

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 9, 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, 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 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 celebrate the seniors of the Portage community. Following the moment of silence, the City Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROCLAMATIONS:

National Senior Center Month: Chair Linda Zoeller and Co-Chair Shirley Wahmoff read the proclamation for National Senior Center Month. At the invitation of the Mayor, Chair Zoeller provided a brief update on the current activities, programming, and membership statistics at the Portage Zhang Senior Center.

National Suicide Prevention Month: Frank Lewis, Crisis Program Manager at Gryphon Place, read the National Suicide Prevention Month Proclamation. Mr. Lewis noted he was one of two managers who administered the Gryphon Place suicide phone line locally, as well as participating in the national organization. He also highlighted the Gatekeeper Program for schools' and the annual suicide prevention walk on September 20th in downtown Kalamazoo. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson asked about the frequency of receiving call from outside Kalamazoo County. Mr. Lewis responded that it occurs often, noting that Gryphon Place also operates as an after-hours back-up as part of the national program partnership.

PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS:

1. Alan Loveridge (23965 88th Ave, Marcellus) provided suggestions for public sewer connections and advocated for problem solving through crowd sourcing.
2. Matt Longjohn (State Representative, 40th District) warned an impending state government shutdown was likely to start October 1 considering a failed budget agreement between the State House and the State Senate.

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 Young, 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 Young, seconded by Miller, to approve the City Council Minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 26, 2025; and the Special Meeting of August 27, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Accounts Payable Register: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to approve the Accounts Payable Register of September 9, 2025, as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

PPCOA Bargaining Agreement: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to approve the Portage Police Command Officers Association Collective Bargaining Agreement for the period of July 1, 2025, to June 30, 2027, and authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to sign on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Budget Amendment: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to approve a budget amendment to use \$1,356,350 in excess General Fund balance to fund a legal claims settlement, via a transfer from the General Fund to the Capital Improvement Fund, 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.

Annual Tax Abatement and Job Summary Reports: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to receive the Annual 2025 Tax Abatement and Job Summary Reports as Information Only. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Ordinance to Enable Creation of Neighborhood Enterprise Zones: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to accept for first reading a proposed ordinance amendment of Chapter 42 of the Code of Ordinances to enable the creation of Neighborhood Enterprise Zones (NEZ) and schedule a second reading and potential adoption for the September 23, 2025, City Council Meeting. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Minutes of Boards & Commissions: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to receive the minutes of the Senior Citizens Advisory Board Minutes of June 18, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 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 7 to 0.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Senior Citizen Advisory Board Update: Mayor Randall introduced the item and noted that Chair Linda Zoeller and Co-Chair Shirley Wahmoff had presented the Board's annual update following their reading of the proclamation. Motion by Burns, seconded by Young, to receive the Annual Report Presentation from the Senior Citizens Advisory Board for the 2024/2025 Year. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

City Investment Update: At the Mayor's invitation, Deputy Director of Revenue and Treasury, Grant Taylor, provided a brief presentation regarding the city's current investment strategies and steps taken to place the city in a healthy financial position. Following the presentation, Mayor Pro Tem Pearson asked why the city wasn't investing more in municipal bonds. Deputy Director Taylor responded, highlighting the need for conservative safety in all city investment.

Mayor Randall asked about the city's interest portfolios. City Manager McGinnis commented on the Treasury Department's new program which renegotiated how funds collected by Portage are dispersed to other taxing bodies. The renegotiations have allowed the city to keep the interest on a high-yield liquid investment account which has already generated \$1.23 million for the city while ensuring other taxing bodies receive a more regular cashflow.

Councilmember Miller asked about Finance Department evaluating investments, comparing it to recent poor investments made by the County treasurer. Deputy Director Taylor responded that a strong investment policy, such as the city's current one, would prevent for potential missteps that lead to poor investments.

Central County Transportation Authority Board - Portage Representative: Motion by Burns, seconded by Ledbetter, to confirm the re-appointment of Jim Pearson to the Central County Transportation Authority Board. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS: Councilmember Burns provided an update on the Central County Transportation Authority. He noted the Board had recently approved the 2026–27 fiscal year budget. Motion by Pearson, seconded by Miller, to receive the Council Committee Report as presented. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

STATEMENTS OF CITY COUNCIL AND CITY MANAGER: Councilmember Young noted the upcoming Portage Northern and Central high schools upcoming football game on October 10th and highlighted the Battle of the Bins food drive happening in the City Hall lobby. She then congratulated Kalamazoo Pediatrics on Mall Drive with October 2 ribbon cutting event and noted Central and Haverhill Elementary's new school buildings ribbon cutting ceremonies are coming up. She closed by letting the audience know she will be representing Portage at the upcoming Michigan Municipal League annual conference in Grand Rapids next week.

Councilmember Burns noted the annual PA 198 tax abatement reports included in the Consent Agenda, highlighting the partnerships with local employers and the jobs created with economic development incentives. He noted the high return on investment compared to the money spent per worker.

Councilmember Urban had no comment.

Councilmember Ledbetter encouraged the men in the audience to screen for prostate cancer and relayed free screenings currently offered by Bronson Healthcare in Kalamazoo and Battle Creek.

Councilmember Miller celebrated the opening of the Judy Acker Smith Memorial Garden at Lakeview Park. She also highlighted that the Portage Zhang Senior Center was accepting donations for the It's In the Bag sale, and the Parks and Recreation Holiday Bazaar on November 8 was currently accepting vendors. She closed by noting all Battle for the Bins Food Drive donations go to 12 Baskets.

City Manager McGinnis highlighted the new Parks and Recreation online reservation system. He also noted residents could submit fun tombstone decorations for the upcoming Monster Mash at Ramona Park on October 13.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson had no comment.

Mayor Randall echoed Councilmember Young's comments regarding groundbreakings and ribbon cuttings, as well as all the parallel resources between the city and the schools. She then noted the 8th Annual City Hall Art Exhibition taking place on September 11, with the winner, Kathleen Mills' painting *Ophelia*, being on display for the whole year.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 6:50 PM.

Erica L. Eklov, City Clerk

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