CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES FROM MARCH 11, 2025

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, Nicole Miller, Jihan Young, Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson, and Mayor Patricia Randall were present.

ABSENT: Councilmembers Victor Ledbetter and 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 Randall, the audience observed a moment of silence to reflect on welcoming spring weather and celebrating unity. Following the moment of silence, Scout Troop 244 of Pathfinder Church led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROCLAMATIONS:

75th Anniversary of Dianetics: Mr. Jeff Breedlove, Director of External Affairs of the Friends of L. Ron Hubbard Foundation, read the proclamation.

PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS:

1. Jordan Horn (Kalamazoo/Portage area) introduced himself as an associate professor at Kalamazoo Valley Community College with a Master of Psychology He spoke against the proclamation based on his background in mental health education.
2. Richard Hewitt (2732 Kalarama) also spoke against the proclamation, noting his background as a school counselor and his education regarding mental health indicators.
3. Cheryl Lathrop (7142 Starbrook) also spoke against the proclamation. She questioned the process of how the proclamation was added and called for more transparency.
4. Jeff Breedlove (9101 B Drive North) noted his background in the local community as a former Western Michigan University student, and explained how Dianetics worked for him, and numerous people he knows as well. He thanked the Council for its willingness to acknowledge all viewpoints and diversity.

Mayor Randall stated the Council usually does not respond to citizen comments but asked the City Attorney to provide a statement regarding the city policy concerning proclamations and pronouncements. Attorney Kaufman clarified that the criteria and the process the City uses to feature proclamations were followed.

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 Pearson, seconded by Young, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Approval of Minutes: Motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, to approve the City Council Meeting Minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 25, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Accounts Payable Register: Motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, to approve the Accounts Payable Register of March 11, 2025, as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Adoption of Bond Resolution: Motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, to adopt the Notice of Intent Resolution to fund construction of Fiscal Year 2024-2025 capital improvement projects, in the amount not to exceed $3,700,000. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Comprehensive Liability, Property, and Auto Fleet Insurance: Motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, to approve a one-year agreement for comprehensive liability, property, and auto fleet insurance through the Michigan Municipal Risk Management Authority (MMRMA) at a total cost not to exceed $608,865 for the period March 1, 2025, to March 1, 2026, and authorize the Authorized Member Representative (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.

ADP Payroll Processing, Time and Attendance and Benefits Services: Motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, to approve the three-year pricing agreement with ADP, LLC, for electronic payroll processing, time and attendance and benefits software, and hosting for $103,015 per year for the first two years and $105,075 for the third year 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.

Computer Replacements: Motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, to approve the purchase of computing devices from CDW Government LLC for the amount of $257,340.89, rescind the prior Council approval of purchasing the computing devices from BITS, Inc., 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.

South Westnedge Avenue Water Leak Investigation and Repair: Motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, to approve payment to Veolia Water Contract Operations USA, Incorporated, in the amount of $111,736 for the South Westnedge Avenue water leak investigation and repair and authorize the City Manager to approve payment. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Property Acquisition - 6510 Lovers Lane: Motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, to approve the purchase of 6510 Lovers Lane in the amount of $1.00 and authorize the City Manager to execute all documents related to this purchase on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Act 381 Brownfield Plan - Allen Edwin Homes (9581 Oakland Drive & 8150 Creekside Drive): Motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, to accept the City of Portage Brownfield Redevelopment Plan Application, with Brownfield Redevelopment Plan Amendment No. 13, Green Development Ventures, LLC, 9581 Oakland Drive and 8150 Creekside Drive, and set a Public Hearing for March 25, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

AVB Development Agreement Exhibits for Stanwood Crossings: Motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, to authorize the City Manager to execute the Infrastructure Construction Management Agreement and approve the Master Home Building Agreement, and incorporate these documents as Exhibits B and C to the May 22, 2024, development agreement with AVB, LLC for the Stanwood Crossings project. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

City of Portage liaison to Kalamazoo County Central Dispatch Authority (KCCDA) Board of Directors: Motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, to appoint Public Safety Director Nicholas Armold as the second City of Portage liaison to the Kalamazoo County Central Dispatch Authority (KCCDA) Board of Directors to replace Councilmember Ledbetter. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Proposed Budget Review Schedule: Motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, to establish April 29, 2025, from 2:00 to 5:30 p.m. and May 13, 2025, from 2:00 to 5:30 p.m. (if needed) for review of the proposed Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Board & Commission Interviews: Motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, to set a Special Meeting for Tuesday, May 27, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. to review Board and Commission applicants. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Minutes of Boards & Commissions: Motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, to receive the minutes of the Brownfield Redevelopment Corporation of October 25, 2024. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

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

COMMUNICATIONS:

Presentation by Jane Ghosh, CEO of Discover Kalamazoo: As the City Council liaison to the Discover Kalamazoo Board of Directors, Councilmember Miller provided a bit of insight into the Discover Kalamazoo Organization and introduced CEO Jane Ghosh. Ms. Ghosh provided a presentation regarding tourism statistics on the City of Portage and surrounding area, and the efforts being placed toward developing a 'sports court' to boost tourism and serve local youth sports organizations.

Motion by Miller, seconded by Burns, to receive the presentation by Jane Ghosh, CEO of Discover Kalamazoo, regarding an update on tourism promotion in Portage. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

CCTA Articles of Incorporation Amendment Update: Motion by Burns, seconded by Young, to receive a communication from Kalamazoo County Clerk Meredith Place regarding a Resolution passed by the County Board of Commissioners amending the boundaries of the Central County Transportation Authority (CCTA), adding Comstock Township, Precinct 1 - Information Only. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

West Lake Weed Management – 2025 to 2029 Application Program: Mayor Randall introduced the item and asked the City Manager to summarize the proposal. City Manager McGinnis relayed that the West Lake Improvement Association requested city assistance in creating a new 5-year special assessment district to manage aquatic plants in the lake, which has been renewed every five years since 1988. He noted that the Association coordinates the on-site work while the city oversees the collection of the assessments of which the city is included for 20 percent based on the land it owns along the lake. Seeing no questions from the Council, Mayor Randall opened the public hearing.

1. Pete Strazdas (2016 Ames Drive) spoke on behalf of the West Lake Improvement Association in favor of renewing the assessment.

As there were no other comments, motion by Pearson, seconded by Burns, to close the public hearing. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 5 to 0. Motion by Pearson, seconded by Burns, to adopt Resolution No. 3, for the West Lake Management Program Special District No. 025-Q. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Proposed Amendment to Citizen Advisory Board Attendance Ordinance: The Mayor asked the City Manager to summarize the background of the proposed amendment and the way any special cases would be handled. The City Manager responded, and also acknowledged a communication from an current advisory board member expressing concern about the potential strictness the new policy.

Councilmember Burns stated the boards are burdened with the decision of determining an excused or unexcused absence, and noted the communication from a current advisory board member which highlighted the rule change could be detrimental to boards that meet infrequently.

Councilmember Young noted an increase in citizen applicants for city advisory boards and commissions and hoped to ensure everyone received an appointment that matched their interests and schedules.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson noted the amendment offered by Councilmember Urban for special cases to be decided by the Council.

Councilmember Miller acknowledged the voluntary nature of citizen boards and commissions, but the new policy would provide better guidance to members while offering exceptions for those who need them.

Mayor Randall noted the original policy dated to 1983 and wanted to ensure better service to citizens needing prompt feedback from those on advisory boards.

Motion by Burns, seconded by Young, to adopt the proposed ordinance to amend the Code of Ordinances, Chapter 1, Article 7, Section 2-252 - Attendance at meetings; and, authorize the City Administration the update the City Council policy accordingly. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 0.

Solicitor Permit Denial Appeal: Mayor Randall noted the background of the item and asked the City Manager for any updates. He relayed the provisions of the current ordinance.

Councilmember Young asked for an amendment to the ordinance by taking the decision from the Council and deferring it to the City Manager. She then addressed Ms. Hartman to explain that her upcoming vote would be based on the information from the Chief of Police, who had denied Ms. Hartman's initial application, and that, as a City Councilmember, she needed to decide based on the information provided. Councilmember Young expressed appreciation for the efforts by Ms. Hartman but reiterated her decision was based on information provided by the City Administration and the recommendation of the Chief of Police.

Councilmember Miller noted the comments by Councilmember Young and highlighted her difficulty in weighing all the aspects at hand. She stated that she needs to support both the citizens of the city, as well as those trying to improve themselves. Councilmember Miller echoed Councilmember Young's desire for a revision to the current ordinance to make future appeals an administrative matter.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson asked the City Administration to return to the Council at a later date with suggested revisions to the ordinance.

Mayor Randall noted the ordinance dated from 1963 and explained why the appeal had been brought under the review and decision of the Council.

Motion by Burns, seconded by Pearson, to approve a Solicitor's Permit for Ms. Rishelle Hartman of Weed Man Lawncare. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 4 to 1, with Councilmember Young voting no.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS: Councilmember Burns provided an update regarding the Central County Transportation Authority annual meeting alongside the Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority. Motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, 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 Miller highlighted the Girl Scout Cookie Bake Off event, noting the positive influence Girl Scouting has provided for many women in leadership. She also noted the welcoming home ceremony of the 415th Civil Air Farers Battalion at the Zhang Portage Senior Center.

Councilmember Young highlighted the March *Portager* newsletter included the city's upcoming yard waste and bulk trash collection programs. She addressed citizen concerns regarding the Council's agenda publication schedule and answered the question of voting on proclamations prior to placing them on the agenda. She highlighted the warmer weather and outdoor recreation safety.

Councilmember Burns echoed Councilmember Young regarding Council transparency and clarified the differences between ordinances, resolutions, motions, and proclamations. He spoke regarding the proclamation edits to avoid endorsing an opinion but suggested another look at the proclamation policy would be warranted if similar issues arise. He closed by expressing his appreciation for citizens providing their opinions on the matter.

City Manager McGinnis thanked staff regarding the West Lake Weed Management special assessment coordination. He then acknowledged the board attendance policy and recognized most of the board and commission members regularly attend meetings. He closed regarding the proclamation matter.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson echoed Councilmember Young's statement regarding voting on proclamations prior to their inclusion on the agenda. He noted the effort made in the continual renewal of the West Lake Weed Management assessment, which has seen approval every 5 years since the late 1980s.

Mayor Randall stated proclamations are not an endorsement but an exercise of the freedom of speech. She noted they were only included if they followed certain parameters and relayed prior proclamation topics and their function of providing a platform of awareness. She closed with mentioning Councilmember Miller and herself attended Public Safety ceremony recognizing a new firefighter and two promotions.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 7:09 PM.

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Erica L. Eklov, City Clerk