

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WORK SESSION
AUGUST 8, 2023**

Mayor Patricia Randall called the Committee of the Whole Meeting to order at 05:02 PM in the Council Chambers at Portage City Hall.

ROLL CALL: Councilmembers Lisa Brayton, Chris Burns, Lori Knapp (5:03 p.m.), 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, Parks and Recreation Director Kathleen Hoyle, Recreation Program Manager Annie Pryor, Farmer's Market Manager Hannah Martin, and City Clerk Erica Eklov.

DISCUSSION ON THE FARMERS MARKET: Mayor Randall introduced the meeting and had City Manager McGinnis provide a summary for the meeting. He introduced Recreation Program Manager Annie Pryor and Farmer's Market Manager Hannah Martin, who began the presentation regarding the recent Farmer's Market survey. Ms. Martin explained the different forms of surveys utilized, including on-site dot surveys, paper surveys, and an online Survey Monkey portal. She relayed that staff had compiled all market survey responses into the following presentation.

She noted a small calculation error in the location survey, stating it should be 95 out of 145 votes (66 percent). Mayor Pro Tem Pearson asked about the product options definition. Mayor Randall asked about food vendors and food truck meaning. Ms. Martin responded to both.

Mayor Randall then asked about market types. Director Hoyle responded it was ultimately up to the City Council and staff. During the discussion regarding buildings, Mayor Pro Tem Pearson asked how many farmer's market buildings in the county are enclosed. Ms. Pryor and Ms. Martin were unsure of the county statistics but cited similar locations around the state, including Traverse City, Muskegon, and Ann Arbor. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson asked staff to research the attendance at these locations during the winter months. Councilmember Knapp asked whether there was increased complexity or cost to vendors with enclosed spaces. Ms. Pryor responded that the city's existing Holiday Market provided a bit of insight, noting that folding table set-up is an added aspect but, as a former vendor herself, that bigger entry doors allowed for ample set-up and would not create additional costs.

Ms. Martin then discussed the local market options in the community, beginning with the City of Kalamazoo and its current and future plans, as well as the Texas Township Market. She stated that the Portage market currently falls in the middle of the two existing markets, especially featuring live music. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson asked for additional details regarding the enclosure plans and designs for the Kalamazoo Farmer's Market. Ms. Pryor and Director Hoyle responded.

Mayor Randall asked about potential conflicts with produce offerings and local grocers, including somewhat limited options for Michigan produce in the winter season. Councilmember Ledbetter asked how the weather affected market vendor and citizen participation. Ms. Martin responded with statistics from the Portage market thus far this season.

Ms. Martin then closed with the current situation of the Portage market and the readiness to take the next steps. She noted some vendors travel far distances to participate and has asked at least one as to why. The vendor highlighted the support from the city as a welcome aspect. Ms. Martin summarized the findings of the survey. Ms. Pryor closed the presentation with an announcement of receipt of a \$1.75 million grant from the State of Michigan.

Councilmember Brayton announced that she had several petitions she desired to be included in the meeting record regarding citizens' desire to locate the Farmer's Market in the quadrant 4 location, specifically at the Portage and Zylman Road intersection. Mayor Randall also noted a citizen's email she had received which asked the city to consider locating the Market at the newly closed Schram's Greenhouse along South Westnedge Avenue. She then asked City Manager McGinnis for the City Administration's desired goal of the meeting today. City Manager McGinnis responded.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson asked which quadrant Schram's Greenhouse is located. City Manager McGinnis responded that it was likely part of the City Centre quadrant but questioned the \$3.6 million asking price. Councilmember Brayton inquired about the location survey and the manner in which it was conducted. Ms. Martin responded that she was unable to fulfill the project with her other market duties but noted several staff members in the City Manager's Office assisted by conducting the on-site surveys. Chief Operating Officer (COO) Herringa responded that he was the staff member to conduct that survey on one particular Sunday. Councilmember Brayton asked about surveying citizens with information regarding additional aspects of costs.

Councilmember Knapp asked about the Zylman Avenue location conflicts from the prior Committee of the Whole meeting, asking for confirmation of a proposed land swap provision with the developer of adjacent land at that location who had recently withdrawn a related development application for Austin Landings. There was additional discussion regarding conflicting electric transmission lines for the noted parcel.

Councilmember Urban highlighted the current Department of Public Works (DPW) location in the City Centre, as well as the South Westnedge Park options with existing facilities to utilize. Councilmember Knapp questioned the order of the Council's approach, including its desired amenities, citing the survey results favoring the City Centre. She asked the Council to alter its approach to first focus on amenities. Councilmember Brayton acknowledged the additional citizen responses included in her petitions, separate from the survey.

Mayor Randall spoke regarding the Portage Zhang Senior Center (PZSC) location options and potential collaborations. She echoed Councilmember Knapp in outlining amenities and costs. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson noted the previously-suggested Portage District Library location would have ADA issues with tiered levels, as Councilmember Brayton had highlighted, and would have related expenses. He echoed a desire for the DPW site with its potential for large buildings, permitting interior market possibilities. He closed by mentioning the PZSC location and utilizing the interior main hall during the winter months and ample parking options with the existing lots and the addition of Brown Avenue. Councilmember Ledbetter expressed an interest in the partially enclosed design and liked the City Centre/quadrant five location. Councilmember Knapp supported a partially enclosed design, especially for rain, but favored a less built-up, more traditional market within the City Centre as a way of building a sense of community. She agreed to tie in the PZSC with the market at some point.

Councilmember Burns began by thanking the staff for increasing attendance at the current market. He noted his focus on funding and the need for parking spaces, especially should the market become more popular. He disagreed with Councilmember Knapp regarding the need for food trucks, citing the citizen survey response favoring food trucks, and recommended aiming for the desired model instead of a patchwork approach. He also expressed a recollection of potential parking issues with the PZSC from the prior meeting. Councilmember Brayton echoed Councilmember Burns's comment to create a design or space that follows the survey responses, as well as Mayor Randall's statement in making the most of what the city owns to reduce costs. She agreed with partially enclosed for instances of inclement weather, citing the 100-year-old market in Cleveland. She agreed with Councilmember Burns regarding planning for future attendance parking and safety. Councilmember Knapp asked for clarification of her comments regarding food trucks and Councilmember Burns responded.

Councilmember Urban asked whether staff had an idea of the site size needed for Portage,

citing the size of the City of Kalamazoo and Texas Township markets. Director Hoyle responded. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson asked staff to estimate the number of parking spaces at the PZSC and compare. He then noted his favor for the Vicksburg Farmer's Market, where the vendor trucks are able to back vehicles into their market stalls, allowing for storage as well as partial enclosure. Director Hoyle confirmed that several vendors with refrigerated trucks currently desire this setup. Councilmember Urban asked whether the initial PZSC design from the prior Committee of the Whole meeting allowed for back-in options. COO Herringa responded that the installation of electricity in the parking lot was part of the existing construction but did not allow for backing in. Councilmember Burns noted the attendance of PZSC Director Phillips and asked for her opinion on interior marketing in light of their current program. Director Phillips responded that a market at the site would be complimentary, noting that the PZSC does not open on Sundays until 2 pm and such a collaboration would likely encourage attendance by seniors.

City Manager McGinnis noted that the upcoming Market could utilize drone footage for traffic/visitor monitoring. Councilmember Burns asked for the specifications on the other two sites Councilmember Urban mentioned, including parking, capacity, and parking. He also asked if it would interfere with any existing programming.

Councilmember Ledbetter noted the site adjacent to the Crossroads Mall with Blaine's Farm and Fleet that could offer potential. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson said such a location would depend on the price asked for, as it is a commercial lot.

PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS: Andrea Stork (1515 Dogwood Drive) asked if the city was limited to Sundays, and asked about traffic issues.

Mayor Randall asked staff to respond to Ms. Stork's questions. Director Hoyle responded that Sunday had been chosen by staff to avoid scheduling conflicts with other markets and utilizing the same vendors. She further responded to the traffic concern. There were no additional citizen comments.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION (& NEXT STEPS): Mayor Randall began summarizing the next steps, noting the Council desired the current Senior Center with adjacent land; the current DPW location; or South Westnedge Park with partially enclosed designs.

Councilmember Burns inquired about the adjacent property owner for the Zylman Road location and whether he remained amenable to the prior land offer to keep that location viable or if the agreement was null, and then what could the city do with the existing city land.

Ms. Stork asked about the status of the former D&W plaza on Romence Road and whether that was private property as well. Mayor Randall responded, noting the owner is experiencing tenant issues and several additional hurdles with the location of the city.

There was additional discussion regarding Councilmember Ledbetter's suggested Crossroads Mall location and associated issues, with a consensus to avoid pursuing it.

Councilmember Urban asked about undeveloped city land in the upper west portion of South Westnedge Park, as well as additional city land behind the Portage Public Safety location. City Manager McGinnis emphasized the need for a visible location for both impulse shoppers and to meet the desire of the vendors.

Councilmember Burns suggested a potential collaboration with the Portage Community Center (PCC). Mayor Randall noted Councilmember Knapp was the current City Council liaison on the PCC Board. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson noted the location was closed on Sundays. Director Hoyle noted the city had existing agreements with the PCC for parking and indemnification agreements. COO Herringa asked Mayor Randall for clarification regarding City Council inquiries requiring responses, including Councilmember Brayton asking about viable buildings at the Schram's Greenhouse location.

There was additional discussion regarding the DPW location. Councilmember Urban noted the potential for a 5-year development timeline. Councilmember Urban also expressed concern about the Schram's site due to usable wetlands and removing the property from private redevelopment along the South Westnedge corridor.

City Manager McGinnis outlined the anticipated next steps for staff, including hiring a design consultant with expertise specializing in markets. Councilmember Knapp asked which site a consultant would pursue. City Manager McGinnis responded, including financing options and costs.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 06:27 PM.

Erica L. Eklov, City Clerk