

**MINUTES FROM THE PRE-MEETING
OF THE PORTAGE CITY COUNCIL
OF APRIL 12, 2021**

Mayor Patricia Randall called the virtual meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Councilmembers Chris Burns, Claudette Reid, and Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson also joined virtually. In compliance with Michigan Public Act 228, the Mayor and Councilmembers disclosed their virtual participation from Portage, Michigan. Councilmembers Lori Knapp, Vic Ledbetter, and Terry Urban were absent with excuse. Also in attendance were Deputy City Manager Mike Carroll, Deputy City Manager Adam Herringa, City Manager La Margo, and City Clerk Erica Eklov.

Mayor Randall began by highlighting the Proclamations, requesting Councilmember Ledbetter read the Arbor Day acknowledgment.

With regard to Item A.3, 2021 Utility Rate Study, Mayor Pro Tem Pearson noted similar ten percent rate increases were implemented several years ago to balance funding levels. He inquired whether the current proposed increase was expected to be a one-time increase or repeated in the future. City Manager La Margo responded that the City of Portage rate increase was a result of the corresponding City of Kalamazoo rate increases but he would research and respond regarding the frequency. Councilmember Burns noted the Utility Rate Study Committee (URSC) had received rate forecasts from the City of Kalamazoo projecting a series of increases. He noted that Portage would need to make future funding considerations if those projections happened. Councilmember Reid inquired whether consideration had been given to making the rate increase a gradual or stepped format. She further inquired whether the City of Portage was continuing to receive revenue from Texas Township as previously set up by former City Manager Larry Shaffer. Councilmember Reid also highlighted a data discrepancy on page 10 and the associated list in the 2021 Utility Rate Study document. Councilmember Burns stated he would pass along the City of Kalamazoo rate projections to City Council, which had been provided to him by Transportation and Utilities Director Kendra Gwin during the URSC meeting. Councilmember Reid then inquired whether the URSC had reviewed Portage's senior water utility discount in light of the rate increases and whether the discount should continue. Councilmember Burns responded that the URSC did not discuss the discount and it remains in place. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson inquired whether the Pfizer plant location's utility usage had resulted in an effect on the proposed rates. Councilmember Burns responded that 2020 had proven to be a lower revenue year due to decreased utility usage overall and that the City of Kalamazoo's rate projections had been too low for quite some time and are now catching up to actual usages.

With regard to Item A.4, Bishop's Bog Boardwalk, Councilmember Reid inquired as to what made the project a sole source purchase. She noted that an internet search demonstrated other boardwalk vendors existed. City Manager La Margo stated he would research and respond. Mayor Randall inquired whether staff inspects installation projects after completion to ensure quality, citing current issues with the Eliason Nature Preserve walkway. City Manager La Margo confirmed the performance of post-completion inspections by staff and stated he would further research the Eliason walkway issues and respond. Councilmember Burns expressed concern that the price for the proposed boardwalk seemed high and inquired whether there were cost-effective alternatives, as well as the expected life of the materials. City Manager La Margo stated he would further research and respond.

With regard to Item A.5, Landscape Beds, Councilmember Reid expressed concern with the costs and appearance regarding installation and upkeep of city boulevards. She highlighted

the City Council's increased focus on sustainability and water conservation. Councilmember Reid inquired about the level of required maintenance going forward and associated costs. City Manager La Margo responded that there would be initial irrigation installation and other watering costs but he expected costs to decrease over time. He stressed the location of the boulevards on the entrances of the city and the need to address both city image-building, as well as citizen complaints on the locations. Councilmember Reid asked for the maintenance costs for years two, three, and four for the locations. Mayor Randall echoed Councilmember Reid's concerns and highlighted the condition of the Oakland Drive bikeway median. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson also echoed Councilmember Reid's concerns and request for future maintenance costs. Deputy City Manager Herringa responded that the proposed plantings would all be perennial, native, and deer resistant with minimal effect to the roadways for any irrigation installations. Mayor Randall noted the conflicting information regarding the number of landscape beds in the agenda communication as compared to the City Manager's Weekly Notes. City Manager La Margo stated he would research further and respond.

With regard to Item A.6, Lake Center District Study Committee of the Whole Meeting, Councilmember Reid inquired whether the associated meeting materials would be provided in advance of the meeting. City Manager La Margo confirmed they would. Mayor Randall asked about the scheduled presenters. City Manager La Margo responded that consultant Doug Farr and Development Services Director Kelly Peterson would present along with Councilmember Lori Knapp as part of the Lake Center District sub-committee. Councilmember Reid, Mayor Pro Tem Pearson, and Mayor Randall inquired regarding public broadcast details in light of the virtual format. City Clerk Eklov confirmed the proposed Committee of the Whole Meeting would be broadcast with a public phone line similar to the Regular Meetings.

ADJOURNMENT: Following a summary of the meeting, Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 8:37 a.m.

Erica L. Eklov, City Clerk