemi.gov](http://www.portagemi.gov) > Boards and Commissions > Human Services Board. For questions or comments regarding the non-discrimination ordinance, please contact the Office of City Manager at 329-4400 or the Department of Community Development at 329-4466.

## Fire Division Receives Accredited Agency Status from National Accreditation Commission

The Portage Department of Public Safety – Fire Division has received the status of *Accredited Agency* with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI). This means that the Fire Division has met the criteria established through the CFAI's voluntary self-assessment and accreditation program.

**first Public Safety Agency in the State of Michigan to have both police and fire agencies accredited through national accreditation commissions.**

CFAI is dedicated to assisting fire and emergency agencies in achieving excellence through self-assessment and accreditation in an effort to provide continuous quality improvement and the enhancement of service delivery to their communities. The CFAI process is voluntary and provides an agency with an improvement model to internally assess their service delivery and performance. The agency then works with a team of peers from other agencies to evaluate their completed self-assessment. One immediate positive outcome of completing the accreditation process is the ability of the Fire Division to respond in a shorter time period to medical related responses by examining and making changes to call processing methods.

"The Fire Division's achievement of Accredited Agency status demonstrates the commitment of the department to provide the highest quality of service to the Portage community," stated Richard White, Public Safety Director. "We have also been able to use the CFAI's process as a proactive mechanism to plan for the future of the Fire Division and locate areas where we can improve on the quality of the services we provide." For more information about the CFAI and the accreditation process please visit [www.cpse.org](http://www.cpse.org).



City Manager Larry Shaffer (center) congratulates Senior Deputy Fire Chief, John Podgorski (left) and Public Safety Director Richard White (right) on the award of *Accredited Agency* status from the Commission on Fire Accreditation International.

The Department of Public Safety – Fire Division is one of about 200 agencies to achieve internationally Accredited Agency status with the CFAI and the Center for Public Safety Excellence, Inc. However, only two other agencies in the State of Michigan are currently accredited through the CFAI: the Detroit Metro Airport Fire Authority and the City of Grand Rapids Fire Department. **The City of Portage is the**

## PSC Recommended for Accreditation for Fourth Time

Twenty years ago, the Portage Senior Center (PSC) was the first senior center in the State of Michigan to become nationally accredited. In order to continue as an accredited institution, the process must be repeated every five years.

The National Senior Center Accreditation Program was developed by the National Institute of Senior Centers (NISC) to advance the quality of senior centers nationwide. Accreditation provides official recognition that a senior center meets the highest standards for programs and operations. A prospective Senior Center must be able to demonstrate an established history of best practices, quality programs and exemplary service delivery to qualify. The PSC received high marks in every area that was evaluated.

A Unit of the National Council on Aging



The accreditation process also includes a review of the senior center by experts from other senior centers and recommendations of how to improve programs and services. The feedback helps to develop a long-term strategic plan for the future of the PSC.

Staff, volunteers and community members all worked together to review the PSC against national standards and develop reports on each of those standards. The PSC is proud to be the only senior center in the State of Michigan to achieve accreditation four consecutive times! For more information about the NISC, please visit [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org).

# Selecting the Right Contractor is Key to a Successful Home Improvement Project

Southwest Michigan is fortunate to have several quality contractors able to perform home improvements, repairs and maintenance. Whether you are constructing a new addition, finishing a basement or ensuring proper maintenance by replacing a roof or furnace, selecting the right contractor to perform the work is important. The City of Portage Department of Community Development offers the following tips to selecting a contractor:

◆ **Get several quotes.** Talk to several contractors and review several quotes for the project. Rates for construction projects vary dependent upon the contractor's workload, materials used and related factors. Make sure you review each quote carefully and that you are comparing "apples to apples."

◆ **Use the buddy system.** Have your spouse, family member or friend with you during the initial meeting.

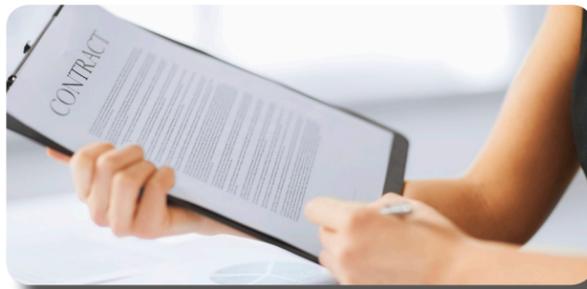


A second set of ears can never hurt and may help you feel more at ease. Questions you ask and observations about the proposed work and manner in which it is to be completed should be straightforward and direct.

◆ **Avoid high pressure sales.** Rushed decisions often bring unintended consequences. Companies or contractors offering "now or never" bargain options should be avoided. Quality work at a fair price is usually your best bet. Take the time to carefully think through your decisions and remember – you are in control of the project.

◆ **Make sure the contractor is licensed and insured.** The State of Michigan requires contractors to be licensed when performing work on a residential house. Ensuring the contractor is licensed should avoid unsafe conditions or future problems often associated with unlicensed vendors offering to "save you money" by performing work without the necessary credentials. Avoid contractors who require you to obtain the building permit because they "do not have the time;" this may signify the contractor is not properly trained, licensed or insured for the work.

◆ **Get it in writing.** Contractual agreements need to be clearly identified in writing and understood by both parties. Your expectations for a project may be different than that of the contractor's. Make sure you both have a clear understanding of the project details, including the start and completion date. Insist that the contractor obtain all necessary permits prior to commencing work and provide you with a copy for your file. In addition, an itemized list of costs and payment expectations should also be recorded. Make sure you have proper contact information for the contractor including their State of Michigan license number. Do not allow any work to start until a signed agreement has been established and the necessary permits are obtained.



◆ **Ask for and check references.**

Ask for references such as the contractor's last two or three jobs. If they can't provide recent references, it may indicate that their recent history is not the best. Most homeowners have no problem advising future clients of their experience with contractors.



◆ **Never pay in full up front.** To help ensure the project is completed in accordance with the contractual agreement, arrangements for partial payments throughout the project may be necessary. While the contractor may require some funds for the purchase of material, payments for the project should correspond to the work completed. Final payment should only be provided once the project has been completed to the terms of the agreement and your satisfaction and after the necessary final inspections by the city have been performed and approved.

◆ **Communicate with your contractor.** An open line of communication with your contractor throughout the project is important. If you have questions or concerns regarding the project, let your contractor know as soon as possible. It is far easier to modify the project in its initial stages than at the end.

By following these simple steps and investing a little time, your project will be on its way to a successful completion. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the Department of Community Development at 329-4477.

## Turn Home Ownership Dreams Into a Reality

For current renters and active home seekers, the City of Portage offers a home buyer assistance program



that can help make the dream of owning a home a reality. If you have been pre-approved for a mortgage and are thinking of buying a home, you may be eligible for assistance.

Home buyers purchasing houses in specific Portage neighborhoods can receive a deferred loan, at 0% interest, up to \$3,000 that will cover 50% of the required down payment, plus eligible closing costs. Up to \$5,000 may be available for the purchase of bank-owned foreclosed properties or vacant properties that were previously renter-occupied homes. For a family of four, the minimum income limit to participate is \$25,250 and the maximum household income is \$50,500.

For more detailed information, a map of eligible neighborhoods, or for an application package, please call the City of Portage Community Development Department at 329-4477.

## Did you know...

### there are requirements for where vehicles, campers and boats can be parked?

The City of Portage has established community quality standards to protect and enhance the character and quality of life in Portage neighborhoods. Vehicles, campers, boats and similar vehicles parked on the lawn can negatively affect the appearance and property values of a neighborhood. Parking in lawn areas is also one of the most common citizen complaints. As many residents and property owners may be unaware that parking on the lawn is prohibited, the following is a summary of the Community Quality ordinance that outlines where motor vehicles and other items may be parked:

◆ Motor vehicles, recreational vehicles, campers, boats or similar property located in the front yard must be parked in an enclosed structure or on an improved driveway surface consisting of either concrete, asphalt or gravel. Parking is not permitted in the "curb lawn" (area between the street pavement and property line) and vehicles may not be parked in a manner that encroaches onto or blocks a public sidewalk.

◆ Motor vehicles, recreational vehicles or campers located in the rear yard must be parked in an enclosed structure or on an improved surface (concrete, asphalt or gravel). However, if you have more than two acres of property outside of a subdivision, vehicles, trailers or boats may be parked on an unimproved surface at least 40 feet from all property lines.

◆ If a vehicle is inoperable (not in running condition and/or not licensed), the vehicle must be stored within a completely enclosed garage or other structure.

◆ While overnight parking on a public street is permitted from April 15 through November 1, please note that a vehicle, recreational vehicle, camper or boat cannot be parked or stored on a public street for longer than 48 continuous hours.

For further information, contact the Department of Community Development at 329-4477. To report a parking violation, please visit [www.portagemi.gov/ReportIt.aspx](http://www.portagemi.gov/ReportIt.aspx).

## Friendly Reminder

Portage residents are reminded of the importance of property maintenance activities. Key to Portage remaining *A Natural Place to Move!* are desirable, high-quality neighborhoods. Please take time to properly maintain your property by controlling weeds and keeping lawns mowed on a regular basis. Growth in excess of eight inches is prohibited by city ordinance. To view the complete City of Portage Code of Ordinances and learn more about these and other community quality matters, visit the *Quick Links* section of the city website at [www.portagemi.gov](http://www.portagemi.gov). To report a community quality concern, please contact the Department of Community Development at 329-4477 or use the online Report It! tool on the city website.



# Portage Senior Center to Host Pickleball Clinics

Tuesday, August 9 and Tuesday, September 13 - 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.  
 Ramona Park, South Sprinkle Road, 1/2 Mile South of Centre Avenue  
 Free and Open to the Public

Visit Ramona Park to learn more about Pickleball from instructors Jim and Yvonne Hackenberg, Pickleball National Champions! These free clinics are geared toward those who want to learn about pickleball or are new to the game and want to learn about key fundamentals to winning pickleball. The clinic will cover:

- ◆ Rules of the game
- ◆ Demonstrations of serving, returning serve and shots
- ◆ Player positioning and movement
- ◆ Teamwork and team dynamics



Instructors will demonstrate a variety of drills that participants can use to improve their game. In addition, Jim and Yvonne will answer questions from participants pertaining to any aspect of the game, including rules interpretation.

Interested in playing pickleball with others? Join the Pickleball Open Play at Ramona Park every Friday from 4 p.m. until dark. All skill levels welcome!

# Movie Night in the Park And Respect for Law Displays

Celery Flats Historical Area, 7335 Garden Lane  
 Friday, August 5 at 7 p.m. (Movie Starts at 9 p.m.)

The City of Portage Youth Advisory Committee and the Breakfast Optimist Club of Kalamazoo have teamed up once again to present Summer Movie Night in the Park, along with free public safety demonstrations.

The evening will begin with *Respect for Law* displays from 7 to 9 p.m. Children, teens and adults can visit with public safety personnel from Portage, Kalamazoo County and the State of Michigan and view displays of public safety equipment such as police vehicles, fire apparatus and ambulances. Mounted police and K-9 units will also be present.

The movie *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (rated PG-13) will begin shortly after 9 p.m. Come early for the best seat and bring your lawn chair or blanket. The event is free of charge and popcorn will be provided.



# August Recreation Offerings

Visit [www.portagemi.gov](http://www.portagemi.gov) to view more summer recreation events.

## Ramona Park Beach

Open daily from 10:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Ramona Park Beach offers a life-guarded swim area; beach volleyball; picnic areas; kayak, canoe and paddle board rentals; a fishing dock and playgrounds! Vehicle permits to Ramona Park can be purchased on site, near the park entrance.

- City Resident Daily Permit .....\$5
- Non-Resident Daily Permit .....\$10
- City Resident Annual Permit .....\$25
- Non-Resident Annual Permit .....\$45
- Group Bus Daily Permit .....\$50

## Kayak, Canoe and Paddle Board Rentals 12:30 – 6 p.m.

- 1-Hour Rental .....\$12
- Each Additional 1/2 Hour (up to 4 hours).....\$5
- 4 - 6 Hour Rental .....\$36

## Paddle Board Lessons and Demos

Sign up at Lee's Adventure Sports – 381-7700  
 Saturday Lessons ..... August 13  
 \$45 ..... 10 a.m. – 12 noon

## School of Fish Day Camp at Ramona Park

Advanced Anglers ages 9 – 14 ..... August 8-11  
 \$85 ..... 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.  
 Intermediate and experienced young anglers will learn skills such as jigging, advanced knots, artificial lures, intro to fly fishing and much more. **Just a few spots left!** Call 329-4522 to register today!

## Park Adventure Programs

**Kanoe the Kazoo** at Ramona Park ..... August 6  
 FREE ..... 10 a.m. – 12 noon  
 Enjoy a leisurely float with the KNC Naturalist.

**Hike the Night** at Eliason Nature Reserve ..... August 15  
 FREE ..... 9 – 10 p.m.  
 Enjoy a hike into Eliason Nature Reserve after dark.

## Get Active Portage at Ramona Park. .... August 13

**Youth Triathlon** ..... 7 a.m. check-in, 8:30 a.m. start  
 Young triathletes will be timed and awards will be presented for top finishers in each age group (6-9 years and 10-13 years). All athletes must be pre-registered online at [www.kidsgetactive.us](http://www.kidsgetactive.us).

**Ramona Park Health Fair** ..... 9 to 11 a.m.  
 Now is the time to learn how to live healthier. Participate in activities provided by local health and wellness vendors.



## Portage Farmers' Market

The City of Portage partners with the People's Food Co-op of Kalamazoo to offer a weekly farmers' market! The farmers' market is held outside at the Portage Senior Center on Sundays from 12 noon – 4 p.m. The Portage Farmers' Market vendors are all local so you know where your food and crafts are coming from. For more information, please call the Parks, Recreation and Senior Citizen Services Department at 329-4522. Vendors interested in participating may contact Kalamazoo People's Food Co-op at 342-5686 or email [outreach@peoplesfoodco-op.org](mailto:outreach@peoplesfoodco-op.org)



# Avoid the Lines at the Polling Station – Vote Absentee!

Presidential elections often have extremely high voter turnout and, with that, longer lines. The upcoming presidential election on November 8 will be no different. Avoid the lines by becoming a permanent absentee voter or by voting absentee!

The City of Portage maintains a permanent list of absentee voters for those interested voters who are over the age of 60, have a permanent disability or meet other specific criteria. Members of the permanent list automatically receive an absentee ballot application for every election that must be completed and returned prior to receiving a ballot. An absentee voter, permanent or not, must always complete an application before receiving a ballot. Only the actual voter may sign the application for a ballot (nobody may sign on your behalf) and only the actual

voter may receive the ballot directly from the Office of the City Clerk. Spouses, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, etc. may not pick up ballots for family members. There are no exceptions. Please note that this rule does not apply to the application for an absentee ballot.

To join the permanent absentee voter, please contact the Office of the City Clerk at 329-4511. If you know that you will be out of town on Election Day, don't wait until a few days before the election – request a one-time absentee ballot today by visiting the Michigan Secretary of State at [www.michigan.gov/sos](http://www.michigan.gov/sos) or by calling 329-4511.

## Special Information for First Time Voters

With numerous voter registration drives occurring across Michigan and the nation, the Office of the City Clerk is experiencing an increase in the number of registrations for

first time voters. If you have never voted in Michigan and registered by mail to vote or as part of a voter registration drive, such as those sponsored by a political campaign or private organization, you must appear in person to vote in the first election in which you wish to participate. This requirement does not apply if:

- ◆ You personally hand deliver the voter registration form to the City Clerk's Office instead of mailing the form.
- ◆ You are 60 years of age or more.
- ◆ You have a recognized disability.
- ◆ You are eligible to vote under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act.

If you have any questions regarding these requirements please contact the Office of the City Clerk at 329-4511.

# Portage Department of Public Safety Recommends the Red Med Box for Disposing Old or Unused Medication

The typical Portage household contains a variety of unused or expired medications. The danger in this is that certain prescription medications can lead to drug abuse, addiction and accidental or intentional overdose. Prescription medications are one of the most sought-after items by burglars. The obvious solution is to get rid of the old medication. But how?

Flushing medication down the toilet or a drain leads to pollution in the ground water and the Great Lakes, causing adverse effects on drinking water and wildlife. Medication disposed of in the garbage ends up in a landfill, causing similar environmental impacts or the risk of the medication landing in the wrong hands.

The Portage Department of Public Safety recommends disposing of old and unwanted medications at the Red Med

Box located in the lobby of the Public Safety Building (7810 Shaver Road). The Red Med Box is a secure receptacle that is accessible 24 hours a day. Simply drop the medication, in its original packaging, in the Red Med Box like you would drop mail into a postal box.

Cross out the patient's name with a black marker, but NOT the name of the medication. Red Med Boxes are emptied on a regular basis by law enforcement officers and the medication is safely destroyed in an incinerator.

Since 2012, the Portage Department of Public Safety has disposed of over 11,600 pounds of expired or unused medications. The program offers citizens a free and easy way to dispose of outdated or unused medications, providing peace of mind that the drugs are disposed of safely. For more information please visit the Red Med Box website at [redmedbox.com](http://redmedbox.com).

**Red Med Box will accept:**

- ◆ Expired and unused medications
- ◆ Over the counter medications
- ◆ Antibiotics/steroids
- ◆ Cold and flu medications
- ◆ Vitamins and herbal supplements
- ◆ Medication samples
- ◆ Pet medications
- ◆ Medicated ointment/lotion/drops
- ◆ Unopened Epi-Pens
- ◆ Liquid medications

**Red Med Box will NOT accept:**

- ◆ Needles/lancets/syringes
- ◆ Thermometers
- ◆ IV bags
- ◆ Bloody or infectious waste
- ◆ Hydrogen peroxide, rubbing alcohol, etc.
- ◆ Business waste
- ◆ Empty containers
- ◆ Personal care products
- ◆ Used Epi-Pens
- ◆ Aerosol cans
- ◆ Electronic devices (diabetes testers, etc.)
- ◆ Inhalants

## What's Happening at the PSC?

### Heritage Dinner Series

The ever popular Portage Senior Center evening meals are held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 5 p.m. and are open to the public. Participants can request their meals "to go." Reservations are requested no later than one day prior to the planned meal. These special dinners are available for \$10, which include an entrée, sides, dessert and a beverage. August's dinner on **August 16** will feature a performance by Arturo Ziraldo (violin) and Lillian Pettitt (cello). Call 329-4555 to RSVP.

### 2nd Annual PSC 9-Hole Golf Scramble

Thursday, September 15  
8:30 a.m. Registration | 9:00 a.m. Shotgun Start  
States Golf Course, Vicksburg  
Registration fee is \$35 per golfer, \$140 per foursome, which includes golf, cart, prizes and a luncheon. Registration forms can be picked up either at the PSC or States Golf Course during the Thursday social golf league. Team registration forms are due no later than 12 noon on Thursday, September 8.

### New Member Meet & Eat

Thursday, September 8  
9:00 – 10:30 a.m.  
320 Library Lane  
Are you a new member of the PSC? Would you like more information about joining? The PSC Meet & Eat is for you! We'd like to get to know you better and introduce you to the Center and the variety of programs and events that are planned throughout the year. There is no charge for this event. RSVP by calling 329-4555.



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:

### Labor Day

Monday, September 5

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

## 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 always open to the public.

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



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## Televised City Meetings

City Council and Planning Commission meetings can be viewed live on channel 190 while Zoning Board of Appeals meetings can be viewed live on channel 187. All meetings can be viewed via live streaming at <http://www.publicmedianet.org/watch-live>. AT&T U-Verse customers can access City of Portage government meetings on channel 99 and then follow the prompts to access the various meetings.



### August

- 4 7:00 p.m. Planning Commission Meeting
- 8 7:00 p.m. Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
- 9 7:30 p.m. City Council Meeting
- 18 7:00 p.m. Planning Commission Meeting
- 23 7:30 p.m. City Council Meeting

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