

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES FROM APRIL 15, 2025

Mayor Patricia Randall called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:00 PM in the Council Chambers at Portage City Hall.

ROLL CALL: Councilmembers Chris Burns, Victor Ledbetter, Nicole Miller, Terry Urban, Jihan Young, 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, 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 Arbor Day and the importance of trees in the community, considering the first anniversary of the May 7th tornado. Following the moment of silence, the City Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROCLAMATIONS:

Kalamazoo Valley Community College Month: Dannie Alexander, Vice President of Campus Planning and Operations for Kalamazoo Valley Community College, read the proclamation. Following the proclamation, Mr. Alexander provided an update regarding the achievements of the college's basketball teams.

Workers' Memorial Day: David Pawloski, Financial Secretary-Treasurer for the AFL/CIO of Southwest Michigan, read the proclamation.

National Arbor Day: Stuart Bassett, arborist and representative from ReLeaf, read the proclamation. Following the Mayor's inquiry, Mr. Bassett relayed that all 350 trees for ReLeaf's Arbor Day event in Portage had been reserved.

PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS:

1. JoAnne O'Rourke, Texas Township Supervisor, noted the shared May tornado event and thanked the city for collaborating with the township to work on the recovery. She considered the tornado recovery effort to be multi-generational and sought continued cooperation with the city moving forward.
2. Rod Balazs (3568 Bellflower) spoke regarding concerns about the remaining tornado tree debris and the potential for a wildfire. He relayed his firsthand experiences with wildfires while in California.
3. Jeri Kazeks (8400 South 12th Street) expressed concerns about the remaining tree damage and debris that have since become habitat for numerous coyotes and provided examples.
4. Mark and JoAnn Mowery (7402 Quail) provided an update regarding the neighborhood issue addressed during the March 25 City Council meeting. He thanked Councilmember Ledbetter for visiting his home and speaking with him since the last meeting to discuss the issue. Mr. Mowery then relayed that the neighbor issue has worsened, noting he had recordings of the subject neighbor which he would share with the Council.

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. Councilmember Burns removed Item B.5 (2025 Local Streets Reconstruction Program) and Councilmember Miller removed Item B.6 (Tornado Relief Funding). Motion by Miller, seconded by Young, to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Approval of Minutes: Motion by Miller, seconded by Young, to approve the City Council Meeting Minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 25, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Accounts Payable Register: Motion by Miller, seconded by Young, to approve the Accounts Payable Register of April 15, 2025, as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Act 381 Brownfield Plan Amendment #14, City of Portage Workforce Housing Project, Stanwood Crossings (9617 Portage Road): Motion by Miller, seconded by Young, to accept the City of Portage Brownfield Redevelopment Plan Application, with Brownfield Redevelopment Plan Amendment No. 14, City of Portage Workforce Housing Project, "Stanwood Crossings," 9617 Portage Rd, Portage MI, and set a Public Hearing for April 29, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. or as soon thereafter as may be heard. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Authorize Stanwood Crossings Infrastructure Construction Expenses by AVB, Inc.: Motion by Miller, seconded by Young, to authorize AVB, Inc. to enter into subcontracts and incur Stanwood Crossings infrastructure expenses of a total amount not to exceed \$3,672,132. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Committee of the Whole to review proposals for legal services: Motion by Miller, seconded by Young, to set a Committee of Whole Meeting on May 6, 2025, at 1:30 p.m. to review and discuss proposals for the provision of legal services. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Minutes of Boards & Commissions: Motion by Miller, seconded by Young, to receive the minutes of the Environmental Board of March 12, 2025; Human Services Board of March 6, 2025; and Brownfield Redevelopment Authority of February 27, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

West Lake Weed Management – 2025 to 2029 Application Program: Mayor Randall introduced the item, noting the matter currently before the City Council was the last step in the renewal process. She opened the public hearing at 6:33 p.m. Seeing no citizen comments, motion by Burns, seconded by Young, to close the public hearing. Upon a voice vote, motion passed 7 to 0. Following the closure of the public hearing, motion by Pearson, seconded by Urban, to adopt Resolution No. 5 confirming the Special Assessment Roll for the West Lake Management Program #025-Q. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

REGULAR BUSINESS AGENDA:

Presentation of the proposed FY 2025-2026 Budget: City Manager McGinnis stated that the proposed FY 2025-2026 Budget was launched for the City Council that afternoon and would be posted for public inspection on the OpenGov website the following day. He explained that the current proposal was a balanced budget of approximately \$36 million in expenditures and debt management. He explained that the City Administration made significant cuts to the original department requests to present a responsible plan. Mayor Randall thanked the City Administration and highlighted that the City Council lowered the city's debt from \$110 million in 20__ to around \$45 million. She closed by noting the two upcoming City Council Budget Review sessions on April 29 and May 13.

2025 Local Streets Reconstruction Program Bid Tabulation: Per the Mayor's invitation, Councilmember Burns inquired about the construction of the new Amberly Elementary School and its scheduling in relation to any street paving adjacent to the location. Councilmember Miller responded that she understood from the Portage Public School Board that Amberly Elementary had yet to be approved for construction and Haverhill and Woodland Elementary Schools would be constructed

first. Councilmember Burns then asked the City Administration to ensure future road paving near schools slated for reconstruction was scheduled to prevent damage to the new pavement by any construction vehicles. City Manager McGinnis confirmed the Administration would maintain discussions with Portage Public Schools during planning.

Motion by Burns, seconded by Young, to award a construction contract to Michigan Paving and Materials Company of Kalamazoo, Michigan, for the 2025 Local Streets Reconstruction Program in an amount not to exceed \$1,788,562.97 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 7 to 0.

Tornado Relief Funding: Councilmember Miller noted her removal of the item from the Consent Agenda to better highlight the planned efforts and provide clarity, considering the citizen concerns expressed regarding the remaining tree damage.

City Manager McGinnis relayed the upcoming first anniversary of the May 7th tornado and a commemorative event planned by the city at Celery Flats. He discussed the city's focus on the immediate recovery measures while efforts were made by state representatives for aid support. He spoke about the development of an aid plan with the state and for affected residents to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. At the City Manager's invitation, Chief Operating Officer Adam Herringa provided additional details regarding the various claim reimbursements, allocating the \$1 million funding. He also highlighted additional business relief support funding that would be facilitated by United Way.

Councilmember Miller asked COO Herringa to elaborate regarding the nature of claims received. COO Herringa answered that structural damage, sign damage, and tree damage were the most common examples. Mayor Randall asked if business owners put out of business could apply for relief or if it was limited to operating businesses. COO Herringa answered that applications for closed or damaged businesses were reviewed. Mayor Randall then inquired about the use of funding for lost wages. COO Herringa clarified the funds were meant to ensure a business could operate.

Though not a public hearing, Mark Mowery was permitted to ask about funding for the Salvation Army. COO Herringa answered that these funds were not intended for reimbursing non-profits for their assistance. City Manager McGinnis elaborated regarding reimbursements to those non-profits that provided recovery support.

Councilmember Miller closed the discussion and commended staff for budgeting the allocated \$500,000 from the State of Michigan and Kalamazoo County with After the Storm.

Motion by Miller, seconded by Burns, to authorize the transfer of up to \$450,000 in tornado relief funding received by the City of Portage from Kalamazoo County/State of Michigan to After the Storm to assist residents with tornado recovery efforts 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.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS: Councilmember Young provided an update regarding the Kalamazoo County Environmental Health Advisory Council. She relayed an additional outlet for citizens to acquire donated trees that she would facilitate with the Portage Youth Advisory Committee.

Motion by Burns, seconded by Miller, to receive the Council Committee Reports as presented. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

STATEMENTS OF CITY COUNCIL AND CITY MANAGER: Councilmember Urban had no comment.

Councilmember Ledbetter commended Western Michigan University's (WMU) hockey team for their national championship, noting his home state of North Carolina didn't provide him with familiarity with hockey but was since considering skates. He then highlighted continued discussion with residents in the Quail Street neighborhood. He closed with an inquiry about the potential use for the remaining downed wood from the May tornado.

Councilmember Miller also congratulated WMU's hockey team on their championship as well as highlighted the WMU Jazz team's championship win, and the KVCC basketball teams' wins. She

relayed her attendance at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Best Brains Learning Center and the renovated Portage YMCA. Councilmember Miller closed with a reminder about the Board and Commission interviews.

Councilmember Young began by recognizing the city's participation in the annual community Respecting Differences diversity event hosted at WMU. She also provided a reminder of the upcoming Board and Commission Interviews, highlighting the inclusion of the Youth Advisory Committee. Councilmember Young closed with encouragement for severe weather preparedness.

Councilmember Burns congratulated WMU and thanked KVCC for their recognition. He also thanked the residents for relaying concerns regarding potential brush fires. Councilmember Burns then extended Happy Easter holiday wishes.

City Manager McGinnis thanked Nancy Money from After the Storm and Texas Township Supervisor O'Rourke and for attending the meeting. He provided a reminder about the Portage Road 360 public meeting on April 16, as well as the April 17 Planning Commission meeting which would include discussions on the unified city zoning ordinance proposal.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson thanked the Councilmembers for their various updates and wished everyone a Happy Easter.

Mayor Randall echoed Councilmember Young in highlighting the Respecting Differences event, detailing its importance with a focus on diversity. She closed by extending birthday wishes to Councilmember Young and good Easter holiday wishes to everyone.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 7:15 PM.

Erica L. Eklov, City Clerk