

**MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING OF THE
PORTAGE CITY COUNCIL
OF JULY 24, 2018**

Mayor Patricia Randall called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. The following Councilmembers were present: Councilmembers Chris Burns, Richard Ford, Lori Knapp, Terry Urban, Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson and Mayor Patricia Randall. Councilmember Claudette Reid arrived at 5:38 p.m. Also present were City Manager Laurence Shaffer, Director of Parks and Recreation Kathleen Hoyle, Senior Center Manager Kim Phillips, City Attorney Randall Brown and Deputy City Clerk Erica Eklov.

Mayor Randall shared that this Committee of the Whole Meeting is to discuss the Portage Senior Center and potential for expansion. Mayor Randall then turned the meeting over to City Manager Shaffer. The City Manager began his presentation by discussing three aspects of the city's effort regarding the Portage Senior Center property. He relayed the history of the prior unsuccessful millages based on reliance of citizen funding and lack of definition regarding the amount of money being previously sought. City Manager Shaffer highlighted that the city's current focus for a new Senior Center is now based on the existing membership, goals and usage data. City Manager Shaffer conveyed that a feasibility study had been recently completed by Byce and Associates. The study was accepted by both city senior citizen boards: the Friends of the Portage Senior Center and the Senior Citizens Advisory Board. The City Manager then noted that future planning had been also done by the prior City Administration with regard to property acquisitions on Brown Avenue and Courier Drive, which has set the stage for potential expansion of a new Senior Center. City Manager Shaffer noted that the desired new site is intended to straddle Brown Avenue and East Centre with a new building accessible from both roads. City Manager Shaffer reviewed the floor plans proposed for a new Senior Center, square footage in comparison to the existing building, number of floors, individual rooms and intended uses. The City Manager also reviewed additional local endorsements of the Byce Feasibility Study – a project which is estimated to be about \$5.3 to \$5.4 million.

City Manager Shaffer relayed that consultant and former resident Keith Hopkins (of Hopkins Fundraising Consulting) had conducted twenty-five interviews with local representatives and citizens regarding the concerns with the current Senior Center, as well as their ideas, which have all been outlined by Mr. Hopkins in a fundraising study. City Manager Shaffer mentioned that Mr. Hopkins also found that all the interviewees noted a desire to meet other community needs with a new Senior Center proposal. City Manager Shaffer conveyed that Mr. Hopkins had further asked the twenty-five interviewees what each would be willing to donate towards a new Senior Center proposal and it would roughly total about \$1.5 million. The City Manager confirmed that the August 14, 2018 City Council Meeting is expected to have a contract on the agenda from Mr. Hopkins to begin fundraising efforts. The City Manager then introduced Portage Senior Center Manager Kim Phillips to further discuss the current proposal for a new Senior Center and what the existing participants' membership and day-to-day experiences are with the existing Senior Center.

Ms. Phillips reviewed the current Senior Center status and noted that there is a community awareness issue owing to the obscure location on Currier Drive. Ms. Phillips next reviewed the difference between the current membership totals versus the program participant totals and that in the past few years there has been a dramatic increase. While membership has somewhat increased the number of program participants in the various activities, classes and tours have dramatically increased as of late. Ms. Phillips discussed the current facility's small size, which prevents staff from hosting outside senior-focused groups, meetings and events. Ms. Phillips further commented that the small size and outdated nature of the building are the biggest issues that need to be addressed in a new proposal.

At the request of City Manager Shaffer the chairs of each of the senior boards presented their comments to Council. Bill Wierenga, Chair of the Senior Advisory Board, commented that the entire board was excited about the new proposal, especially with the incoming Baby Boom population. Mr. Wierenga

noted that the new proposal has the full Senior Citizens Advisory Board support. Mr. Wierenga noted that the option to renovate the current site would still experience existing parking issues and a new building/site is definitely needed. Mr. Wierenga also urged City Council to push the project forward and as soon as possible. Bill McCarty, Chair of the Friends of the Portage Senior Center Board, next spoke and he noted that the Friend's Board is also in full support of the current proposal for a new building. Mr. McCarty commented that the Friends Board is of the opinion that the new proposed facility is the best route to choose. Mr. McCarty also conveyed that the Friends of the Senior Center Board donors have recently increased and also support the proposal.

Mayor Randall opened the floor to City Council questions. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson asked Bill McCarty if he'd been working with a funding consultant, to which Mr. McCarty responded no. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson then asked Mr. McCarty what the Friends Board members were thinking in terms of donations. Mr. McCarty responded that the Board has not begun discussing specifics in terms of how much to donate, but that the Council should simply let the Board know when and in what way to help when the city is ready and the Board will be there. Mr. McCarty did comment that in the last six to seven years donations to the Board have doubled. He relayed that the Friends of the Senior Center group is also part of the Kalamazoo Foundation and has a six figure fund that can assist in supporting a new building project, but that a "black and white target" would be needed. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson confirmed that the Friends Board was in fact in support of a new building proposal.

Councilmember Reid then asked City Attorney Brown about the concept of a Portage Senior Center versus a Portage Community Center, how funding via a capital campaign would work legally. Attorney Brown confirmed that the issue should not be a major one, but that he and the City Manager had not previously discussed the topic. Councilmember Reid then asked Ms. Phillips how much the Friends of the Senior Center Board currently fund for programming. Ms. Phillips responded that the Friends of the Senior Center Board contribute twenty percent (20%) of the operating costs. Ms. Phillips confirmed that it is solely operating costs as of right now but that money and funding could be used to help with a new project. Councilmember Reid also asked Ms. Phillips how a staff increase would look with regard to a new building and expanded program base. Ms. Phillips noted that staff had projected eighteen percent (18%) over the current budget but that increased activities and rentals would also increase the Senior Center's revenue to assist in the goal of being self-sufficient. Councilmember Reid inquired with the City Manager about the soft \$1.5 million in pledges plus the City of Portage funding and how the remaining money will be generated. City Manager Shaffer responded that the remaining money outcome depends on the success of the fundraising effort and Councilmember Reid noted that the Hopkins interviews also highlighted a desire for the new Senior Center to be available to the community at-large. The City Manager confirmed the city will need to walk a fine line between focusing on senior needs and demands, as well as focusing on community demands. Councilmember Reid then asked how a hybrid Center would look structurally. City Manager Shaffer noted elements of the design will meet a wide variety of needs; there is a community room anticipated for programming of events, rentals and weddings. City Manager Shaffer further commented that the needs of both groups will be kept in mind as the City Administration takes the next steps in design.

Councilmember Knapp asked how increased programming and rental funding is proposed in terms of balancing the needs, especially as it pertains to approaching donors and marketing. The City Manager relayed that most of the current center's senior programming occurs during the day and the presumption going forward is that the daytime would focus on seniors, whereas evenings could be opened up for outside events or rentals. The City Manager asked Ms. Phillips to confirm the current scheduling - that this was indeed how it was approached and how that could be accommodated going forward.

Councilmember Ford asked how the city would address the existing building. He wanted to know if the current building had been valued and how the City Administration was planning to dispose of it. City Manager Shaffer responded that this aspect had yet to be evaluated but was planning to have the building appraised and evaluated. The method of disposal would be something to come before Council at a later date

when a true final project was being proposed. Councilmember Ford then asked Ms. Phillips about city resident usage and how that is expected to look going forward. Ms. Phillips noted that the trend is expected to maintain, but highlighted that non-members do pay more in membership fees and it ensures that the funding is sufficient for participation. Councilmember Ford asked the City Manager how fundraising is planned for the new project. City Manager Shaffer explained that financing isn't concrete as of yet.

Councilmember Urban asked Ms. Phillips what the current operating cost is. Ms. Phillips responded that it is more or less \$600,000 currently with \$720,000 projected - roughly an eighteen percent (18%) increase. Councilmember Urban stated that the most recent millage request had an optimistic forecast and that he had supported all the millage proposals in the past. Councilmember Urban commented that he feels it is a conflict of interests. The way the city is approaching the new proposal is still not meeting the needs; he noted that the parking in the proposed plan still doesn't have sufficient space. Councilmember Urban also noted the 2008 economic downturn had brought up the issue of whether the Senior Center would be kept open and the Council and City Administration had ultimately chosen to maintain the Senior Center operation as it was decided to be a special and important community need. Councilmember Urban closed by saying he supports the current proposal moving forward but expressed concern for the current stage presented, the amount of money being requested and lack of project definition to take this proposal to the community for support.

Mayor Randall then spoke, relaying that she had attended a meeting with the City Manager and Keith Hopkins to get the project rolling, noting Mr. Hopkins' prior successful fundraising campaigns. Mayor Randall stated she is optimistic that Mr. Hopkins can assist the city in this endeavor and that he will be able to assist in securing well over half, if not all, the money through fundraising and donations. Mayor Randall commented that she is willing to name or designate rooms or buildings or wings if that help will garner more funds for the project. She also relayed that the City Manager, herself and her husband Bob Randall, a retired executive of Zoetis, will be presenting to the Zoetis Philanthropic Board on August 1st to present the new Senior Center project and ask for funding assistance. Mayor Randall mentioned that she has gained a personal insight into the daily operations, as well as struggles, of the Senior Center now that her in-laws have moved to the area and utilize the amenity. She commented that she fully supports the project and mentioned her optimism in light of the recent community support of the funding for the Portage Public Schools bond issues.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson commented that he regularly utilizes the Senior Center through Rotary. He supports continued use of the Senior Center and agrees with Mayor Randall that Portage has a major donor presence in the community and desires to see these major donors contribute within their local community. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson asked the City Manager to confirm the next steps if at least half of the funding can be secured or promised then the City Administration would come back to City Council for the next phase of the project. Or, if half the funding could not be promised or garnered through fundraising, that the City Manager would report back to Council with the information learned by the City Administration and Mr. Hopkins as to what money was out there and available, as well as what the next options would be based on that feedback. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson also inquired regarding the value of the current Portage Senior Center and asked the City Manager to have that response ready at the next Council meeting.

Mayor Randall then opened the floor to the citizens in attendance for comments. First to speak was Dan Kamerman, a non-resident currently from Delton, who noted that he attends the Portage Senior Center due to the great offerings and selections provided, which is what brings outside participants as compared with other Senior Centers. Resident Bob Perkins stated that the senior board will help fundraising efforts with smaller area donors as well. Resident Edie Burch spoke up to voice her support of the Senior Center because it allows for socialization of seniors and other community members, notably with offerings of various clubs. Resident Ann Perkins offered support of the Portage Senior Center clubs and the need for a bigger space for all activities at the Senior Center. Amanda Willer, representative for Kalamazoo County seniors, commented that the current Portage building is old and that the community will continue to have a

significant aging population but commended Portage for being an age friendly community. Ms. Willer stated that the fees for the Portage Senior Center are attractive because they are more accommodating than senior day services fees. Ann Zemlick from the Kalamazoo County Area Agency on Aging also commended Portage because the community has a notable Senior Center for the region and complimented Kim Phillips for both her efforts and the programs she offers. Ms. Zemlick encouraged continued intergovernmental activities to fight the big issue of senior isolation. Jim Hoppe, former Portage resident, continues to use the Portage Senior Center for the various clubs. Mr. Hoppe complained that the current building is obsolete and retrofitting or renovating is not a viable option. Jane Webling voiced her support and desire to continue participation. Dan Burch noted that Kim and staff do a fantastic job with program offerings and that they continue to be flexible in their space accommodations, specifically that the office space for Kim and her staff is too small but they continue to be able to do very much with very little. Mr. Burch also commented that the facility is failing despite the funds input to keep it up. He further stressed the center's important aspect in the community similar to the Portage Public Schools and school athletics programs. Mr. Burch joked that area seniors are just as athletic as the area students and the senior programs are an important feature for the community as a whole. Resident Lyle Schenk inquired about parking and incorporating the review of parking spaces into building reviews going forward. Mr. Schenk also confirmed the high level of outside participation the Portage Senior Center currently experiences. City Manager Shaffer noted that no formal site plan has yet been created but will address parking and site planning in the next steps.

Mayor Randall closed the meeting by reviewing the purpose of the Committee of the Whole meeting and format. She reminded attendees that August 14th will be the next regular meeting of the City Council at which time an expected fundraising contract proposal will be on the agenda and discussion is anticipated for the next phase of the Senior Center project.

Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 6:46 p.m.

Erica L. Eklov, Deputy City Clerk