

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 15, 2016

The Regular Meeting was called to order by Mayor Strazdas at 7:30 p.m.

At the request of Mayor Pro Tem Ansari, Pastor Joan Herbon of the Lord of Life Lutheran Church, gave an invocation and Boy Scout Troop 244 led the City Council and the audience in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

The City Clerk called the roll with the following members present: Councilmembers Richard Ford, Jim Pearson, Patricia M. Randall, Claudette Reid and Terry Urban, Mayor Pro Tem Nasim Ansari and Mayor Peter Strazdas. Also in attendance were City Manager Laurence Shaffer, City Attorney Randy Brown and City Clerk James R. Hudson.

PROCLAMATIONS: After Public Safety Director Richard White recounted the events of an accident on Sprinkle Road and Meredith Street, Mayor Strazdas issued Certificates of Recognition for Heroic Efforts to Justin Andrew Gillis-Bugg, Nathan Daniel Hizer and Jon Michael-Patrick Walsh for immediately responding to the aid of a driver whose seatbelt was still fastened while his vehicle was upside down and filling with water because it had left the roadway and overturned into Davis Creek.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Councilmember Randall referred to Item G.1, Closed Session, Page 6, Paragraph 6, asked for what amounted to a correction of facts, and indicated that former City Manager Maurice Evans always had a 16.5% contribution to his retirement, not just for the last year or two with the City, and that it was never 10%. Discussion followed. Motion by Ansari, seconded by Ford, to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 1, 2016, as presented. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Motion by Randall, seconded by Reid, to approve the Pre-Council Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2016, as presented. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 4 to 3 with Councilmembers Ford, Pearson and Urban abstaining.

* **CONSENT AGENDA:** Mayor Strazdas asked Councilmember Pearson to read the Consent Agenda. Motion by Ford, seconded by Randall, to approve the Consent Agenda Motions as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE REGISTER OF NOVEMBER 15, 2016:** Motion by Ford, seconded by Randall, to approve the Accounts Payable Register of November 15, 2016, as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

PUBLIC HEARING:

AMENDMENT TO CHAPTER 78, "TRAFFIC AND VEHICLES": Mayor Strazdas introduced the item, explained the protocol for public hearings, including an update from the City Manager, a dialogue among City Council and City staff, and an opportunity for the public to speak once he opens the public hearing to the audience with a limit of four minutes. He explained that he has some latitude with that Rule if someone wishes to be a spokesperson where he allows that individual to speak longer, but asked that there be little or no repetition. He deferred to Mr. Shaffer, who mentioned that he had a visit two months ago from a group of bicycle enthusiasts who expressed their concern for the safety of bicyclists on local roadways. Given the context of bike safety and some of the recent tragedies associated with bicycling in our area, he said it was agreed that this is the proper time to have a discussion about how our municipality might enhance the safety environment for our citizens and the users of our public roadway. He indicated one of the options discussed was the requirement for a five foot safe passing range between bicyclists and motorists. With that, he said he challenged them to go to

the City of Kalamazoo and, if successful, it would then be appropriate for the City of Portage Council to consider such an ordinance, not only for bicyclists and their safety, but also for continuity between the two communities. He deferred to Public Safety Director Richard White for any questions, and mentioned that although Chief White had reservations in the area of effective enforcement of this ordinance, he agreed that the ordinance provides a significant amount of educational value to both motorists and bicyclists because maintaining a safe distance between bicyclists and motorists enhances the overall safety of our entire community. He also recognized this as an opportunity for education through the community dialogue that is a necessary part of the ordinance process. He asked Chief White to come forward to answer any questions Council might have at this juncture.

Chief White indicated that it was important to understand his reservations with the ordinance as he contended that this should not be the end process. He mentioned engineering solutions have been successfully implemented in other communities, and we should not think this ordinance will solve all of the problems associated with mixing vehicular with pedal cyclists on the roadways. Mayor Strazdas concurred, and did not think passing an ordinance was going to necessarily change behavior. He cited the State law against the use of smart phones while driving, pointed out that the use has only gotten worse and expressed his opinion that the answer is more than enforcement which means it should include education. He asked Chief White whether he thought the ordinance was going to change attitudes and whether there needs to be more education or more enforcement. Chief White responded that there needs to be a mix of both, and pointed out that once the Council passes the ordinance, the City will have already started a process of education for the community. In fact, he said he has become more cognizant of bicyclists on the roadway, moves way over to allow for an extra level of safety and comfort for the bicyclist, and admitted he did not know if he would be doing that had he not become aware of all of the issues associated with this ordinance. He indicated that the ordinance gives Public Safety a tool that does not exist currently since absence a collision, there is little a public safety officer can do from the aspect of a motorist infringing upon the bicycle lane or getting so close to the bicyclist that it is dangerous. He recognized the obvious subjectivity with the matter as it will be based on the interpretation of the public safety officer, and that is why there is the option of issuing a warning or a citation. Mayor Strazdas concurred and discussion followed regarding the enforcement and education process that would be necessary. Mayor Strazdas expressed his preference for the education element as that is what will change behavior. Mayor Pro Tem Ansari concurred.

Councilmember Reid referred to Section (A) 1 (c) that states a vehicle driver may pass to the left of center, including when a no passing zone is marked, and said a no passing zone is marked because it means it is not safe to pass in that area. She asked Chief White how it can be safe to pass a bicycle when it is not safe to pass a car in a no passing zone. Chief White indicated this is a one-time exception to driving in the no passing lane because the only time a motorist can do that is when it is necessary to safely maneuver around a bicycle and meet this five foot distance requirement. He deferred to City Attorney Brown, who concurred and distinguished a car from a bicycle in terms of size. Councilmember restated her concern that allowing the motorist to enter into a no passing lane sets up an unsafe situation, and Mr. Brown indicated that the clear and safe distance standard still applies. Councilmember Reid asked what if you cannot see if you can do it safely, and Mr. Brown said, "Then you do not do it." Discussion followed.

Mayor Strazdas shared two questions from one of the Troop 244 Boy Scouts earlier of whether it is legal to ride a bicycle on the sidewalk, and would a public safety officer cite a bicyclist for breaking the law. Chief White responded that the public safety officer would absolutely cite the bicyclist for breaking the law and reviewed a couple of ordinance provisions that apply only to bicyclists, for example, and he mentioned that the purpose of the "Ride of Silence" is to impart bike safety information to the participants. In answer to Mayor Strazdas, City Attorney Brown indicated that it is legal to ride a bicycle on the sidewalk, but the bicyclist would be subjected to the same laws as the pedestrians. Chief White indicated that other communities that have dedicated bike paths and other engineering things to protect that bike path have reduced the traffic on sidewalks significantly as a result. Mayor Strazdas opened the public hearing to the audience.

The following people spoke in favor of the ordinance: Terry Butcher, 333 Cameo Avenue; Brian Smith, 5390 Saddle Club Drive, Texas Township; Valerie Litznerski, 4483 Clayborne Drive, Kalamazoo; Julie Bradfield, 901 Egleston Avenue, Kalamazoo; Martin Knof, 2971 Lost Pine Way; David Jones, 1422 Winter Drive, Kalamazoo; Paul Selden, 10630 Portage Road; Mark Rose, 8918 Marsh Creek Circle, Galesburg; Samantha Kohn, 710 Locust Street, Kalamazoo; and Douglas Kirk, 2615 Mockingbird Drive, Kalamazoo. Discussion followed.

Mayor Strazdas asked if there was anyone else who wished to make a comment. There being no more comment, motion by Reid, seconded by Ford, to close the public hearing. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Motion by Urban, seconded by Ford, to approve the Ordinance to amend the Code of Ordinances of the City of Portage, Michigan, by adding Section 78-3, Overtaking and Passing Bicycles, of Article 1, in general, of Chapter 78, Traffic and Vehicles, to provide that motorists maintain a minimum distance when overtaking and passing a bicyclist.

Mayor Strazdas spoke in favor owing to the need for behavior changes and based on information, the results of pushback, education, common sense, and not just passing an ordinance as a “knee jerk” reaction. Councilmember Randall spoke in favor as an avid bicyclist and on the basis of safety and responsibility. She also cited the Bills passed by the State Senate and the fact that other Michigan communities have this ordinance. Councilmember Reid cited the need for the use of judgment as a motorist, especially young motorists, when passing bicyclists because of the dangers this can cause, so education becomes an important part of this. She reaffirmed her support for the Complete Streets Concept which she has supported for a long time. She pointed out that the fact that the State law is coming through is comforting since having “pockets” where the law has been passed and others where it has not makes it difficult for people coming into an area to know what the rule is. She challenged City Council to look not just at bikes, but at pedestrians because pedestrians are a part of the Complete Streets Concept, also. Since Portage has many roads without sidewalks, she expressed a concern for winter conditions which make sidewalks impassable and cited Sprinkle Road in winter as an example.

In answer to Mayor Strazdas, City Attorney Randy Brown indicated that the State law regarding this matter would be a part of the Motor Vehicle Code, which is adopted by the City of Portage, but reserved judgment of the effect on the proposed Portage Ordinance until after the law does pass and when he could then review it. Discussion followed.

Councilmember Ford stressed the importance of the ordinance, mentioned that previous Councils have regarded Portage as a bike friendly community, and cited bike trails, charging special assessments for bike lanes on streets and the inclusion of bike lanes on the roadways by this City Council as examples. He noted that the Public Safety Officers use bicycles on patrols, mentioned the Mayor’s Ride with the Mayor of Kalamazoo, and cited the City slogan, “A Natural Place to Move.” For these reasons, he indicated it makes sense from a policy standpoint to pass this ordinance and explained. Mayor Strazdas called the question and upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0. Ordinance recorded on page 391 of City of Portage Ordinance Book No. 12.

PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS: Arthur O’Leary, 9504 Oakview Drive, indicated that he was having a dispute with his next door neighbor about barking dogs, five of them. He discovered that Portage does not have an ordinance on the number of dogs allowable in a household, and noted that the City of Kalamazoo has a Dog Ordinance with a limit of three, and conjectured that Kalamazoo Township and Parchment also have a Dog Ordinance. He regarded it as another tool like the bike ordinance and noted that Portage limits the number of chickens (so why not dogs). Mayor advised him to meet with the City Manager to work out the details, noted that this may not be the last time there will be a violation of the noise ordinance, and every Portage citizen deserves quality of life and a good night’s sleep, with the possible exception of the Fourth of July, and discussed the options. Discussion followed.

In response to Mayor Pro Tem Ansari, Mr. O’Leary indicated he had discussed this with the Kalamazoo County Animal Services Department and they said they do not have an ordinance that covers the number of dogs in a household, nor do they have a noise ordinance.

Councilmember Urban cited the Portage Code of Ordinances, Section 10-36 - Noisy animals....“No person shall own, harbor or keep a dog which, by loud, frequent or habitual barking, yelping, or howling, causes annoyance to the people in the neighborhood.” He advised Mr. O’Leary to meet with City Manager Shaffer to see if his situation falls under this ordinance which may require that City Attorney Brown get involved. Mr. Brown indicated that Portage has a pretty detailed noise ordinance which should cover his situation. He suggested that when there is communication and police officers get involved, mediation and discussion usually takes care of the problem. Discussion followed.

REPORTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION:

BICYCLE SAFETY RESOLUTION: Mayor Strazdas deferred to Mr. Shaffer, who pointed out that throughout the interaction with bicyclists and their advocates which led up to the bicycle ordinance, there was a lot of discussion about education and opportunities for participation to enhance safety and the bicycle environment, not only in Portage, but in the Region. He mentioned that this is an opportunity for Council to make a positive statement regarding how they feel about the Portage bicycle environment. He felt it was important to remind the City Council that through the extensive application process, Portage has been designated a “Bronze” Bicycle Friendly Community from the American League of Bicyclist since 2007. He explained that there are Silver, Gold and Platinum levels above the Bronze, recommended setting laying out a course of action and conditions necessary that would allow reaching the Gold standard, and offered the Resolution for Council consideration.

Councilmember Reid cited Page 2 of the Resolution, “Be it further resolved, the City of Portage commits to support and encourage implementation of the bike route network in the KATS (Kalamazoo Area Transit Study) Map 7...” and asked for a clarification. She asked if adopting the Resolution requires that the Portage Representatives to KATS vote in favor of this because it can depend upon how it is presented or the kinds of things that may be involved. Mr. Shaffer responded that he does not believe that this Resolution ties and Portage Representative to support Map 7, and there is no effort here to allow this Resolution to act as a surrogate in terms of the legitimate representation Portage City Councilmembers have on KATS; it just stands as general support of the KATS Map 7. Mayor Strazdas discussed the fact that a single Councilmember cannot commit funds without City Council approval, and expressed his support for the Resolution, and explained it is another aspect of the element of education with regard to bicycle safety.

Councilmember Randall concurred and asked what distinguishes the Gold level from the Platinum Level. Mr. Shaffer explained that he reviewed the League of American Bicyclists criteria and could not find any municipal participants, but did find a number of Gold municipal participants. He expressed an interest in making sure the goal here was realistic and, knowing that there are very few Platinum designees, he want to know that the goal was achievable. Discussion followed. Mayor Strazdas indicated Platinum Level usually means ultimate commitment with ultimate resources and concurred that it is important to have a goal that is achievable. Discussion followed.

Motion by Pearson, seconded by Ford, to adopt the Resolution to Support Bicycle Safety. Discussion followed. Paul Selden favorably discussed the process and thanked Council for their support of what he termed an aspirational Resolution. He described Map 7 that is attached to the Resolution and explained that it creates a bike route network for the greater community. Discussion followed.

At the request of Mayor Strazdas, Councilmember Urban explained what KATS is, how it operates and what it does for the community. He pointed out that there are actually five communities that have reached the Platinum Level, not that Portage should be one: Madison, Wisconsin, Boulder, Colorado, Ft. Collins, Colorado, Davis, California, and Portland, Oregon. He conjectured that knowing those communities and the regulations they have had to develop may be beyond what Portage can attain. Discussion followed. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0. Resolution recorded on page 229 of City of Portage Resolution Book No. 46.

- * **ANNUAL BS&A INTEGRATED MUNICIPAL SOFTWARE LICENSING AND MAINTENANCE FEES:** Motion by Ford, seconded by Randall, to approve payment of the annual licensing and software maintenance services fees with BS&A, Incorporated, at a total cost of \$49,721 and authorize the City Manager to execute all related documents on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

- * **GODWIN DRI-PRIME CD150M UTILITY PUMP:** Motion by Ford, seconded by Randall, to authorize the purchase of one Godwin Dri-Prime CD150M Utility Pump from Xylem Dewatering Solutions, Inc., of Painesville, Ohio, through the Houston-Galveston Area Council purchasing program (H-GAC), at a total cost of \$42,297.17 and authorize the City Manager to execute all documents related to this purchase on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

- * **ACTIVENET SOFTWARE PURCHASE REQUEST:** Motion by Ford, seconded by Randall, to approve the purchase, installation and training services of a three-year software contract in the amount of \$30,890 with ActiveNet for the Parks and Recreation Division of the Parks, Recreation and Senior Services Department and authorize the City Manager to sign all related documents on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

- * **CLIFFWOOD AVENUE AND ARCHWOOD DRIVE SANITARY SEWER PROJECT #418-S:** Motion by Ford, seconded by Randall, to adopt Resolution No. 2 for the Cliffwood Avenue and Archwood Drive Sanitary Sewer Project #418-S, setting a public hearing of necessity on December 6, 2016, at 7:30 p.m. or as soon thereafter as may be heard. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0. Resolution recorded on page 233 of City of Portage Resolution Book No. 46.

- * **CLIFFWOOD AVENUE AND ARCHWOOD DRIVE WATER MAIN PROJECT #316-W:** Motion by Ford, seconded by Randall, to adopt Resolution No. 2 for the Cliffwood Avenue and Archwood Drive Water Main Project #316-W and set a public hearing of necessity on December 6, 2016, at 7:30 p.m. or as soon thereafter as may be heard. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0. Resolution recorded on page 239 of City of Portage Resolution Book No. 46.

- * **ANGLING ROAD SANITARY SEWER PROJECT #417-S:** Motion by Ford, seconded by Randall, to adopt Resolution No. 2 for the Angling Road Sanitary Sewer Project #417-S, setting a public hearing of necessity on December 6, 2016, at 7:30 p.m. or as soon thereafter as may be heard. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0. Resolution recorded on page 245 of City of Portage Resolution Book No. 46.

- * **CHOPIN AVENUE AND MOZART STREET WATER MAIN PROJECT #317-W:** Motion by Ford, seconded by Randall, to adopt Resolution No. 2 for the Chopin Avenue and Mozart Street Water Main Project #317-W, setting a public hearing of necessity on December 6, 2016, at 7:30 p.m. or as soon thereafter as may be heard. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0. Resolution recorded on page 255 of City of Portage Resolution Book No. 46.

- * **DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES:** Motion by Ford, seconded by Randall, to confirm the appointment of Shannon Hertz as the Director of Human Resources effective November 16, 2016. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

- * **OCTOBER 2016 ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMARY REPORT:** Motion by Ford, seconded by Randall, to receive the communication from the City Manager regarding the October 2016 Environmental Summary Report as information only. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **MINUTES OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS:** City Council received the minutes of the following Boards and Commissions:

Portage Human Services Board of October 6, 2016.
Portage Zoning Board of Appeals of October 10, 2016.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS:

DISCOVER KALAMAZOO STRATEGIC MAP: 2017-2019: Councilmember Randall indicated she attended a meeting with Discover Kalamazoo, Monday, November 14, 2016, and explained the purpose of Discover Kalamazoo. She indicated that the hotel tax contributes to Discover Kalamazoo and stressed that Portage is a major contributor owing to the newly built hotels. She mentioned that Greg Ayers of Portage, is the President of Discover Kalamazoo, and that her group spent in excess of fifteen hours reviewing the strategic planning and the whole map of how Discover Kalamazoo is going to go forward in 2017-2019. She indicated that the Strategic Map: 2017-2019 is very detailed and explained. She announced that Mr. Ayers will be coming to the Cities of Portage and Kalamazoo to review the Strategic Map: 2017-2019 in more detail. Motion by Reid, seconded by Ford, to receive the Discover Kalamazoo Strategic Map: 2017-2019, and the Discover Kalamazoo Committee Report from Councilmember Randall. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

KALAMAZOO COUNTY PUBLIC ARTS COMMISSION: Councilmember Randall attended a workshop where the Kalamazoo Public Arts Commission was attempting to give direction to a committee from the 70's that is attempting to reassert itself and fit into the community at large. Motion by Reid, seconded by Ford, to receive the Kalamazoo Public Arts Commission Report from Councilmember Randall. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

KALAMAZOO COUNTY CONSOLIDATED DISPATCH AUTHORITY: Mayor Strazdas thanked Councilmembers Reid and Pearson for their hard work on this Authority and noted that he attended the meeting where the recommendation for the ballot wording was determined to be forwarded to the Kalamazoo County Commission for consideration at their meeting tonight. In answer to Mayor Strazdas, Councilmember Reid indicated that she attended the Kalamazoo County Commission Workshop Session earlier today where the proposed ballot wording was presented, but noted they will not be voting on the ballot issue until December 6, 2016. At the request of Mayor Strazdas, she read the proposed ballot wording as recommended by the Kalamazoo County Consolidated Dispatch Authority, "Shall the County of Kalamazoo, Michigan, be authorized to assess a surcharge on all devices capable of accessing the 911 system located in Kalamazoo County of up to \$2.30 per month for a period of five years, July 1, 2017, through June 30, 2022, both inclusive, to be used exclusively for the funding of 911 emergency telephone call answering and dispatch services within Kalamazoo County, including facilities, equipment, maintenance and operating costs." Discussion followed.

Mayor Strazdas indicated that the other significant item from the Kalamazoo County Consolidated Dispatch Authority meeting was the discussion and selection of the location of the facility for a Central Dispatch in Kalamazoo County. He also mentioned a sidebar discussion related to the tax consequences if it gets on the ballot, and that there is a significant amount of public education and information necessary on the matter. As a result, he shared that each jurisdiction was encouraged to have a meeting after the ballot wording was approved to provide that information and education on the tax consequences on the matter. Councilmembers Reid indicated that at the Kalamazoo County Commission Workshop Session earlier today, there was a considerable amount of discussion regarding the aspect of making sure each of the local Public Safety Answering Points (PCAP's) identify how they are going to utilize the funds that previously had been used for the five PCAP Dispatch Services in order to get the 911 funding proposal understood and passed by the voters. She encouraged Portage City Council to schedule a time fairly soon to discuss the matter. Mayor Strazdas concurred and explained.

Motion by Ansari, seconded by Reid, to receive the report on the Kalamazoo County Consolidated Dispatch Authority Board from Councilmember Reid. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

BID TABULATION:

* **CONTRACT FOR REPLACEMENT OF WORN POLICE UNIFORMS:** Motion by Ford, seconded by Randall, to approve a two-year contract with Nye Uniform Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan, for replacement of police uniforms in the amount of \$34,623.56, with the option for three 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.

OTHER CITY MATTERS:

STATEMENTS FROM CITY MANAGER AND DEPUTY CITY MANAGER: City Manager Larry Shaffer and Deputy City Manager Rob Boulis took this opportunity to introduce and congratulate newly appointed Human Resources Director Shannon Hertz, who provided her background experiences at the request of Mayor Strazdas.

STATEMENTS CITIZENS: Paul Selden returned to thank Mayor Strazdas and City Council for passing the Bicycle Ordinance and Resolution and asked them to come back once the City has achieved Silver Level to resolve to reach the Platinum Level because it should be fun. He commented on the intergovernmental cooperation as it relates to the KATS Map 7 and its implementation. He mentioned that since each Councilmember travels in different circles that overlap and the KATS Map 7 will need cooperation among all of the municipalities, this means that this is an opportunity for leadership for Portage City Council. He indicated once it is completed, KATS Map 7 will be the most extensive network in the state. He expressed his optimism and discussion followed.

STATEMENTS FROM CITY COUNCIL: Referring to Councilmember Urban and his reference to Platinum Level cities, Councilmember Pearson indicated he lived in Davis, California, for about three years and it was so bike friendly, he did not need a car. He concurred with Mr. Shaffer and the Gold Level designation as a goal for Portage because Platinum Level is very expensive and you need to be dealing with a community where the people want to “ditch” their cars and do everything by bicycles.

Councilmember Urban referred to the 17 year old bicyclist who was not following the rules of the road and died a couple of weeks ago when he hit the side of a Metro Transit Bus as he was coming down a hill very fast, through a stop sign and could not stop in time. He stressed that bicyclists have laws and rules that they have to follow, too. He restated his disappointment that there was no place for him to interject this subject earlier when the Boy Scouts were still present to point out that bicyclists have laws and rules that they have to follow, too. He heard about it early owing to his position on the Central County Transportation Authority and acknowledged it is a tragic time for the family of the young man as well as a very difficult time for the bus driver.

Councilmember Reid congratulated the undefeated Western Michigan Bronco Football Team for being 14th in the Nation and indicated that ESPN has set Saturday as “Game Day” at Waldo Stadium. She encouraged everyone to think about Thanksgiving, to reflect on what is good about our family, our friends, and our country; and, with the election last week, half of the people were going to be upset, so coming together is what is important right now.

Councilmember Randall thanked all of the bicyclists who attended the meeting for two hours and to Paul Selden for his passionate leadership. She expressed her appreciation to City Council for supporting the Bike Ordinance, extended congratulations for the local officials who were elected last week and issued a request that they come back and provide reports from their respective County and State offices. She put in a “pitch” for Claire Dirette and Bray McKenzie for sponsoring a Play It

Forward Program set up to collect used tennis bags and rackets and deliver them either to the YMCA in Portage or in Kalamazoo. She indicated she recognized one of the Heroes who received the Certificate of Recognition at the beginning of the meeting, Nathan Hizer, who lived next door to her as a little boy when she first moved to Portage and indicated she was not surprised to hear of his heroic feat.

Mayor Pro Tem Ansari offered his thoughts for America's Veterans who risked or gave their lives for our freedom, and expressed a need for everyone to come together after this past election to celebrate our hard fought democracy. He indicated that we must not just tolerate the exchange of ideas, differences or opinions, but we must embrace them, as stated by Governor Snyder.

Mayor Strazdas announced the writing completion among the youth in the community under the topic, "What Do You Love About Portage?" He asked for help from Council to read the essays, and Councilmembers Reid and Urban volunteered. He noted that Mayor Pro Tem Ansari would do the honors of the Tree-lighting Ceremony as he would be in Washington, D.C. He said he participated in the Kalamazoo Literacy Council and informed everyone that 25,000 people in Kalamazoo County cannot read, and mentioned multiple sites where this is being addressed with the latest in Portage being the Prince of Peace Church with over 100 participants. He stressed the importance of reaching out and trying to help these adults over 18 years of age. He reflected on Thanksgiving and asked Portage citizens to pause and reflect on what they are thankful for in the City of Portage.

MATERIALS TRANSMITTED:

* **DEPARTMENTAL MONTHLY REPORTS:** Motion by Ford, seconded by Randall, to receive the Departmental Monthly Reports. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Strazdas adjourned the meeting at 9:40 p.m.

James R. Hudson, City Clerk

*Indicates items included on the Consent Agenda.