

**MINUTES FROM THE SPECIAL PRE-MEETING
OF THE PORTAGE CITY COUNCIL
OF MAY 8, 2017**

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

Mayor Strazdas asked for questions from Council regarding item D.1, Public Hearing on Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Budget, and City Manager Larry Shaffer answered Mayor Pro Tem Nasim Ansari by saying that Council will hold the public hearing at this meeting and will be adopting the Fiscal Year 2017-2018 Budget at the next meeting on May 23, 2017. Mayor Strazdas indicated that there will be two opportunities for the public, once at the public hearing tomorrow night, and a second opportunity before Council takes action on May 23, 2017.

Mayor Strazdas asked if there were any questions or concerns with Items F.1 through F.7. With regard to Item F.4, Preliminary Plat of The Oaks (Phase I) – 4800 Bishop Avenue, Councilmember Ford asked for more information regarding the wells and whether they are monitoring wells or what. City Manager Larry Shaffer responded that there is a high water table there, so there is a corresponding concern for the impact on the homes. He indicated that Community Development Director Vicki Georgeau would candidly recommend against the plat plan owing to the issue with groundwater, but this is not an option for the City Administration. Deputy City Manager Rob Boulis interjected that the wells are for each individual property and water in the basement, and said he would confirm that.

Councilmember Ford noted that the Developer bored three holes and is monitoring the water now, collecting data. Mr. Shaffer indicated groundwater is an historic issue. Mayor Strazdas interjected that the Developer wants the monitoring to collect data in order to discern whether they need to install their own water table wells. He mentioned that the last time there was a flooding concern in the Black Forest neighborhood, residents came to a Council Meeting and asked Council, "What are you going to do about our water problem in our basement?" He noted the response was that this is private property, so what are you going to do about it; therefore, there is a need to be clear that this is private property and a need to clarify the liabilities and responsibilities on the front end. He posed the question of who will own the problem in the future should the Developer go out of business, and cited the entry signs into the neighborhood as an example. He mentioned that there are State requirements for monitoring wells, and that he is sure that Community Development will have agreements among the Developer, the City and the State; also, the question remains whether they are going to hold some bond money, and for how long, should something happen to the Developer's Company; so, he said, "Lots of red flags."

Mayor Pro Tem Ansari asked if the homeowners will be required to install their own sump pumps, and City Manager Shaffer explained that the City has been pumping water to the storm drains for five or six days in the Black Forest neighborhood to keep the basements dry. Mr. Shaffer assured Mayor Strazdas that the water is going down the storm drains, not into the ground water, and "out of there" until the water table goes down. Mayor Strazdas posed the question of where would the water go if each house

had individual wells, whether it would be directed down the sanitary sewer or not, and asked for more context on that question.

In answer to Councilmember Randall, Mr. Shaffer indicated Ms. Georgeau has encouraged the Developer to put the units on slabs, but the market in Michigan is for basements, and the Developer stressed they want basements.

In answer to Councilmember Pearson, Mr. Shaffer indicated that the City is paying for the Black Forest pumping, and confirmed for Councilmember Randall that it is the only neighborhood in the City where this is being done and the City is paying for it. Councilmember Ford restated his interest in getting more information, and that he is not objecting to it; he just wants more information. Mayor Strazdas indicated that this is the highest the water table has ever been, and Mr. Shaffer said that Transportation & Utilities Director Chris Barnes would confirm that.

Regarding F.7, Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Annual Financial Report, City Manager Shaffer confirmed for Councilmember Ford that it will be two to four years before the DDA will be stable and not require General Fund transfers. He noted that the surplus is at \$250,000 and, once the Tower, the five story office complex, is complete, that will “take us over the top” which will take a couple of years to “pay ourselves back.” He indicated that the City will not be making any contributions next year; this year the City paid \$50,000; then the City will pay \$150,000; then it will pay zero; then we will start to recompense the General Fund for its cash loan to the DDA. He stressed that that is good news.

Mayor Strazdas again called for questions from Council; there being none, he summarized that Item F.4 would be off Consent, so Council can receive a brief presentation on it. Councilmember Randall reminded everyone of the 5:15 p.m. Board and Commission Interview Meeting and Mayor Strazdas asked for a text to let everyone know and be reminded. City Clerk James Hudson indicated that there are 50 applicants, so Mayor Strazdas indicated the need for Council to pace themselves.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Strazdas adjourned the meeting at 8:10 a.m.

James Hudson, City Clerk