

**NOTES FROM THE SPECIAL PRE-MEETING
OF THE PORTAGE CITY COUNCIL
OF JANUARY 9, 2017**

Mayor Strazdas called the meeting to order at 8:58 a.m. The following Councilmembers were present: Councilmember Patricia Randall and Mayor Peter Strazdas. Councilmember Jim Pearson was present via the conference phone line. Councilmembers Claudette Reid, Richard Ford and Terry Urban and Mayor Pro Tem Ansari were absent with notice and excuse. Also in attendance were City Manager Larry Shaffer, Deputy City Manager Rob Boulis and City Clerk James Hudson.

With regard to Item F.1, Building Access and Video Surveillance, Councilmember Randall asked about the questions submitted by Councilmember Reid. City Manager Shaffer indicated a desire to research answers and respond. Recognizing these questions were submitted at 7:57 a.m., Councilmember Randall indicated she was in transit since then, did not have a chance to look at them, and would read them later.

Councilmember Pearson expressed his concern with regard to the escalating cost found in Item F.3, Household Hazardous Waste Program – Intergovernmental Cooperation. He cited the Saturday service won over by Mr. Shaffer and noted that material collection cost increased 7% and collection participation increased 9%, yet the hazardous waste collection services at the Household Hazardous Waste Center increased 28% from \$32,000 to \$41,000. He asked what the rate was for the last three years for this service where it required negotiations to get Saturday collections back; also, how much of the \$32,000 was returned or did the City have to pay extra for the service.

City Manager Shaffer deferred to Deputy City Manager Rob Boulis for affirmation and recollect that he signed a contract last year for \$31 – 32,000, that there remains a lump sum of \$16,000, and the balances are based on usage - the poundage. He noted that when he asked Public Services Director Rod Russell to put together the Budget, the projection for spending came in somewhere in the neighborhood of \$36,000. He said that this reflects their effort to anticipate increased usage and the increase in the rate per pound.

Councilmember Pearson cited that under the old system, once the Portage funds were used up, the Portage resident would be charged for service. He then mentioned the increased interest in getting rid of old CRT's and expressed his objection to charging Portage citizens because this would discourage usage. He wanted confirmation that this was no longer the case. Mr. Shaffer assured him that Portage citizens are not going to be charged. He mentioned that the CRT drop-off program sponsored by the City and Shupan and Sons had a tremendous response from the public and will be tried again. Mayor Strazdas reflected that this is a governmental agency performing a recycling function; he posed the question that as prices rise, for whatever the reasons, is there a private company that could do the work for Portage and/or the County.

Mr. Shaffer indicated that the City has a good relationship with Mr. Shupan and projected having a conversation with him on this subject. Mr. Boulis and Councilmember Randall listed some of the items they take to the Household Hazardous Waste site, and Mayor Strazdas acknowledged that there might not be a private concern that could handle a whole rainbow of items. In addition, Mr. Boulis indicated that with the single stream recycling, it was made clear that the cost of these items has really decreased, so offsetting the cost of the program has gone down, also. Mayor Strazdas concurred and noted that because of this, some of these items end up at the dump.

Mayor Strazdas made the suggestion that the Environmental Board could do some research and study the options to see how much is recycled and how much simply ends up at the dump.

Mr. Shaffer indicated that the very successful latex paint recycle effort would continue again this year, and that the oil-based paint is now being recycled, also. He gave great praise to Vern Johnson and Jennifer Kosak for running a very clean, top flight operation at the Household Hazardous Waste site. He said both of them helped out with the electronic recycling effort and the paint program, and that both are cooperative and collaborative partners.

Under Item F.4, 2017 March Board of Review, Councilmember Randall expressed a concern for the amount of time required for the three volunteers on the Board of Review, as this can be a lot of time off for someone who is employed. She said that all of the volunteers from last year indicated that they did not want to have any more consecutive days and indicated that there have been volunteers who have worked every single day in March, so Council can set the number of days, but the days add on. She expressed her understanding that there will be less appeals than there were in 2009 at the height of the manipulations by the Assessing Department; however, from last year's number to the anticipated numbers this year, if it is the same, she pondered if the time commitment was too great for some of the people who have previously served.

Mr. Shaffer indicated that all of the members of the pods met three weeks ago to discuss this plan and to get their input; furthermore, they were all 100% in favor of it and thought they could handle it which made sense from a logistical perspective. He noted that the only remaining question was which of the members wish to remain regular members and which of the members would prefer to be alternate members, so no one would feel as though they were arbitrarily cut out. He indicated that Council will hear that discussion at the Special Meeting.

Mr. Shaffer indicated that Kalamazoo County Commissioner Michael Quinn will stand down because of his new commitment. Councilmember Randall asked about new applicants and whether they would just go through the process because the membership is predisposed. Mr. Shaffer assured her that they all know that Council can make any decision it chooses, but he expressed his desire to make sure Council knew that staff had had a conversation about it, and that some members wanted to be regular members and some wanted to be alternate members. Mayor Strazdas cited some flexibility with the alternates option implying the alternatives could come in and help if there was a surge in claims. Councilmember Randall understood that there were 61 letters of appeal from concerned taxpayers and Mr. Shaffer settled on the total number of claims at 100. She expressed her concern that the homeowner is going to be more sensitive about the increase in the value of their houses with the new school millage because not everyone knows that the tax increase did not come from the City.

Mayor Strazdas suggested a communication to share with the taxpayers which agencies, elective boards who have the responsibility of raising taxes; or, which groups raised the taxes and why, as a proactive way of educating people.

In answer to Mayor Strazdas, City Clerk Jim Hudson confirmed only the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Board of Review are being considered at the Special Meeting at 5:30 p.m., January 10, 2017. He also indicated that the increase in interest is the result of a December 16, 2016 article from Tom Haroldson and an article in the *Portager*. In answer to Councilmember Randall, Mr. Hudson responded that those who

have not yet indicated that they can make it to the Special Meeting will be contacted again as a reminder before the meeting.

ADJOURN: Mayor Strazdas adjourned the meeting at 9:17 a.m.

James Hudson, City Clerk