

**MINUTES FROM THE SPECIAL PRE-MEETING
OF THE PORTAGE CITY COUNCIL
OF FEBRUARY 27, 2017**

Mayor Strazdas called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. The following Councilmembers were present: Mayor Pro Tem Ansari and Mayor Peter Strazdas. Councilmembers Patricia M. Randall, Claudette Reid and Jim Pearson were present via the conference phone line. Councilmembers Richard Ford and Terry Urban 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 D.1, Industrial Tax Abatement Application: Stryker Instruments (6520 Portage Road), Councilmember Reid asked for an explanation of why the Tax Abatement District is drawn specifically around the building, and if there is a reason why the District does not include the entire 288 acres since it is anticipated that it will all be industrially developed, as it is zoned industrial. City Manager Larry Shaffer offered to research the answer for her. She noted that Portage has had industrial districts in the past, and have had to expand them, but maybe it should be done once and be ready for future development.

Under D.2, Angling Road Sanitary Sewer Project #417-S, Mayor Pro Tem Ansari welcomed the opportunity to take part in the discussion on this matter at the Regular City Council Meeting.

Councilmember Randall asked if those residents on Angling Road affected by the Special Assessment would be attending the meeting, and if Mr. (Alan) Griffin was aware of what is taking place since he contacted her via e-mail wondering if this matter was still open for debate. Mr. Shaffer responded that he would contact him.

Councilmember Reid referred to the neighborhood meeting conducted by the Administration with the Angling Road residents and asked whether the residents were left with the impression that their vote would count regarding whether they wanted the sewer improvements or not. City Manager Shaffer indicated that he made it clear that it was the choice of the City Council of whether or not improvements were necessary; that Council wanted to know how citizens who were affected felt about the change; that City Council is sensitive to their interests; and, that Council would decide not only what is best for the neighborhood, but also what is in the best interest for the City. He mentioned that Chris Barnes, Kendra Gwin and Jamie Harmon did a great job, but this is retail politics, so each individual who was opposed may have had an issue, specific to their particular wants and needs. He cited the individual who would end up having a tree in front of his house saved instead of removed, so his concern did not turn out to be much of a problem for him. He also related the story of a woman whose husband passed away two years ago, who is not used to taking care of the house on her own, and who does not know how to get through this process. He said he referred her to Kendra Gwin, who is one of the best utility people in the area and explained how she would take care of her needs. He commented that the session was very positive, and indicated they were able to move the needle on this since those who are opposed to the project may still be opposed to the project, but are not vehemently opposed anymore.

When Mayor Strazdas asked if there were any concerns with Item F.2, Kalamazoo County Consolidated Dispatch Authority Surcharge Revenues, Councilmember Reid expressed her delight with the language in the First Amendment to

the Agreement for the Distribution of County 9-1-1 Surcharge Revenues. Everyone else was silent on the matter.

In relation to F.3, Kalamazoo County Identification Program, but not specifically about the item, Councilmember Reid asked whether the tradition of not making an endorsement on positions or proposals by City Council is a policy or just a tradition; and, if not a policy, she proposed that City Council should consider having a policy so that entities that ask for Council endorsements or a referendum of support, for example, know what Council Policy is. Mayor Strazdas asked Mr. Shaffer to research the records for an answer on this.

Mayor Strazdas disclosed a discussion he had with State Representative Margaret O'Brien, who indicated that the State has a program through United Way to obtain Identification Cards. He said she was wondering why another governmental agency would create an ID card program. He explained that the State funds or works with United Way to help people get ID cards for people, and left the deliberations on the item for the Regular City Council Meeting. He again posed the question of whether there was a policy on endorsements and does Council want such a policy. He noted that Councilmembers can personally issue an opinion on anything and listed a few examples; further, he indicated that City Council has not set a vote on a matter outside of the jurisdiction of Portage, and neither has the Federal Government, nor has the County Government, voted on a Portage action.

Councilmember Randall indicated that it has been endorsed by Portage residents and the Police force, and she asked if Council would rather have a letter from the Police force or the City Council. She mentioned that "fracking" and things like that may not directly affect Portage citizens, but something like this would. She admitted she had no knowledge of the United Way Program, but would look for it. She mentioned that she has been included on a "loop" of e-mails from Former Kalamazoo County Commissioner Larry Provancher. She also indicated that Mr. Provancher, St. Catherine of Sienna Church Pastor, Father Ken Schmidt, Chapel Hill United Methodist Church Pastor Barry Petrucci, and others in support of this will be attending the meeting tomorrow. She concluded that to do nothing, to not respond, is a response; and, while it is not a City program, it is part of a County Program. She expressed her opinion that this is very different because it affects Portage residents directly.

Mayor Strazdas concurred that it does affect Portage residents, then commented that Portage residents can meet with the three County Commissioners who represent Portage citizens for discussion, and promised to share his thoughts on this matter at the meeting tomorrow. He said that this is a good thing if there is no other policy in place, and noted that the County Commission will be talking to 50,000 people rather than seven people.

Councilmember Reid asked that Mr. Shaffer research the United Way Program to see if there is a Personal Identification Program that would be available in Kalamazoo County that duplicates this Program.

Councilmember Pearson cited the stated Tax Abatement Policy as an example of a City Council policy, and said that a written policy makes it easier for Council to begin discussions on a policy. He noted that over the last few years, there are more of these matters coming up on Resolutions. He concurred with Councilmember Reid, reflected that this is outside Portage, that he personally only found out about this on Friday, and that feels he does not have enough information to vote on it tomorrow saying seven people are not going to change his mind. He reviewed the draft letter from Public Safety Director White which cites Veterans and the Elderly and asked if this is a major problem, especially with regard to how it affects the City of Portage. He noted that the cost for

the service is unknown and not disclosed even though the Kalamazoo County Commission probably has had discussions on this. He said the Kalamazoo Resolution tells him nothing, other than “10 % of the population,” and closed with he does not like these things to come up “Willy– nilly” and would talk more about this tomorrow night.

In reference to Item M.3.f, Portage Road Reconstruction Open House Meeting Reminder, Councilmember Reid asked what segment of road is being addressed at the meeting. Mr. Shaffer responded he would get that information for Council. Councilmember Reid asked if an outreach to the affected residents along the stretch of the roadway will take place, and Mr. Shaffer assured her that there will be.

ADJOURN: Mayor Strazdas adjourned the meeting at 8:15 a.m.

James Hudson, City Clerk