

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 8, 2022

Mayor Patricia Randall called the Regular Meeting to order at 07:02 PM in the Council Chambers at Portage City Hall.

ROLL CALL: Councilmembers Lisa Brayton, Chris Burns, Lori Knapp, Vic Ledbetter, Terry Urban, Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson, and Mayor Patricia Randall were present.

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Acting City Manager Adam Herringa, Deputy City Manager Michael Carroll, City Attorney Catherine Kaufman, and City Clerk Erica Eklov.

INVOCATION: At the request of Mayor Randall, the audience observed a moment of silence to reflect on the diversity within the Portage community and endeavor to make it equitable and welcome for all

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Following the moment of silence, the City Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROCLAMATIONS: Councilmember Ledbetter read the Black History Month Proclamation. Councilmember Brayton read the National 211 Day Proclamation. Councilmember Burns read the National Entrepreneurship Week Proclamation.

CONSENT AGENDA: Mayor Randall shared where the public can access the meeting agenda and asked if any Councilmember or anyone in the audience would like an item removed from the Consent Agenda. Motion by Ledbetter, seconded by Burns, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

City Council Meeting Minutes: Motion by Ledbetter, seconded by Burns, to approve the City Council Meeting Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 25, 2022. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Accounts Payable Register: Motion by Ledbetter, seconded by Burns, to approve the Accounts Payable Register of February 8, 2022, as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Proposed Budget Review Schedule: Motion by Ledbetter, seconded by Burns, to establish Tuesday, April 19 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. and Tuesday, May 10 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. as the dates for City Council review of the proposed Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Budget. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Portage Community Senior Center Motor Coach Services Contract: Motion by Ledbetter, seconded by Burns, to approve a one-year contract for the Portage Community Senior Center Travel program motorcoach services in the amount of \$60,837.37 with Cardinal Buses, with the option for two additional years, and authorize the City Manager to execute all documents related to this action on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Portage Police Command Officers Association (PPCOA) Contract: Motion by Ledbetter, seconded by Burns, to approve the Portage Police Command Officers Association Collective Bargaining Agreement for the period of July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2023, and authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to sign the same. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Minutes of Boards and Commissions: Motion by Ledbetter, seconded by Burns, to receive the minutes of the Senior Citizen Advisory Board of December 14, 2021; Planning Commission of December

16, 2021; Human Services Board of January 20, 2022; and Planning Commission of January 20, 2022. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Materials Transmitted: Motion by Ledbetter, seconded by Burns, to receive the Materials Transmitted of January 20 and January 28, 2022. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Calendar of Meetings: Motion by Ledbetter, seconded by Burns, to receive the Calendar of Meetings as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS: Carolyn Pesheck (6745 Shoreham St.) urged the City Council to pass a housing ordinance similar to the City of Kalamazoo, including funding source options for rent. She cited a recent rental issue in Oshtemo Township as an example.

REGULAR BUSINESS AGENDA:

City Assessor Services Contract At the invitation of the Mayor, Acting City Manager Herringa summarized the contract assessing proposal. He stated the department had experienced a turnover of seventeen people since 2015, including the recent departures of the Assessor and Deputy Assessor in the last two months. Mr. Herringa relayed that both the cities of Kalamazoo and Battle Creek utilized the services of WCA Assessing as a contractor with positive results. He further stated the cost to change to a contractual service would be the same, but optimally result in cost-savings. Mr. Herringa closed by noting the City Administration's confidence in the proposal to move to contractual assessing services since both the current staff and the quality of service would be retained. He confirmed former City Assessor Meshia Rose had been contracted to assist the March Board of Review until WCA could start in April.

Aaron Powers, Managing Director of WCA, provided the history of WCA Assessing and its current operations, as well as the firm's current clients. Councilmember Ledbetter confirmed with Mr. Powers that the existing City Assessing staff would be retained. Mayor Randall asked Mr. Powers to explain the state requirements regarding Level 4 assessors and the associated training. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson noted that Portage had explored outsourcing the Assessing Department in prior years, including WCA. Councilmember Burns asked Acting City Manager Herringa to explain how the City Administration selected WCA for the proposal. Mr. Herringa responded that only two other contractual assessing firms existed in Michigan that were either unable to commit to Portage's requirements or too new to fulfill the contract. Councilmember Urban asked Mr. Powers to further explain the nature of contractual assessing. Mr. Powers relayed that outsourcing the field municipally began in Northern Michigan, where it is still widely used and has since spread into southeast and southwest lower Michigan as a more efficient and cost-effective method. He further noted that while pay is marginally better for contracted employees, the growth potential is notably better than in government. Following Councilmember Urban's request, Mr. Powers confirmed he would remain as the main assessor for the City of Portage for the duration of any contract.

Following a notation by Councilmember Burns regarding two corrections to the WCA contract regarding the county name on page one and payment number on page five; motion by Burns, seconded by Pearson, to approve the three-year contract with WCA Assessing with the two noted corrections for City assessing services (in the amount of \$454,030 in Year One, with increases in Years Two and Three as attached), to appoint Aaron Powers as the City Assessor with an effective date of April 1, 2022, and to authorize the Acting City Manager and City Clerk to execute all necessary documents involved. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

City Manager Search Firm Selection: Motion by Brayton, seconded by Pearson, to select Walsh Municipal Services, LLC, to conduct the next City Manager search. Mayor Randall then inquired about

any additional discussion.

Councilmember Urban relayed concerns regarding the scope, ability, and resources of Mr. Walsh's firm as compared with the GovHR firm. He expressed a desire to ensure Portage received full-time attention and quality candidates from a wide-reaching search. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson agreed with Councilmember Urban's points but noted the city had used a national search firm for the prior two City Manager position searches with poor results. The Mayor Pro Tem stated he was impressed by Mr. Walsh's firm and noted the city had an Acting City Manager in the interim should Walsh's search end poorly and need to be re-done. Councilmember Burns stated he had tried unsuccessfully to develop a scoring method to ascertain the best firm as he also had doubts about Mr. Walsh's firm. Mr. Burns stated he had ultimately envisioned himself as a potential candidate and decided Mr. Walsh could best argue the case for Portage. Councilmember Brayton agreed with Mayor Pro Tem Pearson and Councilmember Burns, stating she experiences the best service as a small business owner from her smaller vendors. Councilmember Knapp noted her concerns about Mr. Walsh's firm and expressed a preference for GovHR. She argued the employment marketplace is now quite different as compared with the prior two City Manager searches and believes a more national and full-time search firm can better facilitate a search. Councilmember Knapp stated that the recruitment brochure created by the City Council and City Administration ultimately makes the case for the identity and desires of Portage. (Councilmember Brayton briefly exited from 7:59 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.)

Councilmember Urban agreed with Councilmember Knapp's comments and expressed concerns that Portage would be the first large-scale search for Mr. Walsh. Mayor Randall expressed appreciation for Mr. Walsh's preparation, cost, and contract guarantees. She stated she had received several outside recommendations for his firm. Mayor Randall noted that GovHR was performing the searches for both the Kalamazoo and Ottawa County Administrator positions and she expressed concern that GovHR could route the remaining candidates from those searches to Portage's position. She stated her desire to get a candidate specifically excited about Portage.

Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 2 with Councilmembers Knapp and Urban voting no.

Following an inquiry by Councilmember Urban to the City Attorney, a subsequent motion was made regarding further action. Motion by Urban, seconded by Burns, to authorize the Acting City Manager to execute all documents related to the selection of Walsh and Associates as the City Manager Search Firm on behalf of the city. Upon roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Councilmember Knapp provided a report regarding the Portage Community Center Board of Directors. She relayed an update on the outcome of the Portage Community Center's Holiday Programs, as well as the current positive fundraising efforts. Councilmember Knapp closed with a reminder about the Community Center's May 9th Golf Outing Fundraiser.

Motion by Burns, seconded by Ledbetter, to receive the Council Committee Reports as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS: Dan Corradini (621 Ludington) spoke as a contracted employee of the city's water and sewer division. He offered support for outsourcing the Assessing Department, noting the outsourcing to Suez Water was a successful arrangement.

STATEMENTS OF CITY COUNCIL AND CITY MANAGER:

Councilmember Urban stated he looks forward to working with Mr. Walsh and expressed a desire to spend due effort on the process.

Councilmember Ledbetter thanked city staff, the community, and Shoshana Johnson for the

overwhelming turnout at the February 5th Black History Month event. He also thanked former Black Councilmembers Dr. Romeo Phillips and Larry DeShazor for serving before him. Councilmember Ledbetter then thanked Dr. Monifa Jumanne for her efforts in starting the original Black History Month event and towards equality. Mr. Ledbetter closed with a recognition of a historical black inventor named Lewis Howard Latimer for creating the current carbon filament used in lightbulbs.

Councilmember Knapp also relayed positive comments regarding the February 5th Black History Month event.

Councilmember Brayton acknowledged February as Black History Month and those local Black figures in the Portage organization, including Sergeant Jermaine Bryant and Councilmember Ledbetter. She closed with a recognition of Valentine's Day.

Councilmember Burns highlighted Item A.5 from the Consent Agenda regarding the Portage Police Command Officers Association agreement. He encouraged the City Administration to research the provision of financial awareness meetings for public safety staff to avoid burnout with extra shifts for additional income.

Acting City Manager Herringa began by recognizing city snowplow drivers for their efforts during the prior week's snowstorm. He then complimented the city on its events on February 5th, including the Youth Advisory Committee's Snow Party and the Black History Month event.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson thanked fellow Councilmembers for their service and presence at recent City Council meetings and events.

Mayor Randall spoke of the various homeowner grants provided by Consumers Energy for sustainability improvements. She then acknowledged a recent phone call with the Portage's state officials delegation to discuss current legislation concerns. Mayor Randall closed by extending thanks, first to the staff for their efforts with snow plowing and the Black History Month event, as well as the City Council for the evening's input and dialogue.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 08:39 PM.

Erica L. Eklov, City Clerk