

BOARDS & COMMISSIONS INTERVIEW SESSION MINUTES FROM JANUARY 13, 2026

Mayor Patricia Randall called the Citizen Advisory Board Interviews to order at 4:00 p.m. in Conference Room #1 at Portage City Hall.

ROLL CALL: Councilmembers Chris Burns, Vic Ledbetter, Nicole Miller, Kathleen Olmsted, Jihan Young, and Mayor Patricia Randall.

ABSENT: Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson, Councilmember Miller.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Pat McGinnis, City Clerk Erica Eklov, Environmental Board Staff Liaison Michael Smoter, and City Council & Records Coordinator Aaron Thiel.

BOARD OF REVIEW (BOR): Applicant Justin Gish and Board Member Carol Eddy were in attendance. Each was given the chance to introduce themselves. There was discussion about how the Council could better support the board. It was suggested that greater education about the purpose of the board, including potentially renaming, could help attract new members.

ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD (EB): Dr. Tapas Acharjee interviewed to fill one of the board vacancies. At the request of the Mayor, Dr. Acharjee provided information on his background. Michael Smoter, staff liaison for the board, answered questions related to duties and environmental efforts in Portage.

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION (HDC): At the invitation of the Mayor, returning member Carol Dunleavy Chandler discussed current efforts of the HDC and goals for the upcoming America 250 Celebration. She highlighted the local history museum in Sturgis as an exemplary living history exhibit that she hopes to bring the Celery Flats and other historic areas in Portage.

Councilmember Ledbetter asked if City would post public signage, similar to acknowledgements in the City of Kalamazoo marking historic treaty lines between settlers and indigenous people. Ms. Dunleavy Chandler elaborated on current efforts and future goals.

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS (ZBA): Returning applicant Hillary Taylor, as well as new applicants Mark Martin and Charley Coss, attended. At the invitation of the Council, each introduced themselves.

Councilmember Burns confirmed there would be no issues with attendance, stressing that appellants needed a majority of the board to support them and missing a meeting could affect their appeal. Each applicant confirmed attendance would not pose an issue.

APPOINTMENT DISCUSSION: Clerk Eklov provided an outline of appointments the Council had considered up until that point. There was consensus among members regarding appointments to the BOR, EB, and HDC, but discrepancies within the agenda prompted discussion about accurate appointments and term lengths to the ZBA. There was also discussion if an appointment posed a conflict of interest, which Clerk Eklov relayed had already been addressed with the City Attorney.

At the Mayor's request, Councilmember Olmsted contacted Mr. Coss and asked if he would be interested in serving on a different board. Mr. Coss confirmed.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 5:18 p.m.

Aaron Thiel
City Council & Records Coordinator