CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 5, 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 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 protecting the children of the community, especially those exposed to domestic violence. Following the moment of silence, the City Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROCLAMATIONS:

Family Court Awareness Month 2025: Clerk Eklov read the proclamation.

Winners of the 4th Annual Tricked Out Home Halloween Decorating Contest: City Manager McGinnis announced the winners. First place was Brad and Gwen Matthews (408 Marigold Avenue). Second place was the Malaski Family (5807 Copperleaf Trail). Third place and Judge's Choice was Dustin and Dusti Morton (5816 Iowa Avenue), with honorable mentions at: 10527 Sudan Street, 7015 Sandpiper Street, 2328 Kalarama Avenue, and 10527 Dandale Street.

PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS:

1. Julia Erity (4818 East Milham) expressed concerns regarding the speed limit of the adjacent Pavilion Township from 55 MPH to 25 MPH in the City of Portage. She noted a nearby school bus stop, a lack of sidewalks, and traffic/pedestrian safety. She requested that the City Administration implement improved safety measures in the area.
2. Tim Earl (6862 Shallowford Way) recognized Councilmember Terry Urban for his many contributions to the city during his long tenure, including the Non-Discrimination Ordinance.
3. Nathan Sachritz (2003 Brighton Lane) spoke as president of the Village at Brighton Lane condo association, as it pertained to the single hauler waste contract. He highlighted concerns regarding conflicting language between implementing the new contract terms for the entire association.
4. Geralyn Morris, Family Court representative, thanked the City Council for recognizining November as Family Court Awareness Month.

CONSENT AGENDA: Mayor Randall shared where the public can access the meeting agenda and asked if anyone would like an item removed from the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Burns removed Items A.3 (Employee Health & Dental Contracts) and A.6 (Fire Station #3 Improvements).

Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to approve the Consent Agenda as amended. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Approval of Minutes: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to approve the City Council Meeting Minutes of the Committee of the Whole and the Regular Meeting of October 21, 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 November 5, 2025, as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Delta Dental Plan: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to approve a two-year contract with benefit change to the Department Head and Non-Union (DH/NU) group, with the option of an additional renewal for a period of up to two years, with Delta Dental Plan of Michigan for dental insurance and authorize the City Manager to execute all documents on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Employee Retirement Plan Investments (401a, IRA, Retirement Health Savings Plan (RHS) and 457 plans) Servicing Contract: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to award the Retirement Plan Investments [401a, IRA, Retirement Health Savings Plan (RHS) and 457 plans] Servicing contract to Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS) of Michigan for a five-year servicing agreement for the cost of $195,600.00 to plan participants 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.

Old Centre Road Reconstruction Project: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to award a contract to perform engineering services for the Old Centre Road Reconstruction Project to Williams & Works, Grand Rapids, Michigan in the amount not to exceed $202,123 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.

Contract for towing and impound lot services: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to approve a one-year contract with McDonald’s Towing and Rescue of Kalamazoo, Michigan, for towing and impound lot services in the amount of $177,375 for one year, with the option for four (4) one-year renewals, and authorize the City Manager to execute all documents related to this matter on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

East Shore Drive Lift Station Renovation Project: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to award a contract to Eng., Incorporated of Lansing, Michigan in the amount not to exceed $106,465 to perform engineering services for the East Shore Drive Lift Station Renovation Project 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.

Sale of Stanwood Crossings Homes and Parcels: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to adopt the Resolution to authorize the City Manager or designee to sell real property at Stanwood Crossings (9617 Portage Road as divided or otherwise created), place the resolution on file for 28 days with the City Clerk, and take final action on December 2, 2025. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Resolution to Accept the Terms of the Project Agreement From the MDNR: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to approve the Resolution to accept the terms of the Project Agreement from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to receive a grant of $400,000 from the Natural Resources Trust Fund toward construction of the Austin Lake Trail 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 7 to 0.

Annual City Council Goal Setting Retreat: Motion by Young, seconded by Miller, to set a special meeting on Thursday, November 20, 2025, at 8:30 a.m. at the Department of Parks and Recreation (320 Library Lane) to conduct the annual City Council Goal Setting Session (Retreat). 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 Planning Commisson of August 21, 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.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Designation of Neighborhood Enterprise Zones in the City Centre and the Lake Center Subarea: At the invitation of the Mayor, City Manager McGinnis summarized the item and the activity to date. Mayor Randall opened the public hearing at 6:28 PM. As there were no comments, motion by Pearson, seconded by Young, to close the public hearing. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0. Following clarification of the motion by CDO Dame, motion by Pearson, seconded by Burns, to confirm December 16, 2025, as the date for consideration of the City Centre and Lake Center Subarea Neighborhood Enterprise Zones (NEZ) resolutions. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

REGULAR BUSINESS AGENDA:

Health Insurance Contract Renewals: Councilmember Burns explained that he had removed the item from the Consent Agenda, citing annual cost increase concerns in addition to a lack of competitive bids.

City Manager McGinnis explained the current healthcare landscape is a difficult one to contract within and the various union stipulations complicate matters, but the actual cost to the public is minimal, being borne mostly by the employees. He differed to the Human Resources staff for additional elaboration.

Human Resources Director Shannon Hertz and Deputy Director Tracy Schmidt relayed that the city is required to bid every three years, and the most recent request found Priority Health declining to quote, and United Healthcare failing to respond. Deputy Director Schmidt stated that most insurance companies do not favor the city as the employee groups are not under one plan and are not viewed as a sincere client.

Mayor Randall asked if we had considered partnering with other municipalities to save on costs. Director Hertz responded that pooling increased the city's risk, and the unions would need to support the change.Councilmember Urban asked if the City Administration had talked to the unions about consolidating. Director Hertz responded that favorable discussions had begun. Councilmember Miller inquired about a per-paycheck rate for the employees. Director Hertz stated there will be various options and various rates depending on levels and plans.

Motion by Burns, seconded by Young, to approve a one-year contract with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan at a current cost of $0.00, and Blue Care Network at an estimated cost of $2,755,541.44, for employee health insurance; approve a four-year contract renewal with EyeMed for Department Head and Non-Union (DH/NU) vision insurance, changing plan year to calendar year, at an estimated cost of $67,253.76; take action to continue to exempt the city from requirements of P.A. 152 for the 2026 medical benefits plan year, and authorize the City Manager to execute all documents related to the contract renewals on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Fire Station #3 Facility Improvements: Councilmember Burns explained that he removed the item from Consent simply to note that the city was not pursuing the lowest bid, but the most responsive bid. Motion by Burns, seconded by Young, to award a contract in the amount of $401,499 to Miller-Davis Company, for Fire Station No. 3 facility improvements, approve a budget transfer of $101,499 to reallocate appropriations from completed public safety projects with unspent appropriations, 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.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Solicitor and Canvassers Ordinance Update: Motion by Urban, seconded by Ledbetter, to adopt the amended Chapter 14 Businesses, Article 4 Solicitor and Canvassers ordinance. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Secondhand Dealers Ordinance Update: Motion by Urban, seconded by Burns, to adopt the amended Chapter 14 Businesses, Article 8 Secondhand Dealers ordinance. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS: Councilmember Urban provided an update on the Gourdneck Lake Governmental Lake Board, noting the Board unanimously adopted to pursue another special assessment process.

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 noted that the current meeting would be his last, at least for now. He stated it had been an honor and a privilege to serve the citizens of Portage on the City Council for the past 28 years, as well as the Park Board and Zoning Board, while working for the Upjohn Company. He congratulated the winners of the election and acknowledged the pleasure of working with his fellow Councilmembers.

Councilmember Leadbetter acknowledged the sentiments of Mr. Earl regarding Councilmember Urban, thanking him for his service and leadership on the City Council. Councilmember Ledbetter then thanked those who supported his re-election. He closed with a recognition of the upcoming Veterans Day holiday and the veterans breakfast event at the Portage Zhang Senior Center.

Councilmember Miller began by thanking everyone who participated in the Tricked-Out Homes contest. She then congratulated the Portage Central Boys Soccer team for winning the state championship and coach of the year. Councilmember Miller also thanked the City Clerk's Office staff for their efforts with the election. She closed by noting her first upcoming meeting of the Michigan Municipal League Board of Trustees.

Councilmember Young started with condolences to the Portage Northern High School community in response to several young people killed in a recent auto accident. She then honored Councilmember Urban for his wisdom and contributions to the community during his tenure on the City Council. Councilmember Young also acknowledged the ongoing "Stuff the Bus" food drive in support of the 12 Baskets food pantry, as well as the upcoming community service fair at the Zhang Portage Senior Center. She closed by thanking the Portage community for its support in her re-election, noting she does not take the role lightly and welcomed incoming Councilmember-elect Kathleen Olmsted.

Councilmember Burns began by noting his support for "No Shave November" with proceeds to benefit Maggie’s Wigs for Kids. He then extended condolences to the Portage families of the young people killed in the recent accident, as well as the family of former chief financial officer of Upjohn and Pharmacia and community leader, Bob Salisbury. Councilmember Burns moved on to congratulate the Portage Central Boys Soccer Team on their state championship. He then praised the City Clerk's Office and election workers for a smooth election, congratulating Mayor Randall, and Councilmembers Ledbetter and Young on their successful re-elections. Councilmember Burns also congratulated Councilmember-elect Olmsted on her election, commending the other candidates for supporting their community, and noting the success of the two millage proposals. He then expressed surprise that Councilmember Urban was a top candidate for the first time since 1997. Councilmember Burns proceeded to share a history of each year Councilmember Urban was elected to the City Council as it related to life in the City of Portage from Mr. Burns' perspective, coming of age in the city from 1997 to 2025, highlighting the 2016 Non-Discrimination Ordinance passage. Councilmember Burns closed by expressing respect and gratitude to Councilmember Urban.

City Manager McGinnis also highlighted his participation in the "No Shave November" fundraiser. He then thanked Councilmember Urban for his service and dedication. City Manager McGinnis closed by sharing his gratitude to the City Clerk's Office, election workers, city staff, and everyone involved to make the election a successful one.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson complimented Councilmember Urban on his foresight and due diligence regarding city matters during his tenure, noting their joint service on the Kalamazoo County Transit Authority. The Mayor Pro Tem highlighted Councilmember Urban's prior term on the Zoning Board of Appeals, suggesting he consider the Planning Commission. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson closed by thanking Councilmember Urban for his countless hours spent on the city and his wisdom.

Mayor Randall began by noting the effect of Councilmember Urban's upcoming departure from the Council and congratulated Councilmember-elect Kathleen Olmsted. Mayor Randall then congratulated the Portage Central Boys Soccer Team for their state win. She also noted the recent election and the majority voting by absentee, thanking the community for re-electing both herself and Councilmembers Ledbetter and Young. Mayor Randall moved on to highlight several upcoming annual city events, including the Senior Center's holiday bazaar, as well as the Veterans Day breakfast at the Air Zoo. She closed with sentiments regarding the accomplishments of the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 7:12 PM.

Erica L. Eklov, City Clerk

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