

CITY COUNCIL MEETING SUMMARY

January 11, 2011

CHECK REGISTER

- ◆ Approved the Check Register of January 11, 2011, as presented.

REPORTS FROM THE ADMINISTRATION

- ◆ Accepted for first reading the proposed amendment to the City of Portage Code of Ordinances, Chapter 34, Fire Prevention and Protection, reflecting changes in the 2009 edition of the International Fire Code to be considered for final adoption on January 25, 2011.
- ◆ Approved the purchase of one 2-ton, 4-wheel drive, medium-duty service truck; six marked Police patrol vehicles; three unmarked Police sedans; and two 4-wheel drive service utility vehicles through the State of Michigan Purchasing Program (MiDEAL) at a cost not-to-exceed \$354,566, and authorized the City Manager to execute all documents related to these purchases.
- ◆ Approved acquisition of the right-of-way, sidewalk easement and temporary grading easement for 4815 West Milham Avenue in the amount of \$86,400 and authorized the City Manager to execute all applicable documents related to this matter on behalf of the city.

COMMUNICATION

- ◆ Received a communication from Councilmember Patricia Randall regarding the Portage Property Tax Database for years 2000-2010, reaffirmed the action taken by City Council at the April 27, 2010 Special City Council Meeting, and voted to conclude City Council investigation of Assessment Practices of the City of Portage Assessor's Office.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- ◆ Adopted the temporary moratorium ordinance pertaining to medical marihuana.
- ◆ Approved the Community Development Planning and Zoning Site Re-inspection Fee and adopted the accompanying resolution.
- ◆ Set the board of Review to be two three-member boards and appointed Theodore Varas with term ending January 31, 2012, to serve with William Stannard and Jay Olwean on one Board and reappointed Wes Mazurek and appointed Michael Simon and Bill Fries with terms ending January 31, 2012, to serve on the other Board.

NEW BUSINESS

- ◆ Reappointed David Felicijan and Marianna Singer and appointed Timothy Bunch and appointed Jeff Bright as Alternate with terms ending February 28, 2014, to the Zoning Board of Appeals; appointed Christine Broberg and Tiffany Raynes with terms ending December 31, 2013, to the Historic District Commission; appointed Allan Reiff with term ending May 31, 2011, to the Planning Commission; appointed Alexis Georgoff, Kelcie McGowan, Kasia Mietusiewicz, Fatima Mirza and Carly Siko with unfulfilled terms ending June 30, 2011, to the Youth Advisory Committee.

STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS

- ◆ Jim Pearson, 3004 East Shore Drive, did not think that City Council addressed the "following sales" issue well enough during the response by the Administration to the presentation and follow-up discussion regarding the Portage Property Tax Database for years 2000-2010.
- ◆ Michael Leinwand, 6677 Oleander, complimented the efforts of Councilmember Randall with regard to tax assessments.
- ◆ Michael Alexander, 1601 Greenview, expressed his appreciation for the openness of City Council with regard to tax assessments.
- ◆ Ken Smott, said he invited Joyce Foondle and Christine Biddle to his home because there were six or seven changes, so felt a need for a new baseline, and wants to pay his fair share of taxes, but felt there was too much haste in deciding to do nothing and asked the Administration to follow up.
- ◆ Alan Sawyer, 6714 Bunchberry Drive, questioned the accuracy of the data he received via Councilmember Randall from the City Assessor's Office that he analyzed and presented after Councilmember Randall's opening statement regarding the Portage Property Tax Database for years 2000-2010, asked the City Assessor to look at it and advocated "going forward."
- ◆ Greg Engle, 8336 Brookwod, indicated that he purchased his home in 2004, the effective age dropped, the taxes went up in 2009, and it caused him a hardship owing to his low escrow account.

STATEMENTS OF CITY COUNCIL AND CITY MANAGER

- ◆ Councilmember Randall thanked those in the audience for staying late, and expressed her condolences to former public officials, Ted Vlieg for the passing of his wife, Mike Quinn for the passing of his father and Jamie Graham for the passing of his mother.
- ◆ Councilmember Bailes thanked the Administration for an enlightening orientation of the responsibilities of the various city departments.
- ◆ Councilmember Reid thanked all of the citizens who attended the meeting and observed that people complained about how complicated taxes are, suggested they contact the Assessor, thanked Councilmember Randall for her work but, because the Assessor can not enter property unless invited, suggested that citizens request an on-site inspection.
- ◆ Councilmember Urban indicated that the Assessor's Office data from the Portage Property Tax Database for years 2000-2010 is both correct and incorrect as it was collected before computerization, using the windshield assessment method, but the variables should not change three or four times. He indicated that the efforts over the last ten years to correct the data have been successful and that the customer service issues have been addressed.

- ◆ City Manager Evans asked citizens to ignore the solicitation circulating in the mails for homeowners to purchase “pipe insurance” coverage from the home to the street.
- ◆ Mayor Pro Tem Sackley said that he was encouraged by the rhetoric regarding the Portage Property Tax Database for years 2000-2010 since there was no mention of fraud, corruption or conspiracy as in the past, except by himself, and made the point that Portage assessment practices have been honest, that any issues that have arisen have been addressed and there is a consensus of City Council to conclude City Council investigation of Assessment Practices of the City of Portage Assessor’s Office.
- ◆ Mayor Strazdas encouraged attendance at “Stepping Out,” a fundraiser for Portage Public Schools, February 12, 2011, at the State Theater, Kalamazoo, and called for City Council Committees to convene and get to work in preparation for the budget process.

COMPLETE MINUTES OF EACH CITY COUNCIL MEETING ARE AVAILABLE ON THE CITY WEBSITE AT PORTAGEMI.GOV, IN CITY HALL AND IN THE DISTRICT LIBRARY. MINUTES OF CITY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST FROM VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS.