

INTERVIEWS OF BOARDS & COMMISSIONS MEETING MINUTES FROM OCTOBER 8, 2024

Mayor Patricia Randall called the Special Meeting to order at 04:31 PM in Conference Room #1 at Portage City Hall.

ROLL CALL: Councilmembers Chris Burns, Victor Ledbetter, Nicole Miller, Terry Urban, Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson, and Mayor Patricia Randall were present. Councilmember Young arrived at 4:42 p.m.

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Pat McGinnis, Records & City Council Coordinator Aaron Thiel, and City Clerk Erica Eklov.

ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD: From 4:31 p.m. to 4:44 p.m. the Council interviewed returning member Martin Atherton and applicant Clair Pelak. The Mayor had Clerk Eklov review the meeting time and board oversight. Mayor Randall asked Mr. Atherton whether he would be interested in continuing to serve. He stated he would, while also expressing interest in the Senior Citizens Advisory Board. Councilmember Urban noted how interest in serving on a city board could expand to other platforms. Councilmember Burns asked the Clerk about Senior Citizens Advisory Board applicant Dan Gabriel. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson and Councilmember Burns asked Ms. Pelak about her interests. Mayor Randall asked Mr. Atherton if there was anything the Council could do to support the Environmental Board.

HUMAN SERVICES BOARD: From 4:44 p.m. to 4:58 p.m. the Council interviewed Nicole Najar. At the request of Mayor Randall, Councilmember Young highlighted the Board's meeting times and areas of oversight as a former Human Services Board member. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson asked Ms. Najar where from the Los Angeles area she had worked, noting his former residence in the location, and her area of focus while there.

Mayor Randall inquired about housing support avenues with the City of Portage. Councilmember Young responded, highlighting Community Development Block Grant funding and Councilmember Burns noted the non-profits that focus on housing that are supported with Human Services Board/city grant funding. Councilmember Burns and Mayor Pro Tem Pearson discussed potential non-profit organizations with Ms. Najar. Mayor Randall reviewed the slate of applicants and appointees.

LOCAL OFFICERS COMPENSATION COMMISSION: Beginning at 4:58 p.m., it was determined that returning member Michael Quinn was not present; however, Mayor Randall relayed Mr. Quinn's current busy family life and reached out to him by phone to confirm his interest. There was additional discussion and requests for clarification regarding the current Commission membership, attendance records, and length of service. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson encouraged seeking potential applicants with a background in public service. City Manager McGinnis noted current city practice. Discussion followed regarding future potential applicants.

PARK BOARD: From 5:15 p.m. to 5:28 p.m. the Council interviewed returning members Timothy Young, Dawn Smith, and Jennifer Gomes. Mayor Randall encouraged the members to recruit as able, noting the remaining vacancy. Mr. Young asked the members of Council that they continue to listen, understanding the thoughts presented have come from lengthy discussions. Ms. Gomes encouraged the Council to attend Parks' events.

Councilmember Young asked the members to explain their interests outside the Parks Board, starting with Ms. Smith. Ms. Smith stated she would likely serve on other boards, notably the Human Services Board with her experience as a nurse and continue to volunteer as part of the community.

Ms. Gomes relayed interest in environmental aspects have her looking towards the Environmental Board and that she works elections in Kalamazoo. Mr. Young also expressed an interest in the Environmental Board.

Mayor Randall asked how the board handles negative feedback on city parks, notably Lakeview Park with the boardwalk construction along the channel. Ms. Gomes stated they've had good opportunities for community feedback with on-site park picnics, as well as Austin Lake Trail expansion public meetings. She stated that listening has proven helpful, stressing how passionate the board members, as well as Councilmembers are about the city. Ms. Smith said she's had at least one concerned citizen who was found to have received bad information that she was able to correct. Ms. Gomes noted that the public attends on occasion but noted pickleball and disc golf requests continue to be received.

SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD: From 5:28 p.m. to 5:39 p.m. the Council interviewed returning member Shirley Wahmhoff. Mayor Randall asked Ms. Wahmhoff to relay the current needs of the Board. Ms. Wahmhoff noted her efforts as a new member to find how best to contribute as a volunteer. Councilmember Urban expressed concern to staff regarding the roster presented. Clerk Eklov stated staff would review and improve for subsequent interview packets.

BOARD AND COMMISSIONS APPOINTMENTS DISCUSSION: Subsequent to the interviews, Clerk Eklov reviewed the appointments and re-appointments to the various boards. Following contact with the Mayor, it was determined that Michael Quinn should be reappointed to the Local Officers Compensation Commission. Councilmember Ledbetter supported the reappointment of John Lobo to the Senior Citizens Advisory Board based on his attendance record, which was followed by discussion regarding the appointment of applicant Dan Gabriel based upon his current volunteer service at the Senior Center, as well as the Director's recommendation.

STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS: None.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 05:44 PM.

Erica L. Eklov, City Clerk