

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 6, 2024

Mayor Patricia Randall called the Regular Meeting to order at 06:00 PM in the Council Chambers 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.

ABSENT: Councilmember Jihan Young.

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 the process of democracy and moving forward as a country following the election. Following the moment of silence, the City Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROCLAMATIONS:

Portage Tricked Out Home Contest Winners: Mayor Randall began by introducing the recent Portage Tricked Out Home Contest for the month of October and the Halloween holiday. City Manager McGinnis announced the winners of the contest, stating that first place was Dustin and Dusty Morton of "Morton Manor" at 5816 Iowa Avenue; second place was Brad and Gwen Matthews at 408 Marigold Street, and third place was Stephen and Autumn Rochholz at 416 Marigold Avenue. City Manager McGinnis closed by noting the honorable mentions at 2328 Kalarama, 5807 Copperleaf, 2328 Kalarama, 5807 Copperleaf, 7860 Harvest Lane, and 8116 Lover's Lane.

PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS:

1. Alan Loveridge (23965 88th Avenue, Marcellus) discussed solar power and tree planting options.
2. Terry Tessari (6047 Marlow Street) relayed comments regarding traffic control measures.
3. Jason Summerfield (1418 Drayton Court) expressed concerns about the proposed McConley Cove development, stating the location is unsuitable for additional traffic and development, as well as ample trees that should not be cut. Mayor Randall noted the public hearing on the matter later in the evening.
4. Troy Thrash (6321 High Pointe Circle) spoke as CEO of the Air Zoo regarding Discover Kalamazoo-sponsored area sports complex project and the proposal's location on the Air Zoo property. He asked the City Council to consider an estimated influx of 595,000 visitors and its impact on the local economy, particularly the surrounding Portage Road area.

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

Approval of Minutes: Motion by Burns, seconded by Miller, to approve the City Council Meeting Minutes of the Regular Meeting of October 22, 2024. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Accounts Payable Register: Motion by Burns, seconded by Miller, to approve the Accounts Payable Register of November 6, 2024, as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Health Insurance Contract Renewals: Motion by Burns, seconded by Miller, to approve a one-year contract with Blue Care Network at an estimated cost of \$2,682,962, for employee health insurance; maintain current employer/employee cost-sharing practices by taking action to exempt the city from requirements of P.A. 152 for the 2025 medical benefits plan year, 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.

Delta Dental Plan of Michigan Insurance: Motion by Burns, seconded by Miller, to approve a one-year contract with Delta Dental Plan of Michigan for the period of January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025, with the option of an additional renewal for a period of up to two 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.

Retention of Special Counsel: Motion by Burns, seconded by Miller, to approve the retention of Attorney Timothy J. Orlebeke of Orlebeke, Mackraz PC as special legal counsel per Section 6.6 of the City Charter 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.

Lake Center Commercial Corridor Mixed-Use Zoning Districts: Motion by Burns, seconded by Miller, to receive Rezoning Ordinance #24/25-3 to create new mixed-use zoning districts with development standards for the Lake Center Commercial Corridor on Portage Road and set a public hearing for December 3, 2024. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

2025 City Council Meeting Schedule: Motion by Burns, seconded by Miller, to approve the 2025 schedule of regular City Council meetings. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Resolution to Correct the Austin Lake Invasive Weed Management Program Special Assessment District: Motion by Burns, seconded by Miller, to adopt the Resolution to correct the Austin Lake Invasive Weed Management Program Special Assessment District. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Committee of the Whole Meeting - Legal Services: Motion by Burns, seconded by Miller, to set a Committee of Whole Meeting on November 19, 2024, at 4:30 p.m. to review and discuss options related to the provision of legal services. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

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

Minutes of Boards & Commissions: Motion by Burns, seconded by Miller, to receive the minutes of the Zoning Board of Appeals from September 9, 2024; Environmental Board of September 11, 2024; Planning Commission of September 19, 2024; and Brownfield Redevelopment Authority of September 19, 2024. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

PD Tentative Plan Amendment and Preliminary Condominium Plan for McConley Cove Planned Development at 1075 Bacon Avenue: At the invitation of the Mayor, City Manager McGinnis, and Chief Development Officer (CDO) Pete Dame summarized the proposed development. CDO Dame provided a presentation regarding the project's details.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson asked CDO Dame to respond to the earlier citizen concerns regarding additional traffic and relay any traffic data determined by the City Administration, as well as housing unit thresholds. CDO Dame responded that the scale of the development did not necessitate a traffic study. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson inquired when a traffic study would be required. CDO Dame responded that staff determine if a traffic impact study is required, and that staff had determined it was unnecessary.

Councilmember Burns asked about the City Council's prior approval for 40 units for the subject site if the Council rejected the updated plan. CDO Dame responded that the current proposal is intended to replace the original and noted a required construction launch timeline, and that the developer has made clear the initial plan is economically untenable. Councilmember Burns stated McConley Cove appears to fit with the surrounding neighborhood but asked about comments made on unfinished housing developments in the city. CDO Dame responded, noting several projects had been approved but had not been started, while several others are continuing construction with the demand for housing and the developers meeting the economics. Councilmember Burns concurred in modifying city policy to conform to market conditions and public factors.

Mayor Randall invited the project's developer, Joe Gesmundo from American Village Builders (AVB), to comment on the project and asked about the number of units proposed for the site. Mr. Gesmundo responded, stating that market analytics, zoning, and community cohesion determined the number of units. He also elaborated on the condominium terminology, noting the deviation from the popular definition of conjoined units, and elaborated on the decision to decrease the garage space under the revised proposal. Mayor Randall then asked if Mr. Gesmundo could comment on AVB's development impacts to existing homes. Mr. Gesmundo relayed that the developments have a positive impact on the housing market.

Councilmember Ledbetter asked Mr. Gesmundo whether his firm had conducted any public or neighborhood meetings regarding the project. Mr. Gesmundo confirmed a neighbors' meeting had been held at his offices before the project was proposed to the Planning Commission, receiving only a handful of residents and one concern that AVB had since addressed.

Mayor Randall opened the public hearing at 6:47 p.m. There were no additional public comments aside

from Mr. Summerfield's earlier statements. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson asked Mr. Gesmundo about the homeowners' association dues, management, and other fees expected.

Motion by Burns, seconded by Pearson, to close the public hearing. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson inquired about the makeup of the recommended action. At the request of the Mayor and from deferral by the City Attorney, Clerk Eklov confirmed that two separate motions were intended as requested by the Department of Community Development.

Motion by Pearson, seconded by Burns, to approve the PD Tentative Plan Amendment for McConley Cove Planned Development at 1075 Bacon Avenue. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Motion by Pearson, seconded by Burns, to approve the Preliminary Condominium Plan for McConley Cove Planned Development at 1075 Bacon Avenue. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS: Councilmember Burns provided an update regarding the Central County Transportation Authority, noting that the board had recently reviewed the collective bargaining agreement. Motion by Ledbetter, seconded by Urban, to receive the Council Committee Reports as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

STATEMENTS OF CITY COUNCIL AND CITY MANAGER: Councilmember Burns complimented staff for administering the recent election. He then congratulated the local office winners of the Kalamazoo Valley Community College Board of Trustees, Portage Public Schools Board of Education, and Portage District Library Board, stating that he was looking forward to working with those members. Councilmember Burns closed with a response to Mr. Tessari regarding his earlier transportation option concerns, highlighting the MetroLink service.

Councilmember Ledbetter congratulated the staff on a smooth election. He then expounded on Councilmember Burns' mention of the MetroLink service, providing additional details regarding his own use of the service.

Councilmember Miller encouraged citizens to shop locally during the upcoming holiday season, highlighting the new Portage Small Business Directory with over 70 listings to date. She then thanked Mr. Thrash from the Air Zoo, noting her membership on Discover Kalamazoo's Advisory Board, and expressed appreciation of the new sports complex proposal with its forecasted economic influx and attraction to the city.

Councilmember Urban thanked the Council for the recent birthday wishes. He then encouraged everyone to reach out to their neighbors as the holiday season approached, noting some may be experiencing isolation or difficult times.

City Manager McGinnis expounded on Councilmember Miller's reference to the sports complex and its relation to the MetroLink route. He relayed that Mr. Thrash requested a letter of support for the project. He then spoke regarding flags around South Westnedge, as well as the cemeteries, as provided by the Portage Rotary. He highlighted the upcoming Community Service Open House at the Portage Zhang Senior Center, followed by a reminder regarding leaf pick up. He closed by complimenting staff on their continued efforts to court small business for the Small Business Directory.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson had no comment.

Mayor Randall began by highlighting the news of the sports court complex as a positive for the community. She then thanked staff for their efforts with the election, noting the process improvements made to better report early. Mayor Randall closed with a sad announcement regarding the recent death of an elderly citizen during a recent house fire.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 07:11 PM.

Erica L. Eklov, City Clerk