

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES FROM JUNE 6, 2023

Mayor Patricia Randall called the Regular Meeting to order at 07:00 PM in the Council Chambers at Portage City Hall.

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

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Pat McGinnis, Chief Operating Officer Adam Herringa, Chief Development Officer Peter Dame, City Attorney Catherine Kaufman, and City Clerk Erica Eklov.

At the request of Mayor Randall, the audience observed a moment of silence to reflect on ensuring the City of Portage that all citizens love continues to thrive. Following the moment of silence, the City Council, alongside six students from the Michigan Youth Challenge Academy Student Council, recited the Pledge of Allegiance. At the invitation of Mayor Randall, program coordinator Gerald Myer introduced the students present and the program.

PROCLAMATIONS:

Juneteenth 2023: Councilmember Ledbetter read the proclamation, noting the upcoming Kalamazoo area Juneteenth celebration begins June 16 through June 19.

Delta Theta Sigma Sorority 50th Anniversary: Chapter President Tracy Morton, alongside Ms. Stacey Ledbetter, read the proclamation.

Women Veterans Recognition Day: Portage citizen and Air Force Veteran, Karen Williams, read the proclamation. Following the reading, Mayor Pro Tem Pearson noted the service of his wife as a Vietnam veteran

Pride Month: Portage citizen Willow Anderson read the proclamation and provided several LGBTQ+ outreach resources.

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 Knapp, seconded by Burns, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Approval of Minutes: Motion by Knapp, seconded by Burns, to approve the City Council Meeting Minutes of the Board & Commission Interview Session of May 23, 2023, and Regular Meeting of May 23, 2023. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Accounts Payable Register: Motion by Knapp, seconded by Burns, to approve the Accounts Payable Register of June 6, 2023 as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Spring Mill & Fill Contract: Motion by Knapp, seconded by Burns, to award a contract in the amount of \$1,365,566.40 to Michigan Paving & Materials Company, for spring mill and fill asphalt repairs to sections of major and local streets, 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.

Chip-Sealing Asphalt Contract: Motion by Knapp, seconded by Burns, to award a contract in the amount of \$319,315.25 to Pavement Maintenance Systems for chip-sealing asphalt repairs to

major streets 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.

Minutes of Boards & Commissions: Motion by Knapp, seconded by Burns, to receive the Minutes of the Planning Commission of April 20, 2023; Brownfield Redevelopment Authority of July 11, 2022; and Planning Commission of May 18, 2023. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

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

REGULAR BUSINESS AGENDA:

Development Project Task Forces: Mayor Randall introduced the item, including the background on the two subject developments, as well as recent citizen contacts and online discussion. She relayed the entire Council's concerns and the resulting request to the City Administration to compile a proposal for a task force to further review the proposed developments while pausing any further activity. Mayor Randall then explained the administrative activity thus far on the two developments in the Stanley/Woodbine area, as well as the East Shore Drive location. She closed with a request that the City Council support the task force proposal.

Councilmember Urban stated this meeting was the first time he had heard of pausing the projects and noted that while one project was a city project, the other was a private development on private property, and it could be improper for the Council to intervene. He then asked for an opinion from the City Attorney on pausing a private development. City Attorney Kaufman responded that the city's project could be paused, but she was unsure of the submission status of the private development. She further stated that administrative review should occur in a timely manner unless the applicant was amenable to pausing the process. At the invitation of the Mayor, City Manager McGinnis provided the status of the private development project submission for an East Shore Drive location.

Councilmember Urban noted the various steps for rezoning requests and associated timelines. Councilmember Knapp noted a task force remained a possibility. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson expressed his position as to why the proposed task force would be beneficial and further explained the city review process with the various roles entailed.

Motion by Knapp, seconded by Pearson, to direct the City Manager to create a Task Force to share information and increase community engagement on proposed developments in the Lake Center District. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS:

1. Alan Loveridge (23965 88th Avenue, Marcellus) spoke regarding the creation of an online election candidate advertisement platform.
2. Dara Konewko (11097 Sprinkle Road, Brady Township) spoke regarding speeding concerns on Sprinkle Road in relation to the newly proposed developments that could increase traffic. She further relayed concerns regarding wetland destruction and the negative impact on Austin Lake, as well as the surrounding wildlife. She closed with concerns about the potential impact on future generations.
3. Victor Campbell (9942 East Shore Drive) expressed concern about increasing development near Austin Lake and its negative effects. He further expressed issues with affordability for long-term residents on the lake.
4. Derek Heath (2430 Woodbine Avenue) encouraged additional research regarding the proposed developments for potential environmental and traffic effects. He expressed concerns about

current traffic speeds in the area and safety concerns. He asked about the potential for increased police presence with the proposed additional developments. He noted the issues with traffic on Portage Road for daily commuters and offered his service as a citizen on the task force for the Woodbine area.

5. Mary Wielopolski (8836 East Shore Drive) explained that she attended the most recent Planning Commission meeting where similar citizen concerns had been expressed and the Commissioners stated an unawareness of the developments at hand. She relayed several concerns regarding the Planning Commission's discussion about changing ordinances and policies to better allow for development. She expressed concerns about recommendations to shorten the city's review and approval process.
6. Denise Sokolowski (2409 Bayside Avenue) had concerns and questions with regard to the developments and how this came about. She expressed concerns about the Stanley Avenue project site formerly belonging to a member of Councilmember Burns' family.
7. Patrick Duggan (1810 Forest Drive) noted he was the liaison for the West Lake Improvement Association and asked that his association also have a position on the new task force.,
8. Ken Norris (9246 East Shore Drive) had a concern with the makeup of the task force and the transmittal of information in order to ask the best questions. He encouraged extending the tenure of the task force for the entire duration of the project's development. He also expressed concern about the two-week timeframe being too short and asked for the rationale. Mayor Randall responded to Mr. Norris' questions regarding the function, plans, and timeframe for the new task force.
9. John Dilworth (4616 Foxfire Trail) expressed concern about a recent *Portager* article regarding affordable housing, its relation to disabled citizens, and the related posting on the website about the workforce housing income parameters. He relayed that, as the previous CEO of the Kalamazoo area Goodwill Industries, the noted affordable housing income parameters did not meet the needs of low-income members of the disabled community.
10. Evan Elliott (2803 East Shore Drive) relayed that he was approached by the developer about the Austin Landings project. Mr. Elliot stated he subsequently acquired the plan documents from the City of Kalamazoo.
11. Mary Deneau (2504 Woodbine Avenue) relayed that she lives across from lake owners that host parties during the holidays and weekends. She provided personal experience with someone driving their truck and boat trailer into her yard to avoid traffic. She asked for speed bumps along Woodbine Avenue, as well as Stanley Avenue, to slow traffic and improve safety in that area. She further expressed concerns about the negative effects on the wildlife around her property.
12. Joe Kuchenbach (2728 East Shore Drive) thanked the residents for the turnout, noting it was an emotional issue, and asked the City Council to take such emotions into consideration. He encouraged the Council to learn more about public walkways. He expressed concerns about the increased density and commuter traffic, especially around the Portage Public Schools bus garage.
13. Zak Mendahm (2151 Stanley Avenue) expressed concern about the fire department's ability to meet the increased needs of the new developments.
14. Tammy Leffingwell (1806 Lansing Avenue) stated she was on the Board of Directors of Twelve Baskets Food Pantry and relayed that the organization currently serves over three hundred households and the development would increase that amount.
15. Richard Peltier (3322 East Shore Drive) expressed concerns about the impact of the new developments on the quality of life in the city.
16. Samantha Myers (527 East Division, Vicksburg) noted she was a childhood resident of Portage and expressed concerns about increased development in the city despite the "Natural Place to

Move" slogan. She relayed prior issues with speeding in the area, as well as negative effects on wildlife and pets.

Mayor Randall thanked the citizens for attending and providing their comments, noting that the new task force should be utilized to start answering such questions and concerns. She then noted the citizen's request to add members of the West Lake area to the task force and asked the Councilmembers for feedback. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson noted that West Lake also has lake access points and rights-of-way requiring attention, like Austin Lake, and supported Mr. Duggan's recommendation.

Motion by Brayton, seconded by Pearson, to increase the Lake Center District task force by one to include a representative from West Lake. Councilmember Urban inquired whether the addition should include one or two West Lake representatives. Mayor Randall posed the question to Councilmember Ledbetter as the Council liaison appointed to the task force, to which he voiced support for two West Lake representatives. Councilmember Brayton amended her motion to increase the Lake Center District task force to include two representatives from West Lake. Councilmember Urban supported the amended motion. Upon a roll call vote, motion passed 7 to 0.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS: None.

STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS:

1. Faith Akert (9702 East Shore Drive) expressed concern that the Austin Lake sailing club members and fellow lake residents did not receive appropriate notification regarding the chemical weed treatment that had occurred earlier that day.
2. Dave Stiemsma (9542 East Shore Drive) noted he was also a member of the sailing club and also expressed concern about the lack of notification of lake weed chemical treatment and posted areas. The Mayor asked the City Manager to review the matter and respond to the citizens the following day.

STATEMENTS OF CITY COUNCIL AND CITY MANAGER: Councilmember Urban discussed his recent dog park visits, including several Austin Lake residents expressing conflicting information. He encouraged citizens to seek accurate information and relayed that the Task Force will aid in this measure. He further relayed that the proposal which ultimately comes before the City Council may look completely different from the present application.

Councilmember Ledbetter spoke regarding his appointment to the new task force, and his desire to take the citizen concerns to the subject-matter experts to achieve the best outcome for all involved. He provided a final reminder regarding the upcoming Juneteenth events from June 16-19.

Councilmember Knapp also spoke regarding the task force, as well as the effectiveness of the evening's meeting and moving forward. She closed with a recognition of the two high school graduating classes.

Councilmember Brayton spoke regarding the meeting's turnout and the inclusion of West Lake in the Task Force. She then recognized the Pride Month proclamation and its personal importance. Councilmember Brayton then relayed her participation in a virtual Apex Police Training, the recent Union Bank ribbon-cutting on East Centre Avenue in one of the city's historic properties, the new Haverhill Elementary groundbreaking ceremony, and the Memorial Day Parade and Veteran's Park event. She closed with a recognition of the new "Hometown Heroes" banners displayed in Liberty Park.

Councilmember Burns thanked the citizens who attended the meeting, with the requested addition of representatives from West Lake. He then recognized the high school graduating classes,

including the Presidential Scholar recipient.

City Manager McGinnis spoke regarding the first Summer Concert at the Overlander Bandshell on June 8, as well as the Scalin' Up for Summer event on June 10.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson also spoke regarding the evening's meeting, noting the West Lake Improvement Association board members in attendance. He then highlighted the Memorial Day parade and Veteran's recognition event. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson closed by thanking the staff for their efforts with the Hometown Heroes veteran banners at Liberty Park.

Mayor Randall began by speaking regarding the creation of the new task force and its goals. She then noted attending the recent groundbreaking ceremonies for the new Haverhill and Central Elementaries alongside the Portage School Board. Mayor Randall also provided an update regarding the sculptures for the new Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. park with the hope of delivery in time for Juneteenth. She then acknowledged the Memorial Day Veterans Park ceremony, as well as the attendance of Representative Bill Huizinga.

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

Erica L. Eklov, City Clerk