CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 23, 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, Terry Urban, Jihan Young, and Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson were present.

ABSENT: Mayor Patricia Randall.

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, the audience observed a moment of silence to reflect on matters of personal importance. Following the moment of silence, the City Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance alongside Scouting Troop 244 from Pathfinder Church.

PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS:

1. Alan Loveridge (23965 88th Ave, Marcellus) spoke regarding concerns of microplastics and offered suggestions to address the issue.
2. Wayne Johnson (1418 Palmetto Drive), speaking as president of the Sterling Oaks condominium community noted the cost of the community's current contract for waste hauling and compared it to the proposed single waste hauler contract, noting Sterling Oaks residents currently pay less than they will under the new single-waste contract. He asked the City Manager to find out the expectations for the city's condo associations considering the new single hauler proposal.
3. Senior Pastor Paul Naumann (1749 Greenbriar) of St. Michael Lutheran Church (7211 Oakland Drive), alongside members Joe Magowski and Cindy Vanicks, announced the church's 2025 Celebration and Prayer for Life Rally.
4. Andrea Kidney (9475 Sebring Drive) noted she was also a resident of the Sterling Oaks Condominium community who had similar concerns regarding the single waste hauler proposal. She encouraged the City Council to consider not only condo associations during future negotiations, but also mobile home communities.
5. Les Minor (2514 East Shore Drive) complimented the city for the improvements adjacent to Daane's Party Store. He then asked about plans for behind the building, noting a build-up of garbage behind the building, which provide places for stagnant water to accumulate.

CONSENT AGENDA: Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson 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 Ledbetter, to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

Approval of Minutes: Motion by Burns, seconded by Ledbetter, to approve the City Council Minutes of the Regular Meeting of September 9, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

Accounts Payable Register of September 23, 2025: Motion by Burns, seconded by Ledbetter, to approve the Accounts Payable Register of September 23, 2025, as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

Farmers Market Pavilion Structures: Motion by Burns, seconded by Ledbetter, to award a contract in the amount of $1,388,856.36 to Penchura, LLC, of Brighton, MI, for the purchase of three pavilion structures for the Portage Farmers Market; 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 6 to 0.

Acquisition of Property from Comerica Bank: Motion by Burns, seconded by Ledbetter, to authorize the purchase of .03 acres of 7941 South Westnedge Avenue, owned by Comerica Bank, for the amount of $1, for use in the development of the Portage Farmers Market, and authorize the City Manager to execute all documents related to this action. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

Bid Tabulation - Tree Planting and Maintenance: Motion by Burns, seconded by Ledbetter, to award a contract in the amount of $182,517 to Twin Lakes Nursery, Inc., for the purchase of trees, planting and maintenance services in Celery Flats and Lexington Green Parks funded by the IRA Urban and Community Forestry Program grant, 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 6 to 0.

Police In-car Computer Replacement - Cooperative Purchasing Contract: Motion by Burns, seconded by Ledbetter, to approve the purchase of Panasonic Toughbook computers, docking stations, and power supplies from Baycom in the amount of $137,818.00, and authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary documents on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

Proposed Shared Emergency Management Staff Person: Motion by Burns, seconded by Ledbetter, to schedule a Committee of the Whole Meeting for Tuesday, October 21, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. to review, discuss and potentially take action on a proposed agreement for the provision of an emergency management staff person to be shared evenly between the City of Portage and Kalamazoo County. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

Transfer of Industrial Tax Abatement: Motion by Burns, seconded by Ledbetter, to accept the Industrial Facilities Tax Exemption Certificate application from KalBlue Group, Inc. to transfer the existing tax abatement certificate from Depatie Fluid Power, LLC, at 5870 S. Sprinkle Road, Unit 1, and set the public hearing on the certificate for October 7, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

City Wise Rental Housing Database Agreement: Motion by Burns, seconded by Ledbetter, to approve the City Wise Software LLC City Service & Licensing Agreement to establish a searchable database for renters to locate rental housing in the City of Portage 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 6 to 0.

Revised Investment Policy: Motion by Burns, seconded by Ledbetter, to adopt the Revised Investment Policy. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

Minutes of Boards & Commissions: Motion by Burns, seconded by Ledbetter, to receive the minutes of the Human Services Board of June 5, 2025; and the Environmental Board of August 13, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

Calendar of Meetings: Motion by Burns, seconded by Ledbetter, to receive the Calendar of Meetings as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Citizen Communication: Motion by Burns, seconded by Young, to receive the communication from Mary Redmond dated September 8, 2025. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Rezoning Application No. 25/26-1 to rezone 4815 W. Milham Avenue: Mayor Pro Tem Pearson introduced the matter, followed by a short presentation of the proposed rezoning by CDO Pete Dame. After CDO Dame finished, Mayor Pro Tem opened the public hearing.

1. Patricia Curtis (4736 Golden Ridge Trail) lives in the adjacent neighborhood and asked that development not abut against the neighborhood, and that light and noise pollution be considered.
2. Dane Davis (9902 Wexford) introduced himself as a resident of the city for the last 20 years and believes retail at that intersection is warranted.

Councilmember Urban asked about the zoned use permitting marijuana. Clerk Eklov responded that the zone could not have a dispensary, citing the proximity to adjacent Westfield Park.

Councilmember Burns asked about lot line adjustments and current ownership. CDO Dame elaborated that the lot had been modified to accommodate different zoning codes, which would provide a buffer between the rezoned parcel and the neighborhoods.

Councilmember Miller asked about the adjacent parcel, verifying only one parcel was up for rezoning. CDO Dame confirmed.

Councilmember Young noted the complementary housing coming to the area and the need to balance it by creating economic development as well.

Motion by Burns, seconded by Young, to close the public hearing. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

Motion by Burns, seconded by Young, to approve Rezoning Application No. 25/26-1 to rezone 4815 West Milham Avenue from B-2 Community Business District to B-3 General Business District. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

REGULAR BUSINESS AGENDA:

Sale of 9246 Portage Industrial Drive to Kalamazoo County: Councilmember Urban explained his removal of the item from the Consent Agenda. He relayed his concerns about the storage provision included in the County agreement, ensuring the city did not lose money on its initial purchase of the property should the County be unable to honor the agreement in full. He removed the item from Consent to highlight the recent changes to the agreement and the County's guarantee.

City Manager McGinnis noted the collaborative efforts from Chief Operating Officer Herringa, Kalamazoo County Administrator Kevin Catlin, and City Attorney Kaufman to ensure the intent in writing ahead of the meeting. Councilmember Urban expressed his appreciation for the City’s and County’s Administrations’ efforts.

Motion by Urban, seconded by Burns, to adopt the Resolution to sell city property addressed as 9246 Portage Industrial Drive to Kalamazoo County for $600,000, place the resolution on file for 28 days with the City Clerk, and take final action on October 21, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

KNHS Agreement Employer-Assisted Housing Program: Councilmember Burns noted he removed the item from Consent as he wanted to highlight the city's effort, as well as discuss some questions regarding the income requirement and employee eligibility. City Manager McGinnis explained the development of the proposal.

Councilmember Burns suggested the City Administration consider an asset test or limiting the program to first-time home buyers. He also suggested caveats to avoid giving to short-retained employees and employees already receiving benefits priority to ensure the program reaches the target audience.

CDO Dame responded, ensuring the City Administration would first adopt an internal policy to guide which employees would qualify and how, based upon current conversations between the city and county of Kalamazoo. He also noted that, as subject matter experts, Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services (KNHS) will help guide the city in facilitating the program, but he welcomed recommendations as the city works to build a policy.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson expressed concern about the part-time employee offer. CDO Dame responded, noting the partner organizations' support of including part-time employees.

Councilmember Young noted the comparison between Kalamazoo and Portage in terms of housing costs, and the incentive to attract people to live and work in Portage. CDO Dame noted the program is run dependent upon need and if the need is higher, the applicant may receive more assistance. There was additional discussion regarding employee retention and attraction.

Councilmember Urban asked where internal policies would apply to the agreement. Councilmember Burns noted Section 4 of the agreement related to employee eligibility, says that the employee will apply to KNHS, which then contacts the city as the employer with the sole discretion in determining eligibility. He believed the City Administration would be able to make more prescriptive guidelines and looked forward to assisting with the creation of those guidelines.

Motion by Burns, seconded by Miller, to approve the agreement with Kalamazoo Neighborhood Housing Services for an Employer-Assisted Housing Program 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 6 to 0.

Preferred Developer Agreement with Dynasty Management, LLC for Redevelopment of 7716 South Westnedge Avenue: Councilmember Urban stated he had removed the item from the Consent Agenda following an earlier request to the City Administration to summarize the agreement, highlighting the actions by the city or the developer and timing to better understand the proposal before the Council. He noted the subject property's proximity to the Police Division and discussions during the spring budget session which highlighted a need for improvements to public safety vehicle parking. As such, Councilmember Urban questioned whether the city needed to discuss retaining the property for city use. He further stated that the summary provided by the City Administration answered his questions, demonstrating a need for the developer to begin the due diligence process.

Councilmember Urban then asked the city staff to clarify the illustrations on Exhibit B included in the agenda. CDO Dame responded regarding the developer’s intention to build a slightly larger development using part of the vacant parcel between the police property and the subject property to maintain a separate driveway and parking from that of the police property. CDO Dame also stated that the developer is flexible on the site plan and desires to collaborate with the Public Safety Department to coordinate how the triangular property is designed. There was additional discussion regarding the history of the police division property and the development of the City Centre area.

Motion by Urban, seconded by Young, to approve the Preferred Developer Agreement with Dynasty Management LLC for a due diligence period of six months to redevelop 7716 South Westnedge Avenue as a mixed-use project 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 6 to 0.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Ordinance to Enable Creation of Neighborhood Enterprise Zones: Mayor Pro Tem Pearson introduced the item. City Manager McGinnis and CDO Dame noted the ordinance would provide another method for redevelopment of mixed-use housing in the city. Councilmemeber Urban requested clarification regarding the two maps provided with the ordinance draft. CDO Dame responded that the two illustrated areas would be the first two zones that staff intended to propose, but that would occur at a later date.

Motion by Burns, seconded by Young, to accept for second reading and adopt the amendment of Chapter 42 of the Code of Ordinances to enable the creation of Neighborhood Enterprise Zones (NEZ). Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS: Councilmember Miller provided an update regarding the Discover Kalamazoo Board of Directors. Motion by Young, seconded by Burns, to receive the Council Committee Reports as presented. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 6 to 0.

STATEMENTS OF CITY COUNCIL AND CITY MANAGER: Councilmember Urban had no comments. Councilmember Ledbetter also had no comments.

Councilmember Miller elaborated on her earlier Discover Kalamazoo comments and her desire to work with city staff to support the creation of additional ice rinks and sheets in the region, stating that Kalamazoo County currently experiences the highest number of annual hotel stays on nights related to ice activities, such as hockey and figure skating, and the impact on the local economy recent closures might have. She then highlighted her attendance at the Michigan Municipal League (MML) Conference, where she was voted to the board of trustees for the League, and her desire to give a voice to Southwest Michigan from Portage. Councilmember Miller closed by noting the Farmer's Market pavilions purchase on the Consent Agenda.

Councilmember Young also spoke regarding the MML Conference and the impact a strong community can have on an individual. She then highlighted the Battle of the Bins competition as an example of the sense of community Portage offers. Councilmember Young also spoke about Beacon Health assuming the Borgess Health System and its arrival in the community. She also noted the League of Women Voters of Kalamazoo (LWVK) candidate forum on October 1, as well as the third annual Tricked-Out Halloween House contest.

Councilmember Burns also highlighted the upcoming LWVK candidate forum on October 1 and noted the League's upcoming *Voter's Guide.*

City Manager McGinnis spoke about the MML Conference and highlighted the emphasis on placemaking. He then spoke about the recent Fall Fest and other city events that support placemaking efforts.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson echoed City Manager and Councilmember Miller mention of the Farmer's Market pavilion contract, as well as the $150,000 grant for trees to replace those lost in the 2024 tornado from the Consent Agenda. The Mayor Pro Tem closed by highlighting the agreement, also passed on Consent, to establish a searchable database for renters to locate rental housing within the city.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson adjourned the meeting at 7:31 PM.

Erica L. Eklov, City Clerk