

CITY OF PORTAGE HUMAN SERVICES BOARD

Minutes of Meeting May 26, 2016

CALL TO ORDER: 6:32 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Staff liaison Elizabeth Money called roll: Diane Durian (aye), Effie Kokkinos (aye), Ray LaPoint (absent), Elma (Pat) Maye (aye), Nadeem Mirza (aye), Edward Morgan (aye), Sandra Sheppard (aye), Fiorella Spalvieri (aye), Amanda Woodin (aye), and Lindy Nebiolo, Youth Representative, (aye). A motion was made by Maye and supported by Durian to excuse LaPoint. Motion passed 8-0.

STAFF PRESENT: Elizabeth Money, Neighborhood Program Specialist; Vicki Georgeau, Director Community Development; Laurence Shaffer, City Manager; Randy Brown, City Attorney; and Bryan Beach, Assistant City Attorney

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Durian moved and Spalvieri supported approval of the minutes. Motion passed 8-0.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Draft Non-discrimination Ordinance: Woodin opened the discussion on the draft ordinance and then a presentation was given by Community Development Director Vicki Georgeau. The presentation provided the history and the development process for the proposed ordinance, including research and reference to existing state and federal laws and model ordinances adopted by many other Michigan communities, including the City of Kalamazoo, Kalamazoo Township, and Oshtemo Township. The overview covered the major points including: core protections, intent and purpose, discriminatory practices that would be prohibited if adopted, exemptions, and enforcement and penalties. Georgeau stated several times that the proposed ordinance supplements existing state and federal laws by offering the same protections for sexual orientation and gender expression that already exist for race, gender, familial status, weight, ethnicity, and other protected classes. At the end of the presentation, Woodin asked if the Board had any questions. Morgan asked if people felt uncomfortable in a restroom or public area with someone who was transgender, could they file a complaint under this ordinance? How would the city address complaints if someone felt uncomfortable? Georgeau again summarized the process to file a complaint and the process of investigation and added that the ordinance addresses concerns over people who were being discriminated against. As there were no further Board questions, Spalvieri moved and Durian supported opening the public hearing at 7:16 p.m. Motion passed 8-0. Twelve citizens spoke in regards to the ordinance, as follows: Andy Robinson, 622 Cliffwood Avenue; Cheryl Gilliam, 9727 Southern Oaks Court; Megan Weinberg, 704 S. LaGrave, Paw Paw (employed at Abraxas, 701 E. Milham Avenue); Christy Moore, 6570 Aldersgate Drive; Rita Stevens, 5249 Windyridge; Scott Anderson, 420 Gladys; Nancy Acker, 2396 Shady Oak Cove; Molly Williams, 2425 Sagebrush, Kalamazoo; Ginger Clifton, 3429 Woodhams Avenue; Reverend Duffy Peet, 8353 Greenspire Drive and on behalf of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church, 10441 Shaver Road; Cathy Greaves, 2651 Woody Noll Drive; Mike Hanley, 6323 Echo Court 2A. All citizens spoke in favor of adopting the ordinance, with several giving personal testimony. Testimony included several statements on the overwhelming support and acceptance from the Portage community for themselves or their transgender children, outstanding support from the Portage Public School District, and inclusion in their work environments. Several citizens worked for organizations in a social service or human resource capacity and stated they had seen the negative effects of discrimination first hand, that laws like these were unfortunate but necessary, and that it was time to protect the LGBT community consistent with protections for others. Several citizens spoke on behalf of their children and that when it was time for them to look for employment, shop, or use public facilities, they did not want to have conversations with them about what discrimination would look like. They wanted their children, and anyone else not currently protected, to enjoy the same rights and privileges afforded everyone else. Cheryl Gilliam gave poignant testimony of how she remembers what it was like

in the South during segregation and that there was a time when white people could not imagine using a bathroom or sharing anything with a person of color and that it made them uncomfortable. If someone was uncomfortable using a restroom with a transgender person, then they needed to learn to adapt. Discomfort is not a reason to continue to discriminate and Portage needed to be one of the cities filled with equality. Reverend Duffy Pete, Unitarian Universalist Community Church, read a statement on behalf of the entire congregation in support of the proposed ordinance. As no further comments were given, Morgan moved and Mirza supported closing the public hearing at 7:40 p.m. Motion passed 8-0. Woodin indicated that City Attorney Brown was present to address any questions. As there were none from the citizens, she asked if he had anything to add. Brown indicated that much had been said, and that Director Georgeau's presentation provided a good overview, and the Board had already had several meetings where the ordinance had been discussed. He had nothing further to add unless the Board had any additional questions. As they did not, Woodin indicated they would vote on their recommendation of the proposed ordinance at the June 2, 2016 Human Services Board meeting and from there it would go to City Council. Georgeau added that it could be on the City Council agenda as early as June 14, 2016 for a first reading with a second reading on June 28th or the first meeting in July. Woodin thanked the audience for coming and for their participation.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Kalamazoo Transit Authority LAC update - Maye: Maye had no update for the Board.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS: None

ADJOURNMENT: Maye moved and Morgan supported adjournment. Motion passed 8-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Money,
Neighborhood Program Specialist