CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 25, 2025

Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson 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, Jihan Young, and Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson were present.

ABSENT: Mayor Patricia Randall and Councilmember Terry Urban.

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 Pro Tem Pearson following his recent visit to the area, the audience observed a moment of silence to reflect on the Los Angeles area wildfires and subsequent destruction. Following the moment of silence, the City Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROCLAMATIONS: None.

PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS:

1. Lauren Tompkins (675 South Shore Drive) spoke as the chair of the Environmental Board to introduce a new plastic bag recycling program in partnership with the Youth Advisory Committee. She noted the bins, sponsored by NexTrex Recycling, would be available for one year at Portage City Hall, as well as both Portage Public High Schools.
2. Alan Hopkins (10510 Sudan Street) relayed comments about the Portage Road Corridor "Project 360" community input sessions and the Osterhout intersection.

CONSENT AGENDA: Mayor Pro Tem Pearson shared where the public can access the meeting agenda and asked if any would like an item removed from the Consent Agenda. Seeing no comments, motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Approval of Minutes: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 11, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Accounts Payable Register: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to approve the Accounts Payable Register of February 25, 2025, as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Computer Replacements: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to approve the purchase of computing devices from BITS Inc. in the amount of $257,289.03 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 5 to 0.

Purchase of Public Works Vehicles: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to approve the purchase of five vehicles at a total cost of $237,765 from Gorno Ford using the State of Michigan MiDEAL Extended Purchasing Program and authorize the City Manager to execute all documents related to these purchases on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Angling Road Microsurfacing Project - Bid Tabulation: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to award a construction contract for the Angling Road Microsurfacing project to Pavement Maintenance Systems, LLC, Imlay City, Michigan for an amount not to exceed $128,695.75 and authorize the City Manager to execute all documents related to the contract on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

West Lake Weed Management – 2025 to 2029 Application Program: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to adopt Resolution No. 2, for the West Lake Management Program Special District No. 025-Q, setting a public hearing of necessity on March 11, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Final PD Plan for 8150 Creekside Drive: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to approve the Creekside Final Planned Development Plan, 8150 Creekside Dr, with the condition that the applicant shall have the required stormwater agreement recorded. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Stanwood Crossings Final PD Plan, 9617 Portage Road: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to approve the Stanwood Crossings Final Planned Development Plan, 9617 Portage Road. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Closed Session Regarding Property Acquisition: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to meet in Closed Session immediately following "Statements of City Council and City Manager" of the regularly scheduled City Council Meeting of Tuesday, February 25, 2025, pursuant to MCL 15.268 Sec. 8(d). Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Minutes of Boards & Commissions: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to receive the minutes of the Environmental Board of December 11, 2024. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Materials Transmitted: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to receive the Materials Transmitted of February 6, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Calendar of Meetings: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to receive the Calendar of Meetings as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Solicitor Permit Denial Appeal: Mayor Pro Tem Pearson introduced the matter and invited Ms. Rishelle Hartman to speak regarding her appeal. She provided brief comments and handed the Council a letter she had penned regarding her appeal. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson inquired how long it had been since her program completion. Ms. Hartman responded that it would be one year on March 5, 2025. He then asked when she received the denial of her Solicitor's Permit application. She responded regarding her two application attempts. While Councilmembers continued to review her letter, Ms. Hartman introduced a friend to comment on her behalf.

Ms. Alecia Door (8451 Greenspire) relayed Ms. Hartman's efforts in recent years following prior criminal issues and spoke in favor of her character. The City Manager asked Alicia about working for the Red Cross, noting a prior familiarity with the city's tornado support.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson then asked the City Manager to summarize new information and documents recently provided by Ms. Hartman demonstrating the coursework she's done. The Mayor Pro Tem also relayed his desire to provide the City Attorney more time to review the matter and inform the Council of potential options.

Councilmember Ledbetter highlighted his public safety background and noted he was impressed by Ms. Hartman’s efforts and commended her for following the appropriate procedures and her efforts to improve her life. He relayed that he understood her challenges and that his prior police academy teachings included spokespeople conveying their life situations like Ms. Hartman’s to new recruits.

Ms. Hartman stated her efforts in writing and helping others in similar life situations. She noted her recidivism, which Councilmember Ledbetter defined for the audience.

Councilmember Young thanked Ms. Hartman for her attendance and her humility. She recommended, based on the Public Safety Director's input and the need to have the City Attorney review the new information, that the Council table a final decision for the next meeting in March. Councilmember Young expressed a desire to ensure due diligence, avoiding personal opinions for transparency.

Councilmember Burns asked about the procedure regarding the public hearing and tabling a decision. City Manager McGinnis confirmed a desire to presently close the hearing and table the decision on the appeal. Councilmember Burns expressed displeasure with the current framework of the ordinance and his desire to revise the procedure going forward. He apologized to Ms. Hartman for the appeal process.

Motion by Burns, seconded by Young, to close the public hearing. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 5 to 0. Motion by Young, seconded by Burns, to table the decision regarding Ms. Hartman's Solicitor Permit denial appeal to the regular meeting of March 11, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS: Councilmember Miller relayed information about the Discover Kalamazoo update with the indoor sports court facility proposed for Kalamazoo County. Councilmember Young provided an update regarding the Small Business Committee "Small Business Town Hall" event in collaboration with Southwest Michigan First.

Motion by Burns, seconded by Miller, to receive the Council Committee Reports as presented. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

STATEMENTS OF CITY COUNCIL AND CITY MANAGER: Councilmember Ledbetter highlighted the 1960 student sit-in at a Woolworth's lunch counter regarding segregation, noting his parents participated. He relayed pride regarding the event, both historically and personally.

Councilmember Miller thanked the Environmental Board and Youth Advisory Committee for introducing the new plastic bag recycling program, commending the inclusion of a competition between the high schools. She then thanked Justin Williams for garnering 30 total businesses for the city's Pocket Pay gift card program.

Councilmember Young thanked the citizens who attended the Portage 360 input session for the Portage Road corridor project. She also thanked those who came to the Small Business Town Hall event. Councilmember Young relayed her attendance at Western Michigan University's "Dinner with Delegates" event that connected college students with local and state elected officials. She closed by recommending that anyone interested in government check the resources available at Kalamazoo Valley Community College and WMU.

Councilmember Burns issued a reminder about the annual Utility Rate Study Committee meeting scheduled for Monday, March 24th to discuss water and sewer rates.

City Manager McGinnis noted Assistant to the City Manager, Justin Williams' efforts with the Portage Pocket Pay program and Kara-Mo-Kee event. He then acknowledged the Department of Public Works for their snow removal efforts, as well as the Public Safety - Fire Division for addressing multiple fires the prior weekend. City Manager McGinnis highlighted several upcoming events, including a Portage Public Schools community input session for the new superintendent search, the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) open house for the next 6-year plan, and the ongoing Kalamazoo Restaurant Week. He closed with kudos to CDO Dame and Deputy Director of Economic Development Jonathon Halberg for hosting the Small Business Town Hall with good attendance.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson noted three things approved under the Consent Agenda, specifically the final plans for Stanwood Crossings and Creekside Planned Development, plus the West Lake Special Assessment renewal. He thanked the Department of Public Works staff for their recent 24-hour snow operations. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson closed with condolences to Councilmember Urban regarding the passing of his nephew.

Follow-up Action from Closed Session: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to authorize the City Manager to execute an agreement to purchase the property at 7716 South Westnedge Avenue as discussed in the closed session. Upon a roll call vote, motion passed 5 to 0.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Pro Tem Pearson adjourned the meeting at 7:12 PM.

Erica L. Eklov, City Clerk