**MINUTES FROM THE SPECIAL PRE-MEETING
OF THE PORTAGE CITY COUNCIL
OF JANUARY 8, 2018**

Mayor Randall called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Mayor Patricia Randall and Councilmember Chris Burns were present and Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson and Councilmembers Richard Ford, Lori Knapp and Claudette Reid joined via the conference phone line. Councilmember Terry Urban was absent with excuse. Also in attendance were City Manager Laurence Shaffer, Deputy City Manager Rob Boulis and City Clerk Adam Herringa.

Mayor Randall opened the meeting and inquired if there were any questions or concerns regarding items on the proposed agenda. Councilmember Reid stated that, with regard to Item A.3, 12 firms expressed interest in the Fire Station Number Two project but only four bid on Construction Management Services. City Manager Shaffer stated that most companies that expressed interest were focused on the actual construction of the fire station and not the project management. Councilmember Reid inquired as to whether AVB Construction would be the actual construction company or if it would be limited to managing and overseeing the project. City Manager Shaffer stated that AVB would manage the project but would not be permitted, as the project manager, from bidding on the actual construction. Deputy City Manager Boulis clarified that AVB would not be permitted to bid unless the number of bidders on the construction project is limited. Councilmember Ford commented that hiring a firm to manage or oversee a project (an owner's agent) is now commonplace and Deputy City Manager Boulis shared that the City, when appropriate, recently began utilizing this practice.

With regard to Item A.4 involving the Board of Review (BOR), Councilmember Reid stated that her recollection is that the City has waited until after there is a sense of the number of appeals before determining the number of BOR members. She inquired as to why the City was proposing two three-member boards at this time. Mayor Randall stated that she remembered the appointment process differently and that members need to be appointed now in order to obtain training in February. City Manager Shaffer stated that last year City Administration recommended moving to a single BOR but it was the will of City Council to have two boards. Given this decision, City Administration is recommending two boards this year and will consider recommending a move to a single BOR in 2019. Mayor Randall inquired if the City anticipated an increase in the number of appeals in light of the recent institution of the school bond millage. Mr. Shaffer stated that he did not anticipate a large uptick in appeals from last year citing positive economic indicators as support.

Councilmember Reid stated that she recalls making appointments last year but not determining the number of boards until later in the year. Mayor Randall shared her recollection of last year that there were six good candidates that were willing to serve and City Council went with two panels. Councilmember Knapp shared some of her experience as a member of the Board of Review and her recollection of the appointment process utilized in 2017. Councilmember Knapp then requested information pertaining to the difference between the poverty exemption this year from last year.

Mayor Randall referred to the minutes from the 2017 meeting in which City Council made appointments to the BOR and Councilmember Reid stated that there was language inserted at that time allowing the City to alter the number of panels.

With regard to Item A.5, the 2018 Recreation and Open Space Plan, Councilmember Knapp asked for an explanation as to the process for development and approval of the plan. City Manager Shaffer stated that the City would put together a timeline of what has happened and what is upcoming. Councilmember Reid inquired if there was an executive summary, mark up or similar that delineated what has changed from the last plan to the proposed plan. Councilmember Knapp inquired as to the urgency of the timeline and Councilmember Reid stated that City Council needs to know the differences between the old and proposed plans before City Council can either accept or approve of the document. Councilmember Knapp clarified that City Council is not approving the document at the Regular Meeting but rather approving the distribution of the proposed plan. Mayor Randall inquired if the plan was being distributed as a courtesy or if it was mandated. Mr. Shaffer replied that it was being distributed for both of those reasons and, in response to a question, indicated that the City rarely receives any feedback.

Councilmember Knapp inquired if there would be a future opportunity to review and approve the proposed plan. Councilmember Ford questioned whether City Council formally adopts or approves of the plan. City Manager Shaffer also questioned whether City Council will have an opportunity to formally approve the plan but would clarify. Councilmember Reid inquired if there would be a public forum regarding the proposed plan. City Manager Shaffer stated that the Planning Commission and Park Board had open discussions about the plan and emphasized the importance of soliciting public input.

With regard to Item A.7, Councilmember Reid inquired if the City had completed and submitted a self-evaluation related to the Michigan Economic Development Corporation Redevelopment Ready Communities program. City Manager Shaffer replied that he was unsure as to the status but would put together a response. Councilmember Reid inquired when the monthly reports referenced in the agenda item would begin. City Manager Shaffer replied that they would begin following City Council and Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) approval. Councilmember Reid next inquired if information on the MEDC Program would be available via the city website and City Manager Shaffer indicated that the City would celebrate this partnership and the City would utilize a variety of methods to communicate information on the partnership.

Councilmember Burns, with regard to Item A.8, asked City Manager Shaffer to provide a history of the position of the Director of Transportation and Utilities and for an elaboration on the recommended appointment of Ms. Kendra Gwin. Mr. Shaffer shared that when former Director of Transportation and Utilities Chris Barnes moved from Portage Ms. Gwin took over as Acting Director. He continued by stating that Ms. Gwin was then appointed to the Director position but withdrew shortly thereafter. Following the withdrawal of Ms. Gwin the City hired Roger Buell as Director. Mr. Buell served as Director for several months but was unable to continue due to health concerns. Following the term of Mr. Buell, Mr. Shaffer stated that he revisited the appointment of Ms. Gwin and shared that he has a good understanding with her and that he is completely satisfied with her performance. Mr. Shaffer informed City Council that the City has hired another engineer to assist the Department of Transportation and Utilities.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson stated that when he left City employment Mr. Barnes shared that he would remain available as a consultant. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson inquired if the City had reached out to Mr. Barnes in such a fashion and City Manager responded in the affirmative. Mr. Shaffer continued by stating that he anticipated using the services of Mr. Barnes on future endeavors such as working to obtain federal funding.

Councilmember Knapp inquired if the "Calendar of Meetings" listed under C.1 was supposed to be located there or under the Consent Agenda. City Clerk Herringa replied that it was located under Communications as an action item in order to draw attention to the various meeting that are being held.

With regard to business that may come before City Council at the Regular Meeting, City Manager Shaffer stated that he was working on a memo to City Council regarding waiving a $50 late fee on a water bill for a resident of Marlow Street. Mr. Shaffer stated that, for a variety of reasons, the resident never received her bill and that he would be recommending a waiver.

Under Unfinished Business, Mayor Randall inquired if the City had reached out to the resident, Bob Peterson, who spoke at a recent City Council Meeting regarding his opposition to the bill before the Michigan State Legislature that expands handgun open carry provisions. Mr. Shaffer responded that he had not spoken with Mr. Peterson but would work to get something on an upcoming City Council agenda. Councilmember Burns stated that since this is a matter from the State Legislature, the City should be sure to reach out to our local legislators and get them involved.

With regard to Item H.1, Councilmember Knapp pointed out that the phrase "if necessary" is used when referring to the appointment of members to the second pod of the Board of Review. She asked that the two items be reconciled.

With regard to Item H.1., Mayor Pro Tem Pearson expressed concern regarding making an appointment to the Public Media Network (PMN) Board of Directors given concerns and planned discussions on the future role of PMN with the City. Mr. Pearson inquired how much time is left in the term that is to be filled and Mr. Herringa replied that the term expires May 31, 2018. Mayor Randall concurred with Mayor Pro Tem Pearson and asked City Manager Shaffer to reach out to the applicant for the PMN Board of Directors and let her know that City Council will not be making an appointment until it achieves clarity on the role and relationship of PMN with the City. Councilmember Reid expressed concern that the Pre-Council Meeting is not a place for such a decision to be made. Councilmember Reid stated that the applicant is highly qualified but also very connected to PMN and questioned whether appointing her would be wise. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson stated that the concern raised by Councilmember Reid makes him even more reluctant to make an appointment to the PMN Board of Directors at this time.

Mayor Randall stated that she had conversed with City Attorney Randy Brown to confirm that the City Manager can reschedule agenda items at the direction of the Mayor and that while no decisions can be made at Pre-Council Meetings, items can be rescheduled. Mayor Randall expressed concern with the issue of timing and deferred to the City Manager on how to handle the applicant and appointment. City Manager Shaffer stated that he would speak with the candidate.

Mayor Randall summarized the questions raised at the meeting requiring follow up from City Administration.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 8:44 a.m.

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Adam Herringa, City Clerk