CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 6, 2016

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

At the request of Mayor Strazdas, Councilmember Terry Urban provided an invocation and the Michigan Youth Challenge Academy Student Council with their Company Commander, Chase Weatherwax, and Boy Scout Troop 287 with their Troop Instructor, Michael Keeler, led the City Council and the audience in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Discussion followed.

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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motion by Ansari, seconded by Reid, to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 15, 2016, as presented. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Motion by Pearson, seconded by Reid, to approve the Pre-Council Meeting Minutes of December 5, 2016, as presented. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 5 to 2 with Councilmembers Ford and Urban abstaining.

* **CONSENT AGENDA:** Mayor Strazdas asked Councilmember Randall to read the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Reid asked that Item F.1, 2017 Fee Schedules, be removed from the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Urban asked that Items F.2, Final Preliminary Condominium Subdivision (detailed engineering plans) for Copperleaf (Phase II) at 3800 Milham Avenue and 5710 Angling Road, F.3, Sale of City Property – Westerly Portion of 5800 and 5710 Lovers Lane, and F.6, Resolution to support the Village of Vicksburg regarding the Non-motorized Trail Connection Project, be removed from the Consent Agenda. Discussion followed. Motion by Randall, seconded by Ansari, to approve the Consent Agenda Motions as amended. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE REGISTER OF DECEMBER 6, 2016:** Motion by Randall, seconded by Ansari, to approve the Accounts Payable Register of December 6, 2016, as presented. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

CLIFFWOOD AVENUE AND ARCHWOOD DRIVE SANITARY SEWER PROJECT #418-S: Mayor Strazdas introduced this item and deferred to City Manager Larry Shaffer, who mentioned the traditional position over the years of developing an Administrative bias towards expanding water and sewer in the community; however, the current Administration considers it counterproductive and not in the best interest of the City to go counter to the will of the neighborhood. He mentioned that as this issue developed, the City conducted its surveys and determined that there was an interest for both water and sewer, initiated the process and continued in good faith; however, the Administration received a petition about a week ago in opposition by a majority of those impacted by the special assessment. With that, he withdrew his recommendation to go forward with the projects until the Administration engages in a lot more public education regarding why this project is important and the benefits to the neighborhood. Discussion followed and Mayor Strazdas asked Council to provide their opinions on the matter.

Councilmember Pearson indicated since eleven out of twelve property owners were against the project, he spoke in opposition to the project. Mayor Pro Tem Ansari and Mayor Strazdas concurred. In answer to Mayor Strazdas, Mr. Shaffer indicated that the Administration is still convinced that this is a good project, but good projects have to be communicated to the citizens who are impacted and he recognized that the City has to do a much better job of conveying the benefits of the project and what the project will do in terms of positive impact on the neighborhood; so, it is premature until the Administration can complete that process.

Councilmember Ford noted that even though the property owners rejected this, it really affects the property and the general health and safety of our community; he recognized this is a very small area, but he is willing to respect the wishes of the Administration and not go forward with this project at this time.

Councilmember Urban asked for an explanation of why the property owners are not interested in the project now, but were interested at one point; he said in general it is in the interest of the entire City to complete our water and sewer system and pointed out that the City has been working on this effort since before 1976.

Councilmember Randall expressed her support for the wishes of the residents, acknowledged that it was initially enthusiastically favored until the costs were revealed, and indicated before a project such as this is brought forward that people need to know the costs involved since residents with functioning wells and septic systems may not wish to spend three to four thousand dollars and this would prevent the process going this far.

Councilmember Reid referred to a communication dated June 9, 2015, from the City Manager that reflected the results of the original survey where four residents were in favor and six were opposed for both the water and the sewer. She concurred with putting a hold on this project and expressed her wish to hear the concerns from the property owners in this instance and explained. Discussion followed.

Councilmember Urban interjected that it has been the practice of the City to not reconstruct a road without putting in water and sewer if it did not exist there already because the new road would have to be torn up to install water and sewer. In answer to his question, Mr. Shaffer responded that the Administration would continue to follow this practice until the policy is changed and explained. Transportation and Utilities Director concurred. Mayor Strazdas opened the public hearing.

The following citizens spoke in opposition to the project:
Peter Prihoda, 207 Cliffwood Avenue, who also took exception to the policy to not reconstruct a road unless it has water and sewer; Ron Warner, 202 Cliffwood Avenue, who also complained about government employees in his yard without notice; Sherry Garrett, 10322 Archwood Drive; Jan Sackley, 10314 Archwood Drive, who also complained about receiving a letter dated February 5, 2015, that led the residents to believe that if a majority of the residents were opposed, the project would not be in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). She referred to the June 9, 2015 communication from the City Manager referenced above by Councilmember Reid where over 50% of the residents were opposed to the project, so she posed the question of why was the project included in the CIP as referenced in the November 15, 2016 letter to the residents. She cited the $9,734, plus hook-up charges, and the ongoing costs for maintenance and use and explained. Discussion followed.

Motion by Urban, seconded by Pearson, to close the public hearing. Councilmember Ford referenced the CIP and noted that these streets are not contained in that Budget. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Motion by Pearson, seconded by Randall, to deny Resolution No. 3 for the Cliffwood Avenue and Archwood Drive Sanitary Sewer Project #418-S, and not direct the preparation of the special assessment roll.

Councilmember Pearson indicated that he was under the impression that there were no objections to the project when he received Resolutions No 1 and 2, and congratulated Peter Prihoda for bringing the petition forward and letting your local representatives know the real sentiment in order to take action. Discussion followed. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 2. Yeas: Councilmembers Reid, Pearson and Randall, Mayor Pro Tem Ansari and Mayor Strazdas. No: Councilmembers Urban and Ford. Discussion followed.

CLIFFWOOD AVENUE AND ARCHWOOD DRIVE WATER MAIN PROJECT #316-W: Mayor Strazdas introduced this item and deferred to City Manager Larry Shaffer, who deferred to Mr. Barnes, who indicated that his comments from the Cliffwood Avenue and Archwood Drive Sanitary Sewer Project #418-S item carry on to this issue. Discussion followed.

Councilmember Urban asked Mr. Barnes if there is any need to put this water line in to loop the system, and Mr. Barnes noted that it is always an advantage, but ultimately answered that it is not impacting anyone else's quality to a significant degree. He indicated that the only thing it does is not strengthen the fire flows available in that area of the City since there is a water tower, but not a lot of wells for supply in the southern part of the City. The loop would be an advantage to strengthen the system for fire protection.

Mayor Strazdas opened the public hearing. There being no discussion, motion by Pearson, seconded by Ansari, to close the public hearing. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

Motion by Pearson, seconded by Reid, to deny Resolution No. 3 for the Cliffwood Avenue and Archwood Drive Water Main Project #316-W, and not direct the preparation of the special assessment roll. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

ANGLING ROAD SANITARY SEWER PROJECT #417-S: Mayor Strazdas introduced this item and deferred to City Manager Larry Shaffer, who indicated that installation of sanitary sewers has been part of the CIP since the year 2000. He noted that the City was successful in obtaining $134,000 in the Federal Transportation Funds which are included in the current Transportation Improvement Funds to offset part of the costs of reconstructing 6,000 feet of Angling Road from Squire Heath Lane to Romence Road. The project consists of installation of sanitary sewer and the reconstruction of the existing road, installation of drainage structures and minor widening of the roadway formalizing that as a part of the Portage bikeway. He discussed the importance of sanitary sewer to the property owner and the community at large. He reiterated that sanitary sewer is necessary before reconstructing the road and maintenance efforts still continue regardless.

He stated that the total cost of the project is $1.32 million with the property owner assessments at $241,000, or 18% of the project; 69.2% of the cost of the project is funded by the city at large through capital improvement bonds, plus the $134,000 in the Federal Transportation Funds; and, the Municipal Streets Fund contribution is $165,000 from the millage that was passed in 2006. He reviewed the standard rate for sanitary sewer installation as $43.77 per front foot of property and $1,536 for the six inch lateral which is based on a maximum taxable frontage of 80 feet. He explained that the residents would not be required to connect to sanitary sewer until the County Health Department determined that the property owner's system was no longer functioning and this is designed to address the issue of no one can predict when a septic system is going to fail. Discussion followed. He noted that areas close to lakes and streams would have eighteen months to connect according to City Ordinance. Discussion followed.

Mayor Strazdas opened the public hearing. The following citizens spoke in opposition to the project: Janet Luchies, 7511 Angling Road and Gary Taylor, 7642 Angling Road. Discussion followed. City Attorney Randy Brown indicated that if there is a special assessment imposed, the cost of that special assessment must be proportionate to the benefit received; there must be an increase in the property value proportionate to the cost of that special assessment; so, that is a legal principle in the State of Michigan, and the City in the past through the City Engineer and the City Assessor have determined that the methodology used by the City does reach that approximation and explained.

Ken DeHaan, 7024 Angling Road, spoke in opposition to the project. Discussion followed.

The following citizen spoke in favor to the project: Alan Griffin, 7249 Angling Road. Discussion followed. Mayor Strazdas confirmed with Mr. Shaffer that full discussions of the projects will occur with this and future projects before pursuing the process.

Motion by Reid, seconded by Ford, to close the public hearing. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0. Discussion followed. Mr. Hudson confirmed that there was no petition in opposition filed on this matter for City Attorney Brown. Discussion followed.

Motion by Urban, seconded by Ford, to adopt Resolution No. 3 for the Angling Road Sanitary Sewer Project #417-S, directing the preparation of the special assessment roll. Discussion followed.

Motion by Pearson, seconded by Randall, to substitute the motion to adopt Resolution No. 3 for the Angling Road Sanitary Sewer Project #417-S, directing the preparation of the special assessment roll, to table until January 24, 2017. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 4 to 3. Yeas: Councilmembers Pearson, Randall and Reid and Mayor Strazdas. No: Councilmembers Ford and Urban and Mayor Pro Tem Ansari. Discussion followed.

At the request for what Mr. Shaffer would do leading up to January 24, 2017, Mr. Shaffer offered that he would report to City Council on two different activities: He would send notice to the members of the neighborhood that there would be a neighborhood meeting at Portage City Hall; that he would be prepared to provide a full explanation as to the scope of the project and its need; that the Administration would answer any questions from the citizens involved; that he would take information and craft a report; and, that the City would conduct a survey. He would then provide Council with the results of the information session and results of the survey. Ultimately, he would come back with a full report on the results of those two activities.

CHOPIN AVENUE AND MOZART STREET WATER MAIN PROJECT #317-W: Mayor Strazdas introduced this item and City Manager Larry Shaffer who deferred to Mr. Barnes for an outline of the scope of the project. Discussion followed. Mr. Barnes indicated that this Hearing of Necessity is for water installation on Chopin Avenue and Mozart Street, that a petition was received from the homeowners, and that the project is included in the CIP. He said that this area has wells that are from 50 to 75 feet deep, and the water quality may not always "be the best" owing to a high level of iron and the shallow nature of the wells. He cited potable water and fire protection as immediately benefiting the area, and no mandatory connection which would allow the property owners to keep their private wells or convert them to irrigation wells, if they wish. He noted that the estimated cost of the project is $320,000 with the homeowners responsible for $105,000 or 30% of the cost and the city at large at $214,000 or 67% of the cost. He indicated that the assessments are capped at 80 feet and the special assessment rate of $38.77 per foot and $1,235 for 1 ¼ inch service has been used for the preparation of the preliminary special assessment roll. Furthermore, he said that these property owners received a notification letter for Resolution No. 3 along with the payment schedule and the amortization schedule for a 20 year period; and, if approved, the project would be constructed in 2017.

In answer to Councilmember Pearson, Mr. Barnes indicated that no post cards were mailed in this instance; that post cards are not always sent out and explained. Mayor Strazdas reminded Council of the letter of support provided in the Agenda Packet. In answer to Councilmember Reid, Mr. Barnes stressed that the property owners petitioned the City for water and that the project was not initiated by the City. Mr. Barnes confirmed for Councilmember Urban that a post card survey was sent out to the property owners on Chopin Avenue and a petition was submitted on behalf of the Mozart Street property owners. Discussion followed regarding the questionable water quality in the area.

Mayor Strazdas opened the public hearing. The following citizens spoke in favor of the project: Martha Dahlinger, 2612 Chopin Avenue, and Ryan Jamie, 9946 Mozart Street. Discussion followed.

Motion by Reid, seconded by Ansari, to close the public hearing. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0. Discussion followed.

Motion by Urban, seconded by Reid, to adopt Resolution No. 3 for the Chopin Avenue and Mozart Street Water Main Project #317-W, directing the preparation of the special assessment roll. Discussion followed. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0. Resolution recorded on page 261 of City of Portage Resolution Book No. 46.

PETITIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS: Dr. Monifa Jumanne, 6156 Independence Drive, performed a poetry recitation of stanzas from "In the Morning" by Paul Lawrence Dunbar, "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou, and "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes, to highlight and introduce the Kwanzaa celebration of family, culture and community to be held at the Portage Senior Center, Monday, December 12, 2016, from 3:15 p.m. until 4:45 p.m. that requires advanced registration by calling the Main Desk at (269) 329-4555.

RECESS: 9:25 p.m.
RECONVENE: 9:30 P.M.

Kay Ensfield, 1818 Forest Drive, informed Council and the community that the Friday after the Presidential Election, her 6th Grade Granddaughter received a handmade Swastika in her middle school from a classmate. She also complained of similar incidents shared with her since then from other parents, including in the elementary school. She confirmed that the School Authorities handled the matter appropriately and read an anonymous position paper in opposition to hate activity. Discussion followed. Mayor Strazdas responded to her comments and offered to work with the City Clerk to draft a Resolution Against Hate Crimes. Discussion followed.

Martha Dahlinger, 2612 Chopin Avenue, cited the findings of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Montgomery Alabama, which is gathering hate crime complaints, tracks hate groups, mentioned their Teaching Tolerance Program that is available free for schools and work with law enforcement groups upon request. Discussion followed.

Councilmember Urban referenced the recent passage of the LGBT Ordinance by the City of Portage and recommended an event or meeting at Martin Luther King Drive, or some place in the City where Council can gather folks together in opposition to this thought and action. Discussion followed and Mayor Strazdas offered that this is something that Council could coordinate through the City Manager's Office and have something that is reasonable that makes a statement to the people in our Region that this is something we will not tolerate.

REPORTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION:

2017 FEE SCHEDULES: Councilmember Reid expressed her dismay that none of the fees showed a decrease, yet owing to the use of technology, there should have been some reduction in fees. She indicated that the proposed 6% increase in the Community Development fees across the board was problematic for her and inappropriate, plus the reason given was that there have not been any increases since 2006. She expressed a preference for a 3% increase instead of the 6% increase at this point and have Council consider a further increase next year, and advocated incremental increases each year instead of one large increase as proposed.

Motion by Randall, seconded by Ansari, to adopt the proposed 2017 Freedom of Information Act Fees, the proposed 2017 Recreation and Park Facility Fees, and to adjust to a 3% increase and adopt the resolutions for 2017 Community Development Fees, Building Permits, Electrical Permits, Mechanical Permits and Plumbing Permits. Mayor Pro Tem Ansari concurred and asked that the City look at what other communities are doing with fees and a general discussion of fees and fee structure ensued. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0. Resolutions recorded on pages 265, 271, 275, 279 and 283 of City of Portage Resolution Book No. 46.

FINAL PRELIMINARY CONDOMINIUM SUBDIVISION (DETAILED ENGINEERING PLANS) FOR COPPERLEAF (PHASE II) AT 3800 MILHAM AVENUE AND 5710 ANGLING ROAD: Councilmember Urban indicated that because this project had streets with no sidewalks on two sides among many other reasons, he has been against this project all along. Mayor Strazdas deferred to Mr. Shaffer, who indicated that this is particularly a good project; that it meets the need; that it has gone through the process; that it is good news for the City; and that it is continuing at a very successful pace.

Mayor Strazdas asked why this particular plan is in conflict with the Council adopted policy of sidewalks on both sides of the street. Ms. Georgeau stated that when this was first brought to Council as a Planned Development (PD) rezoning, it was called Harbors West and is now called Copperleaf. She indicated that the developer provided a design plan that included a certain percentage of open space as well as internal trails, one of which will go from Milham Avenue and connect to Harbors West, and there will be a trail in close proximity either in front or behind lots in those areas where there is proposed to have no sidewalks. She noted that this is a Phase II Engineering Plan and is consistent with the PD design and pointed out where sidewalks will exist. Mayor Strazdas reminded Council of his position that he wanted a balance with the appropriate amount of pedestrian pathways, and asked City Attorney Brown if Council approves the Planned Development intention, how does that play out with the Engineering Drawings presented here. Mr. Brown concurred with Ms. Georgeau that City Council has already approved the plans for this project, and now Council is reviewing the Engineering Drawings, so the scope of review is limited to those documents.

Motion by Pearson, seconded by Randall, to approve the Final Preliminary Condominium Subdivision (detailed engineering plans) for Copperleaf (Phase II) at 3800 Milham Avenue and 5710 Angling Road.

Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 6 to 1. Yeas: Councilmembers Ford, Reid, Pearson and Randall, Mayor Pro Tem Ansari and Mayor Strazdas. No: Councilmember Urban.

SALE OF CITY PROPERTY – WESTERLY PORTION OF 5800 AND 5710 LOVERS LANE: Mayor Strazdas introduced this item and asked Councilmember Urban to address his concerns. Councilmember Urban explained his concern with the $17,000 per acre appraisal for the subject property owing to the value of other property in Portage. Mr. Shaffer indicated that he wished the property had a higher value, explained there were three appraisals received over the years on the property and delineated them. He mentioned that the appraisal amounts are based on the fact that these 4.8 acres have no access and have no developable rights. He explained it does have value in assemblage with property already owned by American Village Builders and Gesmundo, so there is no increment of value left on the table because the contributing factor for the increased value comes from the American Village Builders parcel values not the values of the City parcels. He concluded that the appraisal is accurate. He mentioned that this development has had a very difficult time "getting off the ground" for over ten years and explained. He explained that the intent of the Administration is to get this land into private hands for development and that it has never been designated park land. Councilmember Urban expressed his opinion that this is not a good deal and not in the best interests of the City to "give" this land away.

Motion by Pearson, seconded by Ansari, to adopt the resolution to sell the westerly portion of city-owned property addressed as 5800 and 5710 Lovers Lane. Discussion followed. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 6 to 1. Yeas: Councilmembers Ford, Reid, Pearson and Randall, Mayor Pro Tem Ansari and Mayor Strazdas. No: Councilmember Urban. Resolution recorded on page 287 of City of Portage Resolution Book No. 46.

* **HEALTH INSURANCE CONTRACT RENEWALS:** Motion by Randall, seconded by Ansari, to approve one-year contracts with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network for employee health insurance, maintain current employer/employee cost-sharing practices by taking action to exempt the city from requirements of P.A. 152 for the 2017 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.

* **SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN FIRST - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONTRACT:** Motion by Randall, seconded by Ansari, to approve a contract in the amount of $25,000 with Southwest Michigan First to support economic development activities in the City of Portage and authorize the City Manager to execute the contract on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT THE VILLAGE OF VICKSBURG REGARDING THE NON-MOTORIZED TRAIL CONNECTION PROJECT: Mayor Strazdas introduced this item and asked Councilmember Urban to address his concerns. Councilmember Urban indicated that he did not see, as stated in the "whereas" segment of the Resolution, that this item was in the CIP and ask that someone point that out to him. He mentioned that when this property was abandoned by the Rail Road, Portage was not interested in it, even though he raised the question at that time. He stated that his main concern is the problem of taking the property through eminent domain; nevertheless, he is very supportive of the project and explained. Discussion followed.

Motion by Urban, seconded by Reid, to resolve to support the Village of Vicksburg regarding the Non-motorized Trail Connection Project. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0. Resolution recorded on page 293 of City of Portage Resolution Book No. 46.

* **NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION RECOGNITION:** Motion by Randall, seconded by Ansari, to resolve to recognize the Portage Soccer Club as a nonprofit organization in the City of Portage. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0. Resolution recorded on page 291 of City of Portage Resolution Book No. 46.

* **CITY COUNCIL GOAL SETTING SESSION:** Motion by Randall, seconded by Ansari, to set the date of the annual City Council Goal Setting Session as Monday, January 23, 2017, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Fetzer Institute. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **SPECIAL MEETING FOR BOARD AND COMMISSION APPLICANTS:** Motion by Randall, seconded by Ansari, to set a Special Meeting on Tuesday, January 10, 2017, beginning at 5:30 p.m., to interview Board and Commission applicants. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

COMMUNICATIONS:

COMMUNICATION FROM HARRY S. HAASCH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PMN: After a discussion of the fine services provided by PMN, motion by Urban, seconded by Ansari, to receive the communication from Harry S. Haasch, Executive Director, PMN. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

COMMUNICATION FROM ELIZABETH HART VANDENBERG REGARDING THE "OVERTAKING AND PASSING BICYCLES" ORDINANCE: After an introduction by Mayor Strazdas, there was no discussion. Motion by Randall, seconded by Ansari, to receive the communication from Elizabeth Hart VanDenBerg regarding the "Overtaking and Passing Bicycles" ordinance. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

ANNUAL UPDATE FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL BOARD: Mayor Strazdas introduced this item and William Beck, Chair of the Environmental Board, introduced Ruth Caputo as the esteem previous Chair of the Environmental Board and Environmental Board Vice Chair Martha Dahlinger, and provided an update of the 2016 Goals. He reviewed the City Charter provision for the Environmental Board as having a role of advising City Council. He discussed the progress of the Board in the area of increasing coordination with City Departments and coordinated plan development and the need to look at the whole environment without duplicating efforts already being undertaking by City Departments. He discussed management of invasive species owing to their effect on the environment and the economy in the whole region; support of environmental aspects of City-owned parks; and maintenance of native plants on City-owned property. He discussed the fauna and flora invasive species in more detail, and the involvement of the Environmental Board in Community events. He mentioned that each project will be oriented within the context of the strategic plans for the City of Portage, including prioritizing projects with SMART Goals (Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Reasonable and Time-bound), with specific recommendations as a result. He stressed a closer collaboration with the City Administration and other Advisory Boards and a pro-active educational outreach to engage Portage citizens. Discussion followed.

Motion by Randall, seconded by Reid, to receive the Annual update from the Environmental Board from Environmental Board Chair Bill Beck. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

COMMUNICATION FROM RUTH CAPUTO, 10970 POPLAR BLUFF COURT: Mayor Strazdas introduced this item and Ruth Caputo indicated now is a good time to do a management plan around the Eliason Property to restore Bishop's Bog. She said she had a fruitful conversation with Kendal Klingelsmith, who mentioned Sarah Reding, VP of Conservation Stewardship, Kalamazoo Nature Center, or someone like her, be placed on contract with the City, much like we do with the Forester, to retain some insight as to how to move forward. She indicated that the request is for funding and for getting a level of expertise; and she appreciates any Council consideration in this matter. She also said her experience on the Environmental Board was very valuable and would not be here before Council without having had that experience. Discussion followed. Mayor Strazdas recommended that the matter be referred to the Administration for review.

Councilmember Reid asked how the $25,000 figure was arrived at and what does that encompass. Ms. Caputo responded she worked with Sarah Reding, Chris Barnes and Kendal Klingelsmith only to discover that the Environmental Board does not have enough information about the Portage environment, and this is the reason for asking someone like Sarah Reding to help. She confirmed for Councilmember Reid that this is a request to develop a plan, not to implement the plan, because the expertise and information is necessary before the actual implementation of the plan and explained. Discussion followed.

Motion by Reid, seconded by Ford, to refer the communication from Ruth Caputo, 10970 Poplar Bluff Court, to the Administration for review. Upon a voice 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 November 3, 2016.
Portage Public Schools Policy Governance Retreat and Committee of the Whole Work Session of November 14, 2016.
Portage Planning Commission of November 17, 2016.

OTHER CITY MATTERS:

STATEMENTS FROM CITY COUNCIL: Councilmember Urban restated the need for the City to do more than a resolution regarding hate crimes, and Mayor Strazdas offered to work with Mayor Pro Tem Ansari and City Manager Larry Shaffer to pull off something more meaningful than a resolution.

Councilmember Reid concurred and quoted Edmund Burke, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." She also indicated that Councilmember Urban pointed out to her that the Kalamazoo County Commission approved the ballot wording for the telephone surcharge necessary to fund Central Dispatch (911) to be placed on the May 2, 2017 Special Election. Discussion followed.

Councilmember Randall wished Mayor Pro Tem Ansari a Happy 70th Birthday.

Councilmember Ford cited the new introduction to Council meetings and said that he had the opportunity to enjoy the tree-lighting ceremony with his son.

Councilmember Pearson indicated that the last sentence in the article on the Kalamazoo County Commission approved the ballot wording for the telephone surcharge necessary to fund Central Dispatch (911) to be placed on the May 2, 2017 Special Election reads, "The City of Portage has indicated it will roll back taxes to compensate for the surcharge increase." He was sure there was great sentiment for this from the taxpayers. Mayor Strazdas interjected that the City Council has not made that decision. Discussion followed.

Mayor Pro Tem Ansari congratulated Ariston Petropoulos and Owen Crocker for the winning the writing competition, "What Do You Love About Portage?" He also thanked Kendall Klingelsmith and his staff for the excellent effort at the Christmas Tree-lighting Ceremony.

Mayor Strazdas thanked Councilmembers Reid and Urban for reading all of the essays and thanked Mayor Pro Tem Ansari for being there to light the Christmas trees.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Strazdas adjourned the meeting at 11:07 p.m.

James R. Hudson, City Clerk

***Indicates items included on the Consent Agenda.**