NOTES FROM THE SPECIAL PRE-MEETING
OF THE PORTAGE CITY COUNCIL
OF MARCH 13, 2017

Mayor Strazdas called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. Councilmember Claudette Reid was present via the conference phone line. Councilmembers, Richard Ford, Jim Pearson, Patricia M. Randall and Terry Urban and Mayor Pro Tem Nasim 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.

Mayor Strazdas began reading the Agenda Outline to determine if there were any questions or concerns with the Agenda for March 14, 2017.

Councilmember Reid asked about the letter from Mitch Clark, 706 West Osterhout, who expressed a concern about the density of the development, and whether the Administration had reached out to him. City Manager Shaffer responded that he personally had not contacted him and would check with Community Development Director Vicki Georgeau on this. In answer to her question of when the letter was presented to the City, City Clerk James Hudson indicated that it came after the Planning Commission Meeting.

Councilmember Reid highlighted Item F.1, in anticipation of the confirmation of the appointment of Nicholas J. Armold as the Director of Public Safety – Police Chief/Fire Chief.

Councilmember Reid asked about the Bond in Item F.2, and using the bond mechanism to purchase some items with a life of only ten years, and vehicles and equipment with a life of only five years, when the language in the document calls for items with at least a 20-year life span. City Manager Shaffer indicated he would check with Finance Director Bill Furry to see if the language needs to be "tuned up." He noted that Portage can borrow for all of these items using the bond approach and, typically within the bond itself, each item is paid off at different rates; for example, the vehicles will be paid off in ten years (he later corrected himself and indicated five years), the technology items in ten years, and the longer term issues in twenty years; and he said that the bond payment is scheduled to meet the life of the investment. He promised a formal answer to her inquiry.

Councilmember Reid asked if the maximum life of the bond is twenty-five years, will any of the items reach the twenty-fifth year, and Mr. Shaffer explained that if the life of the investment is twenty five years, then the bond will extend to the full twenty-five years.

Councilmember Reid asked if the City is mortgaging the vehicles for ten years, knowing their life is only five years, and Mr. Shaffer indicated that the vehicles will all be paid off in five years. He said he would have Mr. Furry set up a schedule for Council review. She asked if Mr. Furry could also provide where the best windows might present themselves for refinancing the Bonds or paying them off depending on the financial status of the City at a given time. Mr. Shaffer assured her that he would ask Mr. Furry to provide that schedule and indicate which bonds are callable and which are not (term bonds, for example), recognizing that over the past two or three years, the City has been pulling callable bonds forward and refinancing them.

Mayor Strazdas asked about the overarching plan between the Administration and City Council to get more cash, to reduce debt, to take on less debt and to avoid going on the debt plan. Mr. Shaffer responded that seven years ago, the City had $107 million in debt and now has about $67 million in debt; also, this year the City will retire about $7 million in debt principle even though the City was originally scheduled to borrow over $6 million and the proposed amount is slightly over $3.5 million. Mayor Strazdas thanked Councilmember Reid and Mr. Shaffer for their explanations that show the City is still on a tremendous path to being debt free.

Councilmember Reid asked for a bid tabulation of the quotes obtained by Director of Technology Services Devin Mackinder, who obtained prices from three other vendors in his quest to find the lowest cost for network switches in Item F.6 in order to see what other vendors were considered compared to the NASPO cooperative purchasing program. Mr. Shaffer responded he would get that for her. Deputy City Manager Rob Boulis agreed with Mr. Shaffer and indicated that this was not done through the typical Request for Proposal (RFP) procedure as part of the reason for not providing the bid tabulation. She recognized that it was an informal search for comparable items to make sure that the NASPO price was a good one, and she recalled talking about these switches seven years ago.

Mayor Strazdas recalled the discussion of a Council Policy with regards to a single source as a heads up of the need for a draft of a Single Source Policy for Council to consider perhaps within the next month that would include single source to cooperatives.

Councilmember Reid indicated that she was befuddled because she did not recall the motion from Councilmember Urban, seconded by Councilmember Pearson, to bring a prepared Resolution of Support for the Kalamazoo County Identification Card Program at the next City Council Meeting. She did recall the short motion "that the Portage City Council expresses humanitarian support for the Kalamazoo County Identification Card Program." She complained that the draft Resolution is very large with a bunch of "Whereas'" and a "Now, Therefore" and that it does not include all of the reasons why Council would support this. She supported a smaller Resolution that states Council supports this concept. Deputy City Manager Boulis noted the motion at the end of the item from Councilmember Urban, seconded by Councilmember Pearson, to bring a prepared Resolution of Support for the Kalamazoo County Identification Card Program to the next City Council meeting, and Councilmember Reid did not acknowledge it, but recounted some of what Councilmember Urban said at the meeting regarding the importance of the Card Program. Mr. Hudson recounted the motion as he recalled it at the meeting and indicated that he would check his recording to confirm what happened.

Councilmember Reid objected to the draft Resolution because it needs to be very simple, plus it would be "more convoluted to bring everything in." Mayor Strazdas recounted his recollection of the meeting and said Council agreed to "put it down in words" and indicated that the document as presented is more than the direction Council was headed. He noted Council agreed to go in this direction, wanted it to be short and sweet, yet in a resolution format. He contended that Council requested it be in a Resolution format. He felt that there is no reason to weigh in on matters where someone wants to do social good for the world, especially in our back yard, the County, the State or a neighboring community as a persuasion for action.

Councilmember Reid agreed that it should be less rather than more, and pointed out that Council was going to come up with a policy in cases where people are asking for support that may not have any impact on the City of Portage. She recognized that Portage has a history of how we have been doing that, but we really do not have a policy. Mayor Strazdas concurred that it would help the Mayor and the City Clerk because he gets asked for a Resolution for "whatever from who knows what group." He mentioned that he reviews the requests and may find that he has to reject them, or he may find that the request is more local, good for Portage and does not put Portage in a negative position. He pointed out that Mr. Hudson also does some vetting of the request; or, a Councilmember may champion a cause, and he has no problem bringing those requests to Council for consideration. He agreed a policy is needed and asked that the Administration work on a policy that can help make the decisions in these matters. Where the request is borderline, he said the policy should indicate which ones should be brought to Council to determine whether or not a Resolution is warranted. He said that Council did decide in this case to adopt a Resolution, but a policy would be helpful.

Under G.1, Presentation by Kalamazoo County Consolidated Dispatch Authority Executive Director Jeff Troyer, Councilmember Reid indicated that Mr. Troyer will be by himself speaking as the Executive Director of the Authority so he cannot ask people to vote in favor of this ballot question. As a member of the Campaign Committee, she wanted to be able to ask for the vote, so as a matter of process, she asked if it was appropriate that she relinquish her position at the dais, go to the podium to ask for the vote, and return to the dais. Mayor Strazdas deferred to City Attorney Randy Brown for her answer. Mr. Shaffer offered to call Mr. Brown, work with him on it, and have her call him afterwards.

ADJOURN: Mayor Strazdas adjourned the meeting at 8:20 a.m.

____

James Hudson, City Clerk