

CITY OF PORTAGE

CITY MANAGER SECOND INTERVIEWS

Tuesday, August 25, 2026



12:35 P.M. Sarah Moyer-Cale, City Manager

City of Hastings, Michigan

1:45 P.M. Aaron Desentz, City Manager

City of Mount Pleasant, Michigan

3:00 P.M. Karen Dempsey-Horan, Chief Administrative Officer

The Woodlands Township, Texas

4:30 P.M. Meet and Greet at Zhang Senior Center



12:35 P.M.

Sarah Moyer-Cale

As provided by Michigan Law, please maintain the confidentiality of my interest in this position.

July 3, 2026

City of Portage
Attn: Mr. Frank Walsh
7900 S. Westnedge Ave
Portage, MI 49002

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council,

I am pleased to submit this letter of interest for the position of city manager for Portage. The significant quality of life amenities that Portage offers as well as leadership's resolute vision and desire for continuous improvement align well with my leadership strengths. My passion is for excellence in public service, achieved through a managerial focus on collaboration and data-driven decision making with measurable results.

When I considered this position and what you are looking for in a manager, two specific things stood out to me that led me to apply. The first is that city leadership has a strong and sincere belief in its own people. From your employees to your residents, it is clear that leadership in Portage views its people as its most precious resource and that providing them with the services they expect and deserve is paramount. The second thing that stands out is how involved and knowledgeable the city council members are in the community and in the internal processes of local government. The council successfully works as a team with its management and staff toward fulfilling defined goals for the betterment of the community. It would be an honor to use my talents to advance the vision of such a community as Portage for many years to come.

The resume enclosed with this letter will demonstrate how the experience, values, and perspective that I bring uniquely fit what you are looking for in your next city manager. I use collaborative leadership and focused strategies to effectuate results. I have significant experience improving the built environment through placemaking, redevelopment, and creating affordable housing opportunities. I have had opportunities to lead in high value intergovernmental agreements and initiatives that are supported by citizens, and I am passionate about public participation that is meaningful and respectful to all.

I greatly appreciate your time and consideration of my application. Please contact me with any questions you have. I look forward to being in touch with you soon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Moyer-Cale', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Moyer-Cale

Sarah Moyer-Cale

Municipal Manager

PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Experienced public administrator who launches the objectives of councils into practical action while promoting a collaborative and accountable work environment. Key areas of experience include public participation, relationship building, community development, communication, financial management, grant writing, planning, project management, and problem solving. Strong understanding of state and federal laws and intergovernmental cooperation.

EDUCATION

Central Michigan University (Mount Pleasant, MI)

Graduate Certificate in Public Administration

Wayne State University (Detroit, MI)

Master of Urban Planning, Housing and Community Development concentration

Moody Bible Institute (Chicago, IL)

Bachelor of Arts, Urban Ministry

TECHNICAL PROFICIENCIES & CERTIFICATIONS

SHRM-SCP with workplace investigations credential (SHRM), zoning administrator training (MSU Planning & Zoning Center), grant writing (Grant Writing USA), crime prevention through environmental design (MSU Extension), asset management champion program (MIC), certified election inspector.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- **City of Hastings (Michigan) September 2021 - Present**
City Manager
- **Village of Paw Paw (Michigan) October 2016 - August 2021**
Village Manager/Zoning Administrator/DDA Executive Director (08/2017 - 8/2021)
Assistant Village Manager (10/2016 - 08/2017)
- **Village of Almont (Michigan) January 2015 - October 2016**
Village Manager/Zoning Administrator
- **Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (Detroit, MI) April 2013 - December 2014**
Planning Assistant

EXPERIENCE BY LEADERSHIP CONCENTRATION

Administration & Financial Management

- Led significant modifications to retiree health funding causing the City of Hastings' Net OPEB liability to decrease from \$8.5 million to \$170,928

- Increased pension funding ratio from 44% to 76% in five years
- Secured numerous grants including CDBG grant for rehabilitation of a historic, mixed use building downtown Paw Paw; \$607,383, MSHDA Neighborhood Enhancement Program grant to assist homeowners with housing maintenance; \$75,000, Recreation Passport Grant from DNR for universally accessible kayak launch; \$82,000, Match on Main COVID-19 grant for business support; \$50,000, MEDC-RAP grant for downtown streetscape improvements; \$474,500 and various other grants for public improvements and activities.
- Negotiated collective bargaining agreements with employee unions and contracts with department heads
- Completion of State Revolving Loan infrastructure projects
- Project and financial planning for transformative reconstruction of Green Street with new underground infrastructure, bike lanes, pedestrian safety improvements, and traffic circle
- Reauthorization and renewal of DDA Development and TIF plan
- Preparation and implementation of fiscal year budgets and amendments
- Capital improvement planning and subsequent annual updates

Leadership & Communication

- Led significant transformation in Fire Department services including hiring new department head, commissioning a third-party review of operations, and various large equipment upgrades
- Initiated EMS service provider assessment and transition to a new provider
- Facilitated strategic reorganizations of various city departments for continued efficiency
- Managed various construction processes including building renovations and infrastructure projects
- Brought the *Government for Tomorrow* program to Hastings resulting in the creation of three student board positions.
- Created public engagement guidelines to foster a culture that values meaningful public engagement
- Redesigned website for improved public communication and transparency
- Implemented online platform for ongoing employee training

Placemaking and Economic Development

- Facilitated the planning process, public input, and grants for the complete rehabilitation of downtown Paw Paw's streetscape, which layered four grant programs; cost of \$3.5 million. Also managed planning and construction of a separate streetscape project in Downtown Hastings totaling \$3.6 million.
- Negotiated a 425 shared services agreement with Rutland Charter Township for new development opportunities and the extension of city utility services.
- Improved protocols for achieving International Property Maintenance Code compliance
- Managed Project Rising Tide activities and collaborations
- Successful development and implementation of a downtown consolidated dumpster program
- Redevelopment Ready Communities program implementation
- Creation of Commercial Rehabilitation District for unique economic development opportunities
- Development of program for use of rights-of-way and sidewalks for outdoor dining

- Drafted design standards for the central business district and revamped the façade improvement grant program to be more effective
- Facilitated the development and implementation of the DDA marketing strategy
- Developed incentive policy for developers who use Brownfield Housing TIF

Community and Housing Development

- Participated in development of Missing Middle Housing initiatives to expand options for two-family and accessory dwelling units in targeted residential neighborhoods that have historically been zoned solely for single-family residential use.
- Facilitated bringing the 60-unit Tyden Lofts workforce housing development to downtown Hastings.
- Used commercial rehabilitation district and brownfield TIF to bring the 135-unit Hastings Riverwalk Lofts apartments, with food hub and childcare center known as “*Mill Street Market*,” to Hastings. The project is currently under construction.
- Introduced ordinance for workforce housing PILOT program which helped support dozens of new housing units in Hastings.
- Wrote and managed MDNR grant for city street tree assessment, mapping, and strategy.
- Leading the community-driven redesign and rebuild of the TangleTown inclusive playground

Boards and Organizations Served

- MML Municipal Services Committee 2025-2026
- Barry County Materials Management Committee - Hastings
- MSUE District 7 Advisory Council - Hastings
- Barry County Chamber and EDA Governance Board - Hastings
- Michigan Public Power Association Board - Paw Paw
- Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study Policy Committee - Paw Paw
- Bike Friendly Kalamazoo Advisory Committee - Paw Paw
- Van Buren County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority Board - Paw Paw
- Market Van Buren Executive Committee (Secretary) - Paw Paw
- Lapeer Development Corporation Board of Directors - Almont
- Next Michigan I-69 International Trade Corridor Delegate - Almont

ORGANIZATIONS

- International City/County Management Association
- Michigan Municipal Executives
 - Board of Directors (2023-2026)
 - Member Support Committee
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)
- Rotary Club Member

HONORS & AWARDS

- 2019 Moody on the Market 40 Under 40
- Sue Marx Smock Endowed Graduate Fellowship Award recipient 2013
- Delta Epsilon Chi honor society inductee 2011

1:45 P.M.

Aaron Desentz

Aaron Desentz

To Mayor Randall and the Portage City Council,

I am pleased to submit my application for the position of City Manager for the City of Portage. After reviewing the community profile and the priorities established by the City Council, I am confident that my experience leading Michigan communities through financial stewardship, strategic planning, organizational development, and community investment perfectly aligns well with the leadership you are seeking.

For thirteen years, I have served communities under Michigan's council-manager form of government, progressively leading organizations of increasing size and complexity. As the current City Manager for the City of Mount Pleasant, I oversee a full-service municipal organization with an annual operating budget of approximately \$60 million. Throughout my career, I have focused on strengthening municipal finances, implementing long-range capital planning, negotiating labor agreements, advancing redevelopment initiatives, and building collaborative relationships with elected officials, employees, regional partners, businesses, and residents.

What particularly attracted me to Portage is the Council's emphasis on thoughtful financial management, transparent communication, redevelopment, housing, and community partnerships. These priorities have been central to my work in Mount Pleasant and throughout my career. I have led more than \$70 million in capital infrastructure investments while reducing financing costs, guided organizational improvements that enhanced service delivery and operational efficiency, and worked collaboratively with public and private partners to advance economic development and long-term community goals. I believe effective local government is built on trust, sound financial stewardship, and a shared commitment to improving the quality of life for residents.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss how my experience and leadership capabilities can help Portage continue building upon its outstanding reputation for fiscal responsibility, community investment, and exceptional public service. As I am currently employed as the City Manager for the City of Mount Pleasant, I respectfully request that my application remain confidential to the fullest extent permitted under Michigan law.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate the opportunity to be considered and look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,



Aaron Desentz, MPA

Aaron Desentz, MPA

City Manager • Municipal Executive • Public Administration Leader



Executive Profile

Municipal executive with more than 13 years of progressively responsible leadership directing complex local government organizations ranging from small rural communities to a full-service city with a \$60 million operating budget. Experienced in strategic planning, public finance, labor relations, capital infrastructure, economic development, and governance. Recognized for leading high-performing teams, implementing operational improvements through Lean management, securing millions in grant funding, negotiating complex labor agreements, and building collaborative partnerships among elected officials, employees, businesses, regional organizations, and state agencies.

Executive Competencies

Leadership

- Executive Leadership
- Strategic Planning
- Organizational Development
- Performance Management
- Change Management

Finance

- Budget Development
- Long-Term Financial Planning
- Capital Improvement Programs
- Bond Financing
- Grant Administration

Government

- Collective Bargaining
- Economic Development
- Intergovernmental Relations
- Communication

Professional Work Experience

City Manager – Mount Pleasant, MI
(Population 21,688)

October 2021 - Present

Primary responsibilities include: Executive leadership for a full-service municipal organization responsible for strategic planning, financial management, public infrastructure, labor relations, economic development, human resources, and organizational performance. Reports directly to the City Commission and provides executive oversight of all municipal operations.

Achievements:

- Structured partnerships with local, regional, and state organizations to deliver more than \$70 million in bonded capital improvements while reducing borrowing costs by over \$10 million through innovative financing strategies.
- Spearheaded organization-wide initiatives to strengthen leadership development, modernize performance management systems, align job descriptions with organizational expectations, and build a culture of continuous improvement across City departments.
- Implemented recommendations from a comprehensive fire service operational study that enhanced deployment strategies while reducing long-term equipment expenditures.
- Led successful collective bargaining negotiations that maintained long-term financial sustainability while preserving productive labor-management relationships.
- Strengthened relationships between City government and the business community through policy modernization aligned with City Commission strategic priorities.
- Modernized enterprise technology, cybersecurity, and digital service delivery to improve organizational resilience and operational efficiency.
- Implemented Lean management principles across City departments to improve performance measurement, accountability, and continuous improvement.
- Directed development of long-range organizational initiatives including workforce development, sustainability planning, leadership development, and strategic economic development efforts.

Adjunct Instructor – Jackson College**May 2025 - Present**

Primary responsibilities include: Develop and deliver lesson plans for public administration courses in the Corrections Education Program. Provide educational instruction and support to a variety of learners. Assess student performance and support learning and development.

City Manager – Eaton Rapids, MI

(Population 5,214)

March 2018 - October 2021

Primary responsibilities include: Chief Operations Officer of the City of Eaton Rapids, responsible for an annual budget of \$17 million. Routine duties include operations management of all City activities in support of the goals and objectives of the City Council. Supervise all department managers and City employees. Responsible for the oversight of all City activities and ensure that operations are carried out effectively in compliance with State and Federal mandates. Manage the City's electric utility in accordance with Federal and State regulations.

Achievements:

- Negotiated for large decreases in the City's pension and other post-employment benefit (OPEB) liabilities totaling \$6.5 million representing nearly two-thirds of the City's total liabilities.
- Aligned organization goals with grant opportunities and successfully received over \$3 million in grants over a 2-year period of time.
- Established Lean management principles to create a more efficient and productive work environment across all departments.
- Rewrote the annual budget and introduced the City's first multi-year budget document. Annual budget also coordinates with a six-year Capital Improvements Plan to plan for facility improvements and other capital expenses.
- Implemented new changes in technology to increase the City's posture against cybersecurity threats, increased organization efficiency, and improved organization capabilities.
- Engaged the City of Eaton Rapids in the Michigan Main Street program to increase capacity for dedicated services to downtown businesses and residents.

City Manager – Leslie, MI

(Population 1,856)

July 2015 – March 2018

Primary responsibilities include: Chief Operations Officer of the City of Leslie responsible for an annual budget of \$2.6 million. Routine duties include operations management of all City activities in support of the goals and objectives of the City Council. Supervise all department managers and City employees. Responsible for the oversight of all City activities and ensure that operations are carried out effectively in compliance with State and Federal mandates. Also served as the City's Zoning Administrator.

Achievements:

- Led a team of industry experts in studying, identifying, and fixing the City's ongoing water issues which started in 2013 which led to the improvement of water quality and public health.
- Directed communications during this time to inform the public about the safety measures and remedies that the City was implementing while coordinating with officials at multiple levels of government.
- Apply for and implement grant funded projects ranging from infrastructure to parks and recreation to public safety equipment. Total grants awarded to the City of Leslie July 2015 to March 2018 were over \$2.7 million.
- Rewrote annual budget to create a more informative document that includes greater in-depth financial analysis as well as more summarized data. Annual budget also coordinates with a six-year Capital Improvements Plan for facility improvements and other capital expenses.

Village Administrator – Shelby, MI
(Population 2,065)

September 2013 – July 2015

Primary responsibilities include: Chief Operations Officer of the Village of Shelby responsible for an annual budget of \$2 million. Oversee day-to-day operations of all Village activities including public works and public safety. Responsible for human resources management of all personnel, finance, and planning/zoning.

Achievements:

- Developed a municipal reorganization plan to save the Village \$147,000 implemented over five years. Implemented comprehensive infrastructure approach to coordinate street, sewer and water projects together to increase efficiency and lower future infrastructure costs.
- Created and implemented a staff review plan to strive for continuous improvement of service delivery with the organization. The new plan included annual employee reviews and assessments which gave feedback on employee productivity.
- Negotiated with local utility workers union and delivered the first mutually agreed contract the Village had seen in over five years. Total concessions gained amount to \$10,000 annual savings to the Village while maintaining excellent benefits for employees.

Emergency Management Fellow – Ann Arbor, MI
United States Department of Veterans Affairs

May 2012 - September 2013

Primary responsibilities included: Conducted research on emergency management procedures at the central hospital and satellite offices. Created and conducted training modules for staff to test implementation of emergency management practices, use of equipment, and use of software. Conducted follow-up drills to measure program effectiveness.

Achievements:

- Of 191 applicants, was selected as one of three fellows for prestigious Office of Emergency Management Fellowship program.
- Managed the requisition and implementation oversight of grant-funded acquisitions exceeding \$100,000 for the procurement of critical emergency response equipment.
- As senior member of the Emergency Management cohort, actively mentored other cohort members on technical skills development and interpersonal communications.

Administrative Intern – Ann Arbor, MI
Washtenaw County Administrative Office

September 2012 – February 2013

Primary responsibilities included: Reported directly to the county administrative team and County Commissioners on research and projects. Answer incoming calls and corresponding emails from county citizens. Managed County Administrator and Commissioner calendars; scheduled meetings, arranged correspondence, and provided needed information as requested.

Government Finance Intern – Dexter, MI

January 2012 – May 2012

Primary responsibilities included: review of internal and external financial documents to ensure compliance with State of Michigan and Government Finance Officers Association standards. Prepared a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report in compliance with standards set by the Government Finance Officers Association.

Education and Credentials

Master of Public Administration

Eastern Michigan University

Awarded April 2013

Master of Management, Strategy, and Leadership

Michigan State University

In Progress - Expected Graduation August 2026

Bachelor of Science - Criminology

Eastern Michigan University

Awarded August 2009

Michigan Certified Assessing Officer

State of Michigan

Awarded August 2019

Zoning Administrator Certificate

Michigan State University

Awarded April 2016

Professional Appointments

Chamber of Commerce Board Member

Mt. Pleasant Chamber of Commerce Oct. 2022– Present

CVB Board Member

Mt. Pleasant Convention and Visitors Bureau Oct. 2022 – Present

ICRH Board Member

Isabella County Restoration House Jul. 2022 – Present

MPA Advisory Board

Eastern Michigan University Feb. 2019 – Present

Legislative Governance Committee on Municipal Finance

Michigan Municipal League Jan. 2021 – Present

Sustainability Committee

International City Managers Association Jan. 2022 – Jan. 2025 (Chair Jan. 2024 – Jan. 2025)

Board of Directors

Michigan Municipal Executives Jan. 2022 – Dec. 2024

Professional Development Committee

Michigan Municipal Executives Jan. 2014 – Present (Chair Jan. 2021 - Jan. 2022)

Legislative Governance Committee on Municipal Services

Michigan Municipal League Jan. 2014 – Dec. 2021

NextGen Committee

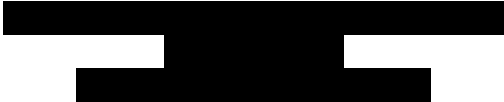
Michigan Municipal Executives Jan. 2014 – Jan. 2018 (Chair Jan. 2016 –Jan. 2018)

3:00 P.M.

Karen Dempsey-Horan

Confidential

Karen T. Dempsey-Horan



July 15, 2026

Patricia Randall, Mayor
City of Portage
7900 S Westnedge Ave
Portage, MI 49002

RE: Portage, Michigan – City Manager Job Opening

Dear Mayor Randall:

I am writing to express my interest in the City Manager position with the City of Portage.

I have extensive experience in local government and am looking for a new challenge. I am passionate about public service and local government's ability to make a positive impact in the everyday lives of its citizens.

The City of Portage is looking for an experienced professional with strong communication and leadership skills who can build relationships, lead staff, and plan for the future while continuing to be a good steward of taxpayer dollars. I feel that my extensive background in local government management processes and expertise in communication and community relations make me an ideal candidate for your position.

I have served The Woodlands, Texas, one of the nation's most successful master-planned communities, for more than 25 years, during a fascinating time of growth and transition. Throughout this time, I have gained a wealth of experience, from working in communications and marketing for major property owner associations to ushering the transition from property owner associations to a governmental entity as part of the executive management team. While my current community is not a city, my current position of Chief Administrative Officer is comparable to an Assistant City Manager position, and our community functions in a council-manager structure.

I believe that my experience would be beneficial to the City of Portage. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to learn more about the city's specific needs and to discuss how my qualifications can assist in meeting and exceeding the community's expectations for responsive governance.

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Kindest regards,

Karen T. Dempsey-Horan

Karen T. Dempsey-Horan

Professional Profile

Local government professional with extensive experience in community relations, strategic planning and organizational management.

Experience

THE WOODLANDS TOWNSHIP, SUCCESSOR ENTITY TO THE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS OF THE WOODLANDS – THE WOODLANDS, TX

Chief Administrative Officer (Assistant General Manager) December 2021 – Current

Responsible for direct oversight of Communications, Human Resources, Township Secretary and Customer Engagement Departments. As a member of the executive management team, advise and collaborate on organization-wide management, with a focus on internal and external communications and Board policy matters.

- Initiated Employee Engagement Committee to plan organization-wide team-building activities and events to enhance workplace culture and increase employee satisfaction.
- Initiated plan for cross-departmental teams to collaborate on community education programs with overlapping themes to enhance and streamline messaging to the community.
- Consolidated Environmental Services, Neighborhood Services and Resident Care Center into a new Department of Customer Engagement to focus on high quality information distribution and customer service.
- Served as a trusted advisor to the President/Chief Executive Officer in all aspects of organizational management.

Township Secretary/Assistant to the President Assistant to the President

**January, 2020 – December 2021
January 1, 2015 – December 2019**

Responsible for supervision of day-to-day operations for the President/General Manager's Office and Legislative Affairs Department. As a member of the executive management team, served as a primary liaison to governing Boards of Directors, focusing on special projects of community interest, policy management, board operations, and strategic planning, including ongoing incorporation project.

- Managed agenda planning and development, including a successful transition from in-person to videoconference meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Tasked with consolidating fragmented staffing and roles to create a city secretary's office in anticipation of future incorporation.
- Managed historic election regarding incorporation as a municipality.
- Served as a trusted advisor to the President/General Manager in all aspects of organizational management.

Management Analyst

April 2007 – December 2014

As a member of the executive management team, served as a primary liaison to governing Boards of Directors, focusing on special projects of community interest and board operations. Served as project manager for ongoing future governance project and assisted in facilitation of transition from homeowners associations to governmental entity.

- Advised president/general manager in analysis of organizational management and company-wide processes and policies.
- Researched and presented proposals for projects, programs and services related to local governance and public policy.
- Developed and managed budget for President/General Manager's Office and Board of Directors.

- Worked with Board of Directors to develop, review and revise policies related to Board operations and Board roles.
- Facilitated formation of civic neighborhood association through grassroots effort.
- Developed, analyzed and coordinated budget initiatives.
- Developed and managed projects with broad impact on community and organizational operations.

Publications Manager

Senior Community Relations Specialist

Community Relations Specialist

January 2006 – April 2007

January 2001 – December 2005

August 1998 – January 2001

Implemented and assisted in community-wide communications for municipal-type service provider to master-planned community. Served as Associate Editor for award-winning monthly full-color publication, The Woodlands Community Magazine.

Organized all aspects of editorial content for magazine, including collecting articles from other sources, editing, writing and photography.

- Assisted in design and update of award-winning web site
- Managed printing projects from concept, design and bidding through proofing and delivery.
- Assisted in creating and implementing new corporate logo, identity and brand management.
- Aided in development of cross-departmental communications team and award-winning strategic communication plan.
- Co-wrote organizational values.
- Assisted in planning and organizing grand openings for parks and ribbon-cutting ceremonies.
- Composed and distributed press releases.

Education

Aquinas College – Grand Rapids, MI

B.A. in Communication, Concentration in English

Graduated cum Laude, 3.482 G.P.A

Model-Netics Management Training Program – The Woodlands, TX

Honors, Awards and Memberships

Aquinas College Nomination for Outstanding Graduate in Communication Arts

Aquinas College Dean's List, Seven Consecutive Semesters

Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)-Houston Bronze Excalibur Award for Interactive Communications for the Community Association's web site

Communicator Award Honorable Mention for the Community Association's web site

Communicator Award of Distinction for The Woodlands Community Magazine and Strategic Communications Plan

Communicator Award of Excellence for the Community Associations' Guide to Services

International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) Award of Merit in Publications for The Woodlands Community Magazine and the Community Associations' Guide to Services

City-County Communications and Marketing Association (3CMA) National Savvy Award of Excellence for Strategic Communications Plan

Texas Recreation And Park Society (TRAPS) Excellence in Marketing for Swim Pass Marketing Plan

Invited to present at Alliance for Innovation conference on the topic of strategic communications planning

Member, Engaging Local Government Leaders (ELGL)

Member, Texas Association of Municipal Information Officers (TAMIO)

Member, International City Managers Association (ICMA)