

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PORTAGE CITY COUNCIL
OF JULY 23, 2020**

City Manager Joseph La Margo welcomed those in attendance including members of City Council, staff and the public. Councilmembers Burns, Knapp, Reid and Urban were present in the audience. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson participated via telephone and Mayor Randall was unable to attend due to a prior commitment.

Deputy City Manager Michael Carroll provided an overview of the agenda for the evening. He explained that there will be many more opportunities for public input and that city staff is planning to ask City Council for permission to proceed with getting engineering proposals. He continued by stating that the process will take time and efforts will be made to keep the public informed of the progress and process.

Kendra Gwin, Director of Transportation and Utilities, reviewed the history of flooding of the Hampton Bog and efforts made to address the situation. She explained the involvement of State of Michigan regulatory agencies and studies that have been undertaken. Ms. Gwin informed the public that the firm "Fishbeck" had completed their work and reviewed the feasibility of the proposed solution.

Deputy City Manager Carroll next reviewed the estimated project cost and likely funding scenario. He explained that those properties benefitting from the project would be most likely to be assessed but that exact amounts would be based on a variety of factors such as lot size, amount of permeable surface, etc. He pointed out that the current project cost estimate is \$1 million but that, with over 600 potential parcels involved, the average assessment would be \$1,667 and this would likely have a payback period of 10 to 20 years. Mr. Carroll explained that everything being discussed is not finalized and emphasized that there will be several more opportunities for public input. City Manager La Margo shared that the city paid \$125,000 over the past year on the temporary pumping and explained that this option is not sustainable.

Ms. Debby Freiman, 3218 Bennington Court, asked several questions. She inquired as to how water levels in the bog responded to a recent heavy rain. Ms. Gwin responded that the bog level rose slightly and Mr. La Margo reminded those in attendance that the pumping permit from the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy dictated when the pump can be activated. Ms. Freiman inquired if any homes in Texas Township discharged into the Hampton Bog. Ms. Gwin and Mr. Carroll explained that this was extensively studied and that all homes discharging into the Hampton Bog are located in Portage. Ms. Freiman inquired if developments at Greenspire were contributing to higher water levels at the Hampton Bog. Mr. Carroll reviewed the process utilized to permit construction in the bog environment and that it is not believed developments at Greenspire Apartments adjacent to Greenspire Bog are contributing to water levels at the Hampton Bog. Mr. Carroll concluded his response by stating that this matter is subject to further study. Next, Ms. Freiman inquired if the proposed solution will take into account changing weather patterns and Mr. Carroll spoke in the affirmative. Finally, Ms. Freiman inquired as to the impact of development on Hampton Bog water levels. Mr. Carroll responded that there is no doubt that past development and the resulting decrease in permeable surfaces have contributed to higher water levels. However, changing weather patterns are also contributing factor.

Mr. Daniel Farrell, 7646 West St. Andrews Circle, commented that he sees Ms. Gwin checking water levels near his home almost daily. He then inquired as to a possible project timeline. Ms. Gwin commented that it may be the end of 2021 before the project is complete. She pointed out that engineering designs must be solicited, permits obtained, easements obtained, etc. She expressed optimism that recent studies on flora and fauna would not need to be repeated as these can take at least a year. Mr. La Margo reiterated the complexity of the process.

Mr. Jim Biba, 7688 West St. Andrews Circle, thanked city staff for bringing the project forward and commented that staff are further along than he anticipated. He inquired if the solution would be automatic or manual in nature. Ms. Gwin shared that it would be manual and explained how it might function. Mr. La Margo commented that the plan is to renew the existing pumping permit until the project is complete.

Councilmember Burns referenced a project in Oshtemo that is generating significant discussion. He inquired how what Portage is proposing is different than what is occurring in Oshtemo. Deputy City Manager Carroll reviewed the assessment process and stated that the City of Portage would pay for construction and would recoup these costs from property owners over a period of 10 to 20 years. He also reviewed the notification requirements of the special assessment process.

Councilmember Burns next inquired as to disclosure requirements for those looking to buy or sell property in the project area. Mr. Carroll explained that the proposed project is a matter of public record. However, he continued, disclosure requirements for buyers and sellers are required once the special assessment process is initiated.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson pointed out that properties on the west side of 12th Street are in Texas Township and not included in the project area. He asked if staff had confirmed that none of these properties contribute water to the Hampton Bog. Mr. Carroll stated that this topic had been examined multiple times. He stated that had these properties contributed to bog water levels, jurisdiction over the flooding situation would be elevated to the County level.

There being no further questions, Mr. La Margo summarized the conversation. He reiterated that this is not the only opportunity for public comment and shared that the city website will be updated with pertinent documents and information.

The meeting concluded at 6:56 p.m.

Adam Herringa, Deputy City Manager