

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL PRE-MEETING
OF THE PORTAGE CITY COUNCIL
OF MARCH 7, 2016**

Mayor Strazdas called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. The following Councilmembers were present: Councilmember Jim Pearson and Patricia Randall, Mayor Pro Tem Nasim Ansari and Mayor Peter Strazdas. Those not present were: Councilmembers Richard Ford, Claudette Reid and Terry Urban. Also in attendance were City Manager Larry Shaffer and City Clerk James Hudson.

Mayor Strazdas explained that the purpose of the meeting was to hear any questions of Council regarding the Agenda of the Regular City Council Meeting of March 8, 2016, and proceeded with questions from those present.

Councilmember Pearson asked for a background on the hiring process for Item F.5, Director of Human Resources, and City Manager Larry Shaffer indicated that there were two finalists out of seven applicants; that the two applicants were first interviewed by telephone, then by Deputy City Manager Rob Boulis individually, then by both Rob and himself together. He indicated that there was one internal candidate, Robert Sames, but pointed out that Mr. Donald Wood was the best qualified and outlined some of his credentials as found in the March 8, 2016 City Manager Communication found in the Agenda Packet. He also reviewed the credentials of the second candidate who was a female and also very viable, but not as credentialed or experienced as Mr. Wood as she did not have a Master's Degree, nor collective bargaining or negotiation experience. He said he appreciated her energy, enthusiasm and youth and expressed his hope that she could be a Deputy Human Resources Director. He indicated that she had worked her way up at Georgia Pacific and was a fine candidate.

Mayor Pro Tem Ansari asked whether these positions were approved or are we "adding jobs?" In answer to Mayor Pro Tem Ansari, Mr. Shaffer indicated that the hope is to have the same number of jobs as last year; that the savings so far with the change from Benefit Services is \$347,000; and, that two positions are funded, but not filled.

In response to Councilmember Pearson, Mr. Shaffer indicated that the current staff in the Human Resources Department are: Acting Director Robert Sames, Human Resources Generalist Betsy Loebig, Benefits Specialist Stacey Baker and two part time assistants. He indicated that the goal is to have no more than four Human Resources employees, so he mentioned that he might exercise an option to bring one of the part time assistants into the City Manager's Office. In answer to Councilmember Pearson's question of whether a Deputy Director is necessary if there are four full time employees, Mr. Shaffer indicated that he is trying to groom somebody once Don decides to move on, mentioned the female applicant as an example, with a plan to continue to recruit the best people, move them around in order to learn the organization and use their talents for a host of different things.

In response to Councilmember Randal, Mr. Shaffer summed up that at least one other female applied and interviewed with Mr. Boulis, and one internal candidate, Robert Sames, and he offered to research that. Mr. Shaffer expressed his frustration for not being able to increase the diversity level by hiring a female for the position, but said

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he couldn't turn Mr. Wood down owing to his qualifications: he has a Master's Degree instead of just a Bachelor's Degree, and he has the desirable collective bargaining and negotiation experience where the female does not, even though she would grow into the position perfectly.

In response to Councilmember Pearson, Mr. Shaffer said the female applicant is a Portage resident, and that Mr. Boulis did call her to let her know that they had selected someone else, but liked her for the Assistant Director position and asked her to think about it. Mr. Shaffer cited the negotiation of a change in scheduling for the Police Officers to a 12-hour shift and a four-day week instead of five days that has been in place for four months now. He mentioned this as an indication of the importance of a Human Resources Director with negotiation experience and the resultant flexibility and a willingness to accommodate younger officers and their families. He also mentioned that sick time and overtime usage has gone down as side benefits and stressed the importance to employee wellness for city employees. Mayor Strazdas asked that Mr. Shaffer include any more details regarding wellness, workers compensation and negotiation in a written report to City Council.

Councilmember Pearson asked if PowerPoint presentations and other landscape printed documents could be rotated before placing them on Boardsync, and City Clerk James Hudson answered he would make sure staff understands the need.

Councilmember Pearson asked since the millage pays 32% of the patrol and Portage does not get any patrols, does Portage get money coming back with this millage for those patrols, or does portage get short-changed. Mayor Strazdas concurred and both wanted Mr. Shaffer to let Sherriff Fuller know to be ready to provide an answer when he comes to the meeting. Mr. Hudson indicated that the question was asked in the 1990's and the response was Portage gets 51% return on the dollar, but Councilmember Pearson indicated that the public has the impression Portage is getting patrols, but the public doesn't really know what is going on and he sees it as a subsidy being given to the County instead of payment for law enforcement in Portage. Councilmember Pearson asked if Portage can be up front with the County and let them know that Portage is being overtaxed. Mr. Hudson pointed to the defenses cited in the past: that if the alleged perpetrator is caught in the rural areas, then they won't commit crimes on South Westnedge Avenue, and that the Sherriff patrols I-94 and US-131, both of which go through Portage. Councilmember Pearson expressed his satisfaction when they also patrol the lakes, pay for the prosecutor and the courts, but this is all infrastructure that everyone uses.

With regard to G.2, The 2016 Calendar Year City Council Committee Appointments, Councilmember Randall asked if she could remain on the Discover Kalamazoo Board since she has invested a lot of time and energy; and certified herself with her own time and money. She cited a communication from President & CEO Greg Ayers, who said he had received a call from the City regarding alternatives, but wanted her to continue to serve on the Discover Kalamazoo Board. She cited that City Council takes into consideration the opinion of the Chair or President of the Board in question and the attendance record of the Councilmember when making appointment recommendations, and said it is important for City Council to take into consideration the effect of placing people on a Board which is not aligned with the wishes of the Board Chair. She cited her many contributions to this Board, like special projects, serving at

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different levels, relationships she has built and a fine history of service, as reasons to reappoint her.

Mayor Pro Tem Ansari emphasized he has always believed that there should be a rotation of City Councilmembers on outside Boards so a person gets a chance to have the experience, and he recognized that every person does the best that they can when serving on a Board. He cited taking himself off of the Public Media Network Board as an example. Mayor Strazdas offered to go offline with them to discuss this matter further.

In answer to Councilmember Pearson, Mayor Strazdas answered Councilmember Reid agreed to step down from the Council of Governments. Councilmember Pearson noted that City Council School / Library Committee is now a Committee of the Whole instead of two representatives, and Mayor Strazdas indicated that this is because everyone chose this as their number one preference. Councilmember Pearson asked about the complication of having three Boards meeting as a Committee of the Whole. Mayor Strazdas responded that the Committees are policymakers, not implementers; noted that they met this way at their first meeting; and that it is appropriate to do it this way again, brainstorm, then get tactical with a couple of people from each group with the Administrators.

Councilmember Randall indicated that she has been contacted by School Board Members, who would appreciate input from the City on the cite plans for the two campuses, and asked whether the City can provide City tax dollars for these projects. Mayor Strazdas cited the intersection of Mustang Drive and Centre Avenue and his proposal to merge all of the City of Portage Parks with the School District Parks as prior examples where he advocated intergovernmental cooperation with Portage Public Schools.

In answer to Councilmember Pearson, Mayor Strazdas indicated he would call each School Board member to provide his assurances of cooperation and support for their projects.

Councilmember Pearson asked that a copy of the City Manager Communication to Senator Margaret O'Brien and State Representative Brandt Iden about the weakening of Michigan's Historic District be provided to City Council.

ADJOURN: Mayor Strazdas adjourned the meeting at 9:28 a.m.

James Hudson, City Clerk