

**MINUTES FROM THE SPECIAL PRE-MEETING
OF THE PORTAGE CITY COUNCIL
OF JUNE 26, 2017**

Mayor Strazdas called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. The following Councilmembers were present: Mayor Peter Strazdas. Councilmembers Richard Ford, Patricia M. Randall and Councilmember Claudette Reid were present via the conference phone line. Councilmember Jim Pearson entered the meeting via the conference phone line at 8:06 a.m. Councilmember Terry Urban and Mayor Pro Tem Ansari were absent with notice and excuse. Also in attendance were City Manager Larry Shaffer and City Clerk James Hudson.

Councilmember Randall asked if there will be the introduction of the new Transportation & Utilities Director, Roger Buell, who started Monday, June 19, 2017, at the meeting, and City Manager Larry Shaffer assured her that there would be.

Councilmember Reid called in and Mayor Strazdas reviewed that there was a question of whether there would be the introduction of the new Transportation & Utilities Director, Roger Buell, and Mr. Shaffer confirmed that there would be.

Mr. Hudson noted a Point of Order and notified Mayor Strazdas that there is now a quorum of Council.

With regard to Item F.2, Proposed three-year Labor Agreement with the Portage Police Command Officers Association, Councilmember Ford asked if an agreement for a defined contribution plan had been reached. City Manager Shaffer disclosed that there are two issues before Council: first, at the meeting there will be the question of ratification of the Police Command Officers Contract and; second, one of the issues discussed with the Police Patrol Officers was the Defined Benefit Retirement Plan; that the City has resisted this with great vigor; that the Administration is still negotiating this with the Police Patrol Officers; and that it remains a "sticking point."

Councilmember Reid asked why the City has several contracts with the Police and Fire, instead of one contract, and have one contract going forward. Mr. Shaffer pointed out that each unit has the ability to organize on its own behalf; traditionally, the Police Patrol Officers and Police Command Officers are represented by different units because they each have different concerns. He acknowledged that in the old days, there was some bundling, but Police Command Officers have always felt they have different issues than Police Patrol Officers and, as a result, sought separate recognition as a collective bargaining unit; and, they are well within their rights to bargain separately.

Mayor Strazdas and Mr. Shaffer updated Councilmember Pearson when he arrived via the conference phone. With regard to Item F.2, Proposed three-year Labor Agreement with the Portage Police Command Officers Association, Councilmember Pearson asked if the Police Patrol Officers have had a Defined Benefit Retirement Plan in the recent past. Mr. Shaffer answered in the negative as it was something that was eliminated from their contract at least two rounds ago. He also reminded Council that many municipalities around Michigan, and around the country, have gotten into a lot of financial difficulty over defined benefit retirement plans. He offered his opinion that Portage was very wise to move to defined contribution and emphasized he could not imagine a situation where he would recommend a defined benefit plan to City Council.

With regard to Item F.3, May 2017 Environmental Report, as a member on the Austin Lake Governmental lake Board, Councilmember Pearson indicated the five-year contract for weed reduction in West Lake Management Program that was signed off in 2014 was of interest to the Board. With that, he requested copies of the contract for the years 2015, 2016 and 2017, and the Open Report from the Restorable Lake Scientist, who is doing the Aeration for Austin Lake. Mr. Shaffer indicated he would be happy to obtain that for him.

With regard to Item F.2, Proposed three-year Labor Agreement with the Portage Police Command Officers Association, Councilmember Randall asked Mr. Shaffer how many times the Administration has met with the Police Union, or is the Administration waiting for arbitration. Mr. Shaffer indicated that they have not been meeting frequently at all, and not in the last three months; in fact, he pointed out that the Administration may take them up on an unfair labor practice because of a failure to negotiate since it is not going anywhere. When Councilmember Randall asked if this has affected morale, Mr. Shaffer noted that there have been very good reports regarding morale since changing the schedules about a year ago, even though they have been without a contract since July of 2016. He indicated that some of them are surely looking for a pay increase. When asked if any increases will be retroactive, Mr. Shaffer pointed out that that can be, but it is all negotiable, and retroactivity goes back on the table as of July 1, 2017.

With regard to Item L.3, Lakeview Park Tennis/Pickleball Court Upgrades – Bid Tabulation, Councilmember Reid pointed out that four different requests for bids were released and only one came back. She asked if the Administration followed up to obtain information regarding why the three companies did not bid; and, was it because the companies have too much work, or is the bid process too difficult to result in multiple bids for review. Mr. Shaffer answered that there is a follow-up with companies that do not bid, and he would check with Purchasing Manager Judy Johnson for an explanation regarding this instance. Councilmember Reid asked that in the future, for entities whom we have approached directly who do not present a bid, can Council receive the reasons why they chose not to bid. She indicated she felt it was important to know if it is because they have too much work, or is the bid process too difficult.

Mayor Strazdas offered that owing to his experience at Western Michigan University, bidding anytime in the summertime for summertime work is not a good situation. He said generally the best value is bidding in the winter for summer work.

ADJOURN: Mayor Strazdas adjourned the meeting at 8:14 a.m.

James Hudson, City Clerk