

**MINUTES FROM THE PRE-MEETING
OF THE PORTAGE CITY COUNCIL
OF MAY 7, 2018**

Mayor Randall called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Councilmembers Chris Burns, Lori Knapp, Claudette Reid and Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson joined via the conference phone line. Councilmembers Richard Ford and Terry Urban were 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 May 8th Agenda. With regard to the minutes of the second Budget Review Session, Councilmember Knapp asked that additional reference be made to a statement she submitted that was read by Mayor Randall at the meeting.

With regard to Item A.4, Newly Constructed Streets, Councilmember Reid inquired if any of these streets were narrower than common practice. She commented that she inquired because of issues which have been experienced on narrower streets in the Moorsbridge area related to snow plowing in harsh winters. Mayor Randall speculated that the new narrower streets may be so because of the inclusion of bike lanes. Mayor Randall inquired if Councilmember Reid was opposed to accepting the streets listed as part of the agenda and Councilmember Reid asked that the City monitor narrower streets as it relates to increases in issues as compared to more traditional residential streets.

With regard to Item A.5, Councilmember Knapp inquired as to how the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) calculated how much a community receives in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding. City Manager Shaffer stated that he was sure HUD used a formula to calculate amounts but would research and respond. Councilmember Knapp next commented that the City of Portage has a history of not fully utilizing CDBG funds and if there are fewer people asking for access to the funds. Mr. Shaffer stated that the City is always looking to maximize allocation of CDBG funds and finding clients for new home ownership or rehab programs. He continued by stating that the City also tries to utilize this funding in support of capital improvement projects in low and moderate income areas of the City. He cited enhancements to Lexington Green Park as an example. Councilmember Reid inquired as to possible barriers to new home owners getting a mortgage from a lender due to how the City places a lien against the property. Mr. Shaffer stated that the City takes a second position behind the primary mortgage lender but would review City procedures to make sure there are no unnecessary impediments to new home owners. Councilmember Reid asked that, if no impediments are found, the City get the word out to lenders. Mayor Randall inquired as to whether the City's process is different than other communities.

With regard to Item A.6, Virtual Attendance Policy, Councilmember Knapp asked that the document be consistent when referencing meetings of City Council. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson inquired as to why Committee of the Whole (COW) meetings were included especially since there is no voting. Mr. Shaffer stated that including COW meetings affords City Council

added flexibility to participate and Mayor Randall commented that it would provide a Councilmember the ability to be informed.

Councilmember Knapp inquired as to the provision allowing Councilmembers to participate remotely in up to three meetings and the procedure on how City Council decides to allow participation in additional meetings. She asked for clarification in this regard. Councilmember Reid inquired if there is a Committee of the Whole Meeting followed by a Regular Meeting and a Councilmember participates remotely in both, if this would constitute one meeting or two. City Clerk Herringa stated that these are two distinct meetings.

Councilmember Reid asked that the proposed policy be modified to reflect that not only must the Councilmember be able to hear what is happening but that the Councilmember be able to be heard by all meeting attendees as well.

Councilmember Reid expressed the importance of a Councilmember being able to fully understand what is being discussed and presented at a meeting. She continued by questioning how a current or future councilmember with a hearing impairment could participate remotely. Mayor Randall stated that such issues could be addressed as they arise and shared that she recently spoke with Kalamazoo Mayor Bobby Hopewell about Kalamazoo's Remote Attendance Policy. She stated that, according to Mayor Hopewell, the Kalamazoo City Commission has only had a commissioner participate remotely one time since they adopted their policy. Mayor Randall shared her belief that people will only utilize this policy when there is an emergency and/or a critical vote. Councilmember Reid commented that there may be people on City Council who have a hearing impairment. Councilmember Burns inquired how, for a viewer, accommodations are made for the hearing impaired. Mr. Shaffer responded that currently there is no closed captioning or related efforts to assist the viewing audience but that such a service could be part of a new broadcasting and streaming contract. Deputy City Manager Boulis stated that he believes there is policy in place in which assistance could be made available upon request.

Councilmember Burns asked for consistent language with the terminology "remote attendance." Councilmember Burns next inquired as to a provision regarding the need for a Councilmember who is participating remotely to accommodate members of the public. City Clerk Herringa explained that the Council Meeting is public and, by extension, the view is that wherever a remote Councilmember is located would also need to be open to the public. Councilmember Burns stated that a reasonable accommodation would be notifying the City where they are and that, if the public shows up, they should make themselves available.

Councilmember Reid inquired as to the provision in which a Councilmember would receive a reimbursement for costs associated with remote participation. She inquired how this would be managed. City Manager Shaffer stated that the City, for example, would follow standard reimbursement requests and note that, for example, a Councilmember would submit a request for reimbursement if there are international calling charges. Deputy City Manager Boulis expressed concern with getting telephone bills and arranging reimbursement. At the request of the Mayor and City Council, Mr. Shaffer stated that he would ask the City Attorney to review this provision.

Mayor Randall raised a question on the steps to take if the connection to the remote participant is lost. She commented that putting a meeting on hold in order reestablish connection interferes with the flow of the meeting especially for those who are present. She asked that this provision be reviewed. Councilmember Reid questioned if there are technical difficulties, should the remote participant be allowed to vote? She stated her belief that the remote participant should be privy to all information and discussion on a topic in order to be permitted to vote on the item. Mayor Randall commented that perhaps it would make sense to take it on a case by case basis and pause the meeting if it is a critical item and not routine in nature.

With regard to Item A.7, Councilmember Reid inquired if the Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting on the new website could be promoted as a meeting for the public to learn more about the website and not simply a work session for City Council. Mr. Shaffer stated that he would look at having a more detailed presentation at the COW meeting for City Council followed by a short presentation that is promotional for the public.

There being no other questions regarding the proposed agenda Mayor Randall summarized the questions raised at the meeting requiring follow-up from the City Administration.

With regard to the Board and Commission Interview Session, Mayor Pro Tem Pearson inquired if City Council would get a hard copy of the applicant materials. Mr. Shaffer responded in the affirmative. Councilmember Knapp inquired as to the meeting start time and City Clerk Herringa clarified that it was at 5:15 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 8:39 a.m.

Adam Herringa, City Clerk