

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 24, 2015

The Regular Meeting was called to order by Mayor Strazdas at 7:30 p.m.

At the request of Mayor Strazdas, City Manager Laurence Shaffer called the roll before the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance. The following members were present: Councilmembers Nasim Ansari, Richard Ford, Patricia M. Randall, Claudette Reid and Terry Urban, Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson and Mayor Peter Strazdas. Also in attendance were City Manager Laurence Shaffer, City Attorney Randy Brown and City Clerk James R. Hudson.

Mr. Dale Mentor, Deacon Chair of the Victory Baptist Church of Portage, gave the invocation and City Council and the audience recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

PROCLAMATION: Senator Margaret O'Brien and House of Representatives Brandt Iden presented a Resolution of Respect from Governor Rick Snyder, Senator Margaret O'Brien, House of Representatives Brandt Iden and the 90th Legislature to Retired Park, Recreation and Public Services Director Bill Deming for his nearly 35 years of service. Bill, Margaret, Brandt and City Council had a photograph taken together.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Motion by Ansari, seconded by Reid, to approve the Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes and the Regular Meeting Minutes of February 10, 2015, as presented. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 6 to 0 with Mayor Strazdas abstaining.

* **CONSENT AGENDA:** Mayor Strazdas asked Councilmember Reid to read the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Reid asked that Item F.5, March 10, 2015 Committee of the Whole (COW) Meeting, be removed from the Consent Agenda. Motion by Reid, seconded by Urban, to approve the Consent Agenda motions as amended. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE REGISTER OF FEBRUARY 24, 2015:** Motion by Reid, seconded by Urban, to approve the Accounts Payable Register of February 24, 2015. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS: Senator O'Brien introduced her District Director, Megan Hicks, who will be representing her at the 157 Kalamazoo Mall Office in Kalamazoo. She also provided and explained a fact sheet on the upcoming sales tax issue for the May 5, 2015 Special Election, and promised to bring updates on the budget process as it develops. Discussion followed.

REPORTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION:

CENTRAL COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (CCTA) UPDATE: Mayor Strazdas asked City Manager Laurence Shaffer for comment. Mr. Shaffer introduced Central County Transportation Authority (CCTA) Executive Director Sean McBride for any questions, who deferred to CCTA Chairperson Linda Teeter, 471 West South Street, Kalamazoo. She expressed her appreciation to Councilmember Urban and Mayor Pro Tem Pearson for their contributions to the CCTA that was formed by the Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners in August 2014 and began meeting in September 2014. She mentioned that this is the first of six public input session that will be held over the next thirty days and thanked City Council and Mr. Shaffer for the opportunity to have this session to hear public comment on the CCTA. She indicated that all comments presented to the Kalamazoo County Transit Authority (KCTA), the CCTA and the City of Kalamazoo Transit Authority will be reviewed at a joint meeting on March 19, 2015.

Mr. McBride provided a brief overview of the status of public transit in the community, including the following topics: Increases in Ridership, the Metro County Connect, Line-Haul Bus Service, a Metro Transit Route Map Display and Community Service Vans. He revealed some of the new Service Enhancements such as Converting to Hybrid Battery which allows for nearly 50% Diesel emission Reduction, Travel Training, KVCC Transportation Fare which provides students a semester pass for budgeting purposes, and the Multi-modal Transportation Center. To help with planning a bus trip, he covered some of the enhancements to the rider experience, including “Real-Time Passenger Information” with the use of a web portal for a particular bus location, the bus schedule that can be accessed using a Smart Phone App, and an automated telephone service information option or an email/text alert; these allow the rider to wait in a warm location and walk over to the bus stop as the bus arrives. He mentioned that the buses are ADA-compliant that there are new electronic LED signs at key transfer points in the system with more to be installed once the weather breaks.

Next, Mr. McBride shared that the future transition of the Public Transit System of Kalamazoo will go from the KCTA and the CCTA to a Regional Authority and thanked Councilmember Urban and Mayor Pro Tem Pearson for their fine efforts in this regard. He revealed that the Public Transit System cost is about \$14 million per year, broke down the funding and explained the local millage structure by outlining those municipalities included in the taxing district. He pointed out that one precinct in Texas Township, one precinct in Pavilion Township and half of Oshtemo Township opted out of the taxing district during the 30-day opt out period. He discussed the policy that once the millage is passed and levied, service will cease to exist outside the taxing district and any areas that may require service outside the taxing district must enter into a service agreement with the CCTA which would replace the millage revenue that would have been raised if they were within the boundaries of the CCTA.

Mr. McBride discussed the future millage structure, the millage timeline, a data comparison, the millage rates, and the service hours with other similarly situated cities in the state. He disclosed that the level of the millage consideration for the voters is at a rate of up to 0.75 mills for a period of five (5) years for 2016 through 2020, and he emphasized, “Only if the full 0.75 is needed.” He covered the levels of service that are part of the plan, the economic development benefits to be realized as a result of bus service, and the need for retail and industrial workers to use bus service for commuting.

He reviewed the next steps, including: feedback on the August Election proposal for the millage increase as a result of the six public input sessions that will be held over the next thirty days; education of the voters about the millage proposal; on-going feedback on how the CCTA and the governmental bodies can work together; and on-going feedback on how the Public Transit System can better meet the needs of the community.

Mayor Strazdas thanked Mr. McBride, confirmed that Portage residents are currently paying 0.4 mills for public transit, and that they will be asked to pay 0.75 mills with the CCTA making the determination how much of the 0.4 mills is required for Metro Connect. Mayor Strazdas emphasized that Portage citizens need to know: what is the cost, what are citizens going to get for that cost and what are the benefits to Portage and the region.

Councilmember Ansari asked for a confirmation that the millage will be up to 1.15 mills and Mr. McBride explained that there will be two millages and that is the range being considered. He indicated that they will be able to figure out what the exact required amount is once the 0.4 mills expires in 2016, but it should be no more than 0.4 mills

Mr. McBride confirmed the indication by Councilmember Reid that both of these millages are “up to,” so as the 0.75 goes into effect, there could be a change in how much of the 0.4 millage is being levied prior to 2016. Councilmember Reid also recognized and stressed the importance of the new GPS system for the users of the system, especially young people who want to know how quickly they need to leave their location to get to a new destination. She asked whether there has been any consideration regarding the spoke wheel configuration of the system as the citizens of Portage have to go downtown to get to outlying areas, and she specifically mentioned the ride to KVCC since it becomes a very long bus ride. Mr. McBride responded that he is currently releasing a Request for Proposal for a community

planning/visioning process to obtain feedback from the community and to obtain some studies for a ten-year plan, including the bus rapid transit option and sub-hubs such as the Crossroads Mall with additional connections from there, for example, to KVCC or to the Meijer Store in Oshtemo. He promised to come to City Council for feedback on the studies as it will become a guiding document for system design needs in the future.

Councilmember Randall asked if there is a chance that the communities that have opted out will participate and, if they do, will that lower the burden on the other jurisdictions, and Mr. McBride answered in the affirmative. He disclosed that he has been in conversation with Texas Township and KVCC and has had a very positive response from both of them. He mentioned that Oshtemo Township sent him a letter indicating a desire to begin the conversation regarding a service agreement with the CCTA, but no conversation has taken place as yet. Furthermore, he indicated that he has had no contact from Pavilion Township regarding this matter. Discussion followed.

At the request of Councilmember Urban, Mayor Strazdas asked if any members of the public wished to speak. There being none, Councilmember Urban indicated that the CCTA discussed what kinds of millage rates should be considered and with what kinds of service offerings should be considered, either maintaining service or enhancing service. He also indicated that the CCTA Board considered a little higher millage, up to 0.8 mills, with the option of looking at adding routes, including a possible "rim" route, but the majority of the CCTA Board chose not to go to that level. However, he said that this discussion will not be finalized until the meeting on March 19, 2015. Discussion followed.

Mayor Strazdas summed up and asked Portage residents to talk to CCTA Board Members and discussion followed. Motion by Urban, seconded by Ford, to receive the update and presentation from Central County Transportation Authority (CCTA) Executive Director Sean McBride. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **COMPREHENSIVE LIABILITY, PROPERTY AND AUTO FLEET INSURANCE:**

Motion by Reid, seconded by Urban, to approve a one-year agreement for comprehensive liability, property and auto fleet insurance through the Michigan Municipal Risk Management Authority (MMRMA) at a total cost not to exceed \$446,134 for the period of March 1, 2015, to March 1, 2016, and authorize the City Manager to execute all documents related to this action on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **LOCATE SIGN IN A CITY RIGHT-OF-WAY, LLC, 2317 EAST CENTRE AVENUE:**

Motion by Reid, seconded by Urban, to approve the License to Locate Sign in a City Right-Of-Way for North of Centre, LLC, 2317 East Centre Avenue, and authorize the City Manager to execute the agreement on behalf of the city. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016 PROPOSED BUDGET REVIEW SCHEDULE:** Motion by Reid, seconded by Urban, to establish April 21 and May 5, 2015, from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. as the dates for review of the proposed Fiscal Year 2015-2016 Budget. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

MARCH 10, 2015 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (COW) MEETING: Councilmember Reid indicated that the City Council had deferred the Discussion of the City Retail Profile to guide City Council efforts as a topic for the next COW meeting. Discussion followed.

Motion by Ford, seconded by Reid, to set a Committee of the Whole (COW) Meeting for Tuesday, March 10, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. in Conference Room No. 1 to discuss enriching culture, increasing community engagement and the City Retail Profile topics. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **JANUARY 2015 SUMMARY ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVITY REPORT:** Motion by Reid, seconded by Urban, to receive the January 2015 Summary Environmental Activity Report as information only. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **DEPARTMENTAL MONTHLY REPORTS:** Motion by Reid, seconded by Urban, to receive the Departmental Monthly Reports. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

* **MINUTES OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS MEETINGS:** City Council received the minutes of the following Boards and Commissions:

Portage Historic District Commission of January 7, 2015.

Portage Youth Advisory Committee of January 12, 2015.

Portage Environmental Board of January 14, 2015.

Portage Human Services Board of January 22, 2015.

Portage Planning Commission of January 22, 2015.

NEW BUSINESS:

APPOINTMENT TO THE KALAMAZOO COUNTY CONSOLIDATED DISPATCH AUTHORITY SEARCH COMMITTEE: Mayor Strazdas provided some background information on the Kalamazoo County Consolidated Dispatch Authority. He explained that the City of Portage volunteered to provide the Request for Proposal for an Executive Search Committee for the Kalamazoo County Consolidated Dispatch Authority. He said the Authority now wishes to form a subcommittee to select the Search Firm and have asked for one representative from Portage. He confirmed that there are four Councilmembers who have expressed an interest on the Kalamazoo County Consolidated Dispatch Authority Search Committee: Councilmembers Reid and Ford, Mayor Pro Tem Pearson and Mayor Strazdas himself. Councilmember Ford withdrew his interest and Mayor Strazdas asked for thoughts from Councilmember Reid or Mayor Pro Tem Pearson.

Councilmember Reid referred to a recent opinion from City Attorney Randy Brown regarding membership on the CCTA, and cited his opinion that while Council may appoint a member to serve on a Board outside the City, they act as a member of that Board and their primary fiduciary responsibility is to that Board and the mission of that Board. With that, she asked Mr. Brown whether the sitting members, two regular and two alternate members, should come to Council in order to decide this because the Portage members are not functioning as a part of City Council, the members are functioning as a part of the Board for Dispatch. Mr. Brown questioned whether his opinion is relevant to this decision since the Authority is the entity that asked each member to pick somebody, and the Authority could have picked a search committee much like the Council can choose a committee to do its search, so it was the decision of the Authority to do this, not the decision of City Council, and is legal to do so.

In answer to Councilmember Urban, Mayor Strazdas indicated that the search committee will only be selecting a search firm and the voting members will go through the interview process and select the Director.

Motion by Randall, seconded by Ansari, to appoint Mayor Pro Tem Pearson to the Kalamazoo County Consolidated Dispatch Authority Search Committee. Discussion followed regarding the importance of flexibility and the availability of the Councilmember selected, and Councilmember Urban stressed the importance of having the Mayor serve in this capacity here as head of the body. Discussion followed. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 5 to 2. Yeas: Councilmembers Ansari, Ford, Pearson and Randall and Mayor Strazdas. No: Councilmembers Urban and Reid. Discussion followed.

OTHER CITY MATTERS:

STATEMENTS OF CITY COUNCIL: Councilmember Ansari thanked Kalamazoo County Commissioner Scott McGraw for attending the meeting and Linda Teeter for her service.

Councilmember Ford thanked Linda Teeter, Sean McBride and the elected officials for attending the meeting and expressed appreciation to Bill Deming for his years of service to the City of Portage. He reminded everyone that the Winter Blast Race is Sunday and cautioned everyone to be careful and to have safe travels.

Councilmember Randall expressed her appreciation for the Portage Central High School production of the musical, *West Side Story*, and all who contributed to the effort. She noted that registration for the Winter Blast Race on Sunday is at Portage Central High School on Saturday, February 28, 2015, at Portage Central High School (Commons area) from 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., and late registration for the 5k only is available at Portage Central High School (Commons Area) from 6:30 a.m. – 7:30 a.m. on Sunday, March 1, 2015.

Councilmember Urban said he toured the Earth Fare Health Foods Store on Kilgore Road and announced the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for this welcomed addition to the community is at 6:45 a.m. on Wednesday, February 25, 2015. He also stressed the need for comment from the public for the CCTA millage proposal as presented by Mr. McBride earlier.

City Manager Shaffer complimented Sean McBride and his group and noted that as part of the South Westnedge reconstruction, the plan is to incorporate new bus shelters and accoutrements at the bus stops along South Westnedge Avenue. He mentioned the two meetings with approximately eighty Portage citizens regarding leaf and brush pick-up along private roads in the City, and he said that Department of Public Services Director Rod Russell is meeting with property managers representing the various property owners and associations to see what accommodations are necessary to expedite the process and will bring a report back to Council possibly at the next Regular City Council Meeting. He indicated that on Wednesday, March 4, 2015, at 6 p.m., Council Chambers, there will be a meeting of the property owners of the City Center area to discuss the issues identified in *Portage 2025* and the Comprehensive Plan for the possibilities of a City Center development. He finished by describing the two sessions held to discuss the International Fire Code where the Administration met with those opposed to the Code and reached some accord and satisfaction with them. He said that questions were posed that will be answered formally, and that a proposal regarding the Code will be before City Council at the next Regular Meeting.

Councilmember Reid announced that a newly formed opportunity for business and community leaders to engage with state and local government representatives about issues that affect the region has been established as the Listening Post, which is a conversation over a cup of coffee as an effort to build relationships and open lines of communication necessary to grow Southwest Michigan for the better. She noted that this is a collaboration between the Chamber of Commerce and the Council of Governments (COG) with the first meeting to be held on Friday, February 27, 2015, from 8:00 a.m. until 9:00 a.m., at the Kalamazoo County Road Commission, 3801 East Kilgore Road, Kalamazoo, and thereafter on a monthly basis on the fourth Friday of each month.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson announced a new television show on CBS called *Battle Creek* that premieres on March 1, 2015, and that CBS will be having a big premier in Battle Creek, as well as satellite premiers in Southwest Michigan, including one for 100 people, first come, first served, at 9:00 a.m., Room 209 in the Bernhard Center of Western Michigan University. Discussion followed.

Mayor Strazdas said he will be at the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the new Earth Fare Health Foods Store on Kilgore Road at 6:45 a.m. on Wednesday, February 25, 2015, and mentioned what a great addition this is for the whole region. He likened the Earth Fare Store to a Farmer's Market in

Portage since they will be procuring a lot of local products and organic products for the store, but Portage will not be paying any tax dollars for it because Earth Fare will be paying taxes to be here. He mentioned the Winter Blast Race on Sunday and that he will be starting the race with a fake gun and thanked all who will not be able to travel from their homes for their patience with this inconvenience.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Strazdas adjourned the meeting at 8:46 p.m.

James R. Hudson, City Clerk

***Indicates items included on the Consent Agenda.**