



NOVEMBER 2024

PORTAGER

A Natural Place to Move



A Message from Mayor Patricia M. Randall

I am always curious about the lives of those who came before me. I am fascinated with ancient artifacts which give us a window into how they lived, loved and survived. History can be found in museums, ancient ruins, carved into rock and embedded in caves. However, one does not have to visit a museum or faraway places to witness that which came before us; living trees could tell us many a story if only they could communicate.

Trees appear in hundreds of proverbs, sayings that express simple truths or experiences throughout modern and ancient history, in every culture and from every continent. People cared about their trees and the impact they had on their lives, as the proverbs reveal:

A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they know they shall never sit. – Greek proverb

The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best is now. – Chinese proverb

A tree falls the way it leans. – Bulgarian proverb

A tree does not move unless there is wind. – Afghan proverb

A seed hidden in the heart of an apple is an orchard, invisible. – Welsh Proverb

There is not a way into the woods for which there is also not a way out of it. – Irish Proverb

A tree doesn't fall with one blow. – Yiddish proverb

The wisdom captured in these quotes serves as a reminder of our deep human connection to nature and the responsibility we hold to nurture and protect it. Planting a tree is more than just an act of environmental stewardship, it's a profound gesture of hope, a symbol of life, and a legacy for future generations to enjoy.

The May 7, 2024 tornado destroyed 48,000 trees, many in Portage. The loss of 3,900 trees in Celery Flats and along the Portage Creek Bicentennial Park Trail was a staggering loss. Today, our city's tree canopy is 27%, which is far below the U.S. Forestry Service recommended amount of 40-60%.

Trees provide many benefits. Here are just a few examples:

- » Reduce carbon monoxide
- » Lower temperatures during the hottest months
- » Improve air and water quality

- » Expand wildlife habitat
- » Attract economic development

The city is not only committed, but has already taken steps to plant more trees by allocating \$110,000 annually and seeking all available grant opportunities. Reforestation is a long-term goal which has caught the attention of the Portage Parks Foundation. The "Leaf-A-Legacy" program has committed to planting four hundred trees over two years and they are seeking your help. With the expertise of a forester, 6-8 foot native trees will be planted in the areas most impacted by the storm. You can learn more and donate to the cause here: portageparksfoundation.org.

As we enter the holiday season, consider paying it forward by planting a tree to help restore wildlife habitats. Organize your neighborhood, workplace, social, and faith-based groups to support this endeavor. Instead of buying that obligatory gift for someone who already has everything, buy them a tree. Then, once we have become part of history, someone in Portage will enjoy the shade of a tree that they did not plant. How awesome is that?

Happy Thanksgiving Portage!

– Patricia M. Randall

Grants Available to Human Service Agencies Providing Assistance to Portage Residents in Need

The City of Portage is committed to supporting non-profit agencies that offer critical services to residents in need, particularly those that help individuals maintain stable housing. Each year, the city allocates grants from the General Fund to organizations that address housing needs and provide essential services, such as home repairs for seniors, emergency assistance, and more. These services ensure that residents can stay in their homes and focus their income on housing expenses, taxes, insurance, and necessary repairs to maintain a safe living environment. The assistance also includes transportation for appointments and work, along with vital support like food and clothing.



For FY 2025-26, Human Public Service funding will be available starting July 1, 2025. Although the exact amount of funding for FY 2025-26 is not yet determined, the city

allocated \$206,000 from the General Fund for human services in this current fiscal year. Not all communities offer this type of funding, but the Portage City Council views it as a valuable investment that directly benefits residents.

Non-profit agencies in the greater Kalamazoo area are encouraged to apply for these grants by submitting a Human Public Service grant application to the Department of Community Development.

Qualifying Criteria for Grants

The following criteria will be used by the City of Portage Human Services Board to evaluate funding requests:

- » Extent to which the program services meet a basic human need in support of housing (e.g., provision of housing units such as rental units, opportunities for homeownership, or elderly, assisted, and supportive housing). Programs that provide essential services like food pantries, health and safety services, job training, transportation, and quality of life enhancements to help people remain in or obtain housing are also eligible.
- » Extent to which program services are accessible to Portage residents.
- » Extent to which clientele are economically or socially deprived, senior citizens, or people with disabilities.
- » The number of Portage residents to be served.
- » Outreach efforts to Portage residents.

- » For new programs or agencies, the ability to secure other funding. For established programs (five years or more), the ability to leverage additional funding. Startup programs will not be accepted.

To qualify for funding, applicants must provide direct services that benefit low-income residents of Portage. Applicants should be prepared to offer detailed information on the income and demographics of the clientele they serve.

The FY 2025-26 Human Public Service Grant Application is available on the Human Services Board web page at portagemi.gov/180.

Application Deadline

To be considered for funding during the FY 2025-26 funding cycle, complete applications must be submitted by 12 PM on Tuesday, November 26, 2024, to:

Portage City Hall
Department of Community Development
7900 South Westnedge Avenue
Portage, MI 49002

Emailed applications will not be accepted. For additional information, contact the Department of Community Development at 329-4477.



Curious about Human Services Available in Portage?

Are you curious about the extensive range of services and resources available to Portage residents? Perhaps you're seeking assistance for yourself or a loved one, are interested in volunteering, or simply want to learn more about the support systems within our community. If any of these scenarios resonate with you, mark your calendar for the upcoming Community Services Open House, where service organizations will share their invaluable resources and assistance offerings.

This event promises to be an informative and engaging occasion, providing you with an opportunity to learn about the multitude of community services that cater to the diverse needs of Portage residents. Explore programs and services designed to enhance the lives of children,

teenagers, and families. Discover organizations that provide essential support in areas such as housing, food, transportation, and financial assistance. Learn about local healthcare resources, clinics, and wellness programs.

Discover non-profit organizations and community groups working tirelessly to address social issues like poverty, homelessness, and domestic violence. Your involvement can be a powerful force for change. If you're passionate about giving back to the community, there will be information about local volunteer opportunities.

The Community Services Open House is not just an event; it's an opportunity for us, as a community, to come together, support one another, and strengthen the bonds that make Portage a special place to live. Together, we can build a stronger, more connected, and compassionate Portage.



Community Services Open House

Thursday, November 7, 4:30 - 6:30 PM
Portage Zhang Senior Center (230 East Centre Avenue)

Fall Leaf Collection Program Continues through December 6

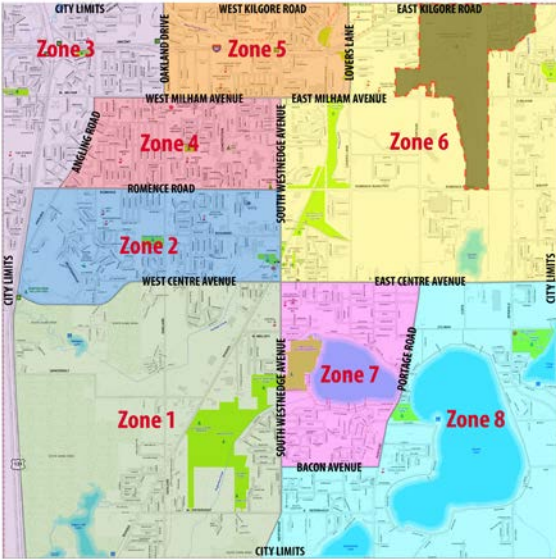
The annual Fall Leaf Collection Program began on October 28 and will run through December 6, weather permitting. If you missed your first collection, not to worry! Two more collections will take place in each neighborhood zone.

This year, to better accommodate leaf volumes, the city has modified the zone map to include eight zones instead of the previous seven zones (see schedule to the right). Complete program details along with the full collection map and schedule for the eight leaf pickup zones are available at portagemi.gov/282. Residents can also use the handy Address Locator Tool found on the city website.

- » Place leaves at the curb by 7 AM on your scheduled pickup date.
- » **ONLY loose leaves or leaves bagged in biodegradable paper bags will be collected. Leaves in plastic bags (including biodegradable plastic bags) WILL NOT be collected.**
- » Loose leaves should be raked off the grass and into the street. Leaves bagged in biodegradable paper yard waste bags should be placed next to the curb as close to the street edge as possible. **Please do not block traffic or bike lanes.**
- » Public streets will be swept following the third and final collection, weather permitting.
- » **There is NO burn period in Portage.** Burning of leaves is not permitted at any time.
- » If you notice a neighbor who may need help getting their leaves to the curb, **lend a hand! #PortageCares**

Questions regarding the Fall Leaf Pickup Program can be directed to the Department of Public Works at 329-4444.

Zone	1st Collection	2nd Collection	3rd Collection
1	Monday, October 28	Monday, November 11	Monday, November 25
2	Tuesday, October 29	Tuesday, November 12	Tuesday, November 26
3	Wednesday, October 30	Wednesday, November 13	Wednesday, November 27
4	Thursday, October 31	Thursday, November 14	Monday, December 2
5	Friday, November 1	Friday, November 15	Tuesday, December 3
6	Monday, November 4	Monday, November 18	Wednesday, December 4
7	Tuesday, November 5	Tuesday, November 19	Thursday, December 5
8	Wednesday, November 6	Wednesday November 20	Friday, December 6



RECYCLE BATTERIES!

We accept many types and sizes of batteries, visit our website for details.





For more information visit our website:
kalcounty.com/hhw
or call 269-373-5211.

This service is provided by the Kalamazoo County Household Hazardous Waste Center at no additional fee through a City of Portage dedicated, voter-approved millage.



Shake Your Mailbox Now to Avoid Winter Woes

Before winter arrives, take a few moments to check the stability of your mailbox. A quick “shake test” can help you avoid bigger issues later. If your mailbox moves when shaken, it may not hold up against the force of snow being pushed by plows. Tighten screws, secure the post, and repair or replace any weak parts now to save yourself the hassle later. Fix loose hinges on the door and make sure reflective house numbers are clearly visible for postal workers and emergency responders.



Mailbox Repair & Replacement Program

Although city snowplow operators do their best to avoid damaging mailboxes, the weight of snow being cleared from the roads can sometimes cause unavoidable

damage. If your mailbox is damaged due to snow removal, the City of Portage offers repair or replacement services through the Mailbox Repair Program.

If your mailbox or post cannot be repaired, the city will replace it with a standard U.S. Postal Service-approved model. The replacement mailbox is available in white or black and measures 6.5” x 19” x 8.5” with a hinged door and flag. Posts are replaced with a standard 4” x 4” wooden post. For residents with a specialty mailbox or post, the city offers a \$44 reimbursement toward the cost of the standard replacement, allowing homeowners to upgrade at their own expense.

Report a damaged mailbox at reportit.portagemi.gov or call the Department of Public Works at 329-4444.

YOU HAVE MORE FRIENDS THAN YOU KNOW

Portage Zhang Senior Center Events, Activities & Classes

Explore More. Have Fun. Live Well.

Find us at 203 East Centre Avenue | mypzsc.portagemi.gov | To find out more or to register, call 329-4555

Experience a vital, vibrant community offering a wide variety of services and activities that match the needs of active older adults. **Membership and participation at the PZSC is open to anyone over the age of 50. Portage residency is not required.** All events are held at the Portage Zhang Senior Center unless otherwise noted.

Date Night Cooking Class

Enjoy a culinary journey with our Date Night Cooking Class that promises to deepen connections and sprinkle love into every bite – perfect for couples looking to mix fun, learning, and romance. Savor a glass of champagne or non-alcoholic sparkling juice to set a joyful tone, and regardless of your cooking skills, prepare a delicious meal under the expert guidance of Meg Mattison. The menu will feature Southern Small Plates, crafted to spark conversation between couples and strengthen bonds.

» Tuesday, November 19, 6 - 9 PM
» \$60 per couple (Registration required)



and friendly competition. Light snacks and water provided; pop adult beverages available for purchase.

» Wednesday, November 13, 4 - 6 PM
» \$10 per person (Registration required)

Holiday Charcuterie 101

Join Laurel Day from the **Do Something Co., A Creative Workshop & Events Company** as she presents a festive and delicious meat and cheese platter. Learn where to shop, what to buy, and how to prep and execute an artful display of delicious snacks for your holiday parties.

» Thursday, November 21, 1 - 2 PM
» \$20 Members | \$25 Non-Members (Registration required)

Holiday Wine & Cheese Pairing

Join us for a fun and educational afternoon of wine and cheese pairings with **The Cheese Lady** and **Great Lakes Wine and Spirits**. Enjoy a variety of soft creamy cheeses with crisp white wines, or bold cheddar and Gouda with rich red wines as you learn how each wine and cheese complement each other. Wow



your guests at your next holiday gathering with your newly learned knowledge and pairing abilities. Bring a friend and don’t miss out on this unforgettable event. The price includes samples of four wines and four varieties of specialty cheese.

» Wednesday, December 4, 2 - 3:30 PM
» \$20 Members | \$25 Non-Members (Registration required)

Kiln Fused Glass Ornaments

Dive into the festive spirit with **Glass Art Kalamazoo** to learn the basics of cutting and arranging flat glass for the fusion (melting) process, using an array of styles and vibrant glass colors. In this special holiday-themed kiln-fusing workshop, participants will create an entirely unique holiday ornament. The workshop fee includes all tools and materials. Suitable for crafters of all skill levels, no prior experience in glass art is required. Completed projects will be ready for pickup 5 to 7 days after the workshop

» Wednesday, November 20, 2 - 4 PM
» \$25 Members | \$30 Non-Members (Registration required by November 18)



YOUR BACKYARD IS BIGGER THAN YOU THINK

Call to Artists! Black History Month Local Artist Display



The inaugural Black History Month Local Artist Display will be an exhibition of visual arts featuring local artists. Submissions can include paintings, prints, photographs, mosaics, ceramics jewelry, sculpture, wood turnings, mixed media, and more. To be eligible, artists must be current residents of Portage, Michigan and their artwork must reflect the themes of honoring “Black History Month” or “Black Futures in Portage.”

Artwork images must be 300 DPI or higher. Winners will need a minimum of five works that adhere to the themes for the exhibition. Prizes will be awarded by the Portage Parks Foundation for 1st place (\$500), 2nd place (\$250), and 3rd place (\$100). For additional information, contact Portage Parks & Recreation at (269) 329-4522. **Apply by completing an application online at mypark.portagemi.gov by November 19 at 5:30 PM.**

Yoga 4 Life

Relax, refocus, and improve your strength and flexibility with yoga to enhance your life. Join personal fitness trainer, Josie Moorlag, for this monthly four-week yoga class. Open to adults 18 and up with all levels of experience. Bring your own yoga mat and wear comfortable exercise clothing. Limit 20 participants.



*** Nov 5 class will be held at Schrier Park (850 W Osterhout)**

- » Tuesdays, November 5 - 26, 7 - 8 PM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)*
- » \$59 per participant (Registration required)

Traditional Holiday & Tree Lighting Celebration

- » **Saturday, December 7, 6 PM**
- » **The City Centre & Celery Flats Historical Area (7335 Garden Lane)**
- » **FREE (No registration required)**

Celebrate the magic of the season at the eagerly anticipated Portage Traditional Holiday & Tree Lighting Celebration at the Mayor’s Tree in the City Centre. This cherished event begins with the heartwarming essay readings from the winners of the “I Love Portage” essay contest – Portage students, who capture the essence of our wonderful community.

The festivities continue with the Portage High School singers performing “Santa Claus is Coming to Town,” creating a perfect prelude for the much-anticipated arrival

The Ice Rink at Millennium Park! 280 Romence Road

The Ice Rink at Millennium Park will open for the 2024-2025 winter season on Friday, December 13, weather permitting. This large outdoor refrigerated rink features skate rental, skate sharpening, snack concessions, restrooms, lockers, and an excellent skating surface!

December 13 to December 19 & January 6 to March 2

- Monday - Thursday Closed
- Friday 3 - 9 PM
- Saturday & Sunday 12 - 6 PM

Winter School Holidays: December 20 to January 5

- Daily 1 - 8 PM
- December 24 & January 1. 1 - 6 PM
- Christmas Day Closed

Portage Parks & Recreation Events, Camps & Classes

1,000 Acres. 20 Parks. One City.

The Portage Parks system is multi-faceted with activities and opportunities for families and people of all ages. To find out more and register online, visit mypark.portagemi.gov and click



REGISTER NOW!

PORTAGE IdeaWorx Becoming a Small Business Owner

This IdeaWorx class covers the essentials of starting a small business, from evaluating the market potential for your goods and services to understanding startup costs. Designed for entrepreneurs crafting their first business plan, this class will equip you with the knowledge and tools needed to turn your business dreams into reality.

- » Thursday, November 7, 6 - 8:30 PM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » \$15 per participant (Registration required by November 2)

Creative Corners: Giant Holiday Card

Tailored to students with special needs and artists of all abilities, Creative Corners students follow a lead artist through each project while adding their personal touch. Put on your elf cap and get into the holiday spirit! Work on a collaborative piece of art with the group and help Portage celebrate the holidays. Create a Giant Holiday Card that will be featured at the Celery Flats Historical Area for the Holiday Tree and Card Walk. Participants are encouraged to bring a chaperone (fee is waived for chaperones). Please wear clothing that can get messy. The fee covers art supplies and tools. Artworks designed during this program may be featured in future art exhibits.



- » Wednesday, November 13, 6 - 7 PM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » \$5 per participant (Registration required)

of Santa and Mrs. Claus in a horse-drawn carriage. Follow the carriage as it leads excited onlookers down the scenic Portage Creek Bicentennial Park Trail to the historic Celery Flats where more holiday delights await.



Stuart Manor will host Santa and Mrs. Claus where they will greet children and listen to holiday wishes while spreading festive cheer. Then step into the 1856 one-room Schoolhouse where children can write letters to Santa, ensuring their holiday dreams are mailed directly to the North Pole.

Take a stroll through the grounds of Celery Flats Historical Area as you are serenaded by the choir and entertained by a lively brass band, marvel at the ice sculpture demonstrations, and warm your hands by a toasty fire. Enjoy complimentary milk and cookies served in the Grain Elevator or indulge in hot

Zoo to You: Michigan Wildlife

Let the zoo come to you! Explore the wild side of Michigan and learn about animals that might be in your backyard! Remember...your backyard is bigger than you think. Meet ambassador animals from John Ball Zoo in these exciting sessions, each session featuring different animals. The presentation begins at 11 AM, arrive by 10:45 AM to be seated. A chaperone must accompany participants under the age of 18. Children ages 3 or younger may attend for free.



- » Saturday, November 16, 10:45 AM - 12 PM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » \$5 per participant (Registration required, including chaperones)

Portage Holiday Market



The Portage Holiday Market is the place to find unique gifts and whimsical stocking stuffers for your friends and family. Shop local and support vendors selling tasty treats, crafts, handmade products, and holiday goodies. Mark your calendar now for this always-popular holiday event!

- » Saturday, December 14, 9 AM – 1 PM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » FREE – open to the public (No patron fee)

Vendors: Visit portagemi.gov/834 for booth information.



chocolate and cider provided by the Portage Community Center (donations accepted).

Experience the joy, fun, and glistening winter wonderland that Portage offers all while sharing the holiday spirit with friends and family.

Santa Skate

Join us for a festive afternoon on the ice with Jolly Ol’ Saint Nick! Skate to the sounds of holiday music and enjoy special moments with Santa Claus himself. Don’t forget your cameras to capture this fantastic holiday photo opportunity with family and friends.

- » Saturday, December 14, 1 - 3 PM
- » \$5 Open Skate | \$3 Skate Rental (No registration required)



November 5, 2024 Presidential Election

Tuesday, November 05, 2024 | 7 AM - 8 PM

Make your voice heard! All registered Portage voters are encouraged to exercise their right to vote on November 5, 2024 in the General (Presidential) Election. Polls are open from 7 AM to 8 PM.

For personalized voter info, visit the Michigan Voter Information Center at mi.gov/vote or scan the QR code.

Michigan Voter Information Center
Personalized Michigan election information



- » Confirm your voter registration status
- » View a sample ballot
- » Find your polling location
- » Check your absentee ballot status
- » ...and more!

December Board of Review

The City of Portage Board of Review will meet at City Hall (7900 South Westnedge Avenue), Tuesday, December 10, 2024, at 9 AM until such time as the Board completes its business. The December Board of Review can only address clerical errors and mutual mistakes of fact related to real and personal property assessments.

LAST CHANCE The December Board of Review is also the last opportunity to request a **Poverty Exemption** for the 2024 tax year. Download a Poverty Exemption Affidavit application at portagemi.gov/156. You can also obtain an application by visiting the Office of the City Assessor. Completed forms should be received by the City Assessor no later than Monday, December 2, 2024.

The December Board of Review is prohibited from hearing disputes related to property valuation for the 2024 tax year. Any clerical errors or mutual mistakes of fact that need to be presented to the Board can be scheduled by calling 329-4433 or by visiting the Office of the City Assessor prior to the meeting.

Portage Business Directory

Our business directory is growing! Portage business owners and operators – sign up today to bring business your way.

The Portage City Council is dedicated to fostering a business-friendly environment that supports small businesses across our city. To further this goal, the Portage Business Directory was established to enhance the connection between businesses and the community. This platform not only brings businesses and residents closer but also promotes the growth of our vibrant local economy.

Explore the Portage Business Directory today at portagemi.gov/businessdirectory. To register your business and be part of this growing community, scan the QR code to the right and complete the registration form.



www.portagemi.gov

Portage Business Directory
Strengthening the Connection Between
Business and Community



Scan the QR Code or visit
portagemi.gov/PBDSignMeUp
to sign up for the Portage Business Directory

Connect with Your Community

A strong community thrives on the active involvement of its residents. In Portage, we all share the responsibility of shaping and nurturing the place we call home. By getting involved, you can build connections with your neighbors, discover what makes our city special, and contribute your talents, passion, and resources toward its growth.

Here's how you can stay informed:

Social Media: Follow the City of Portage on our nine official platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, X, and LinkedIn. Stay in the loop by liking, sharing, and engaging with our posts.

Notify Me®: Sign up for real-time city updates tailored to your interests, so you never miss important news.

PortageAlert: Register for PortageAlert to receive critical emergency notifications right when you need them.

Report It!: Use our Report It! tool to let us know about a concern or issue in your neighborhood

PortageConnect Podcast: Tune in to PortageConnect to hear about upcoming events and get the latest updates on city services.

Now that you're plugged into what's happening in Portage, it's time to roll up your sleeves and make an impact. Here are some ways to contribute to the well-being of our community:


Election Worker or Volunteer: Support the City Clerk's Office by becoming an election worker or volunteer.

Advisory Board or Commission: Apply to serve on one of the City Council's advisory boards or commissions, and help shape the future of Portage.

Parks & Recreation Volunteer: Lend a hand at one of our exciting Parks & Recreation events.

Park Patrol: Join the Park Patrol to ensure our parks remain safe and welcoming for everyone.

Engaging with your community is a rewarding way to create positive change. It fosters collaboration and makes Portage an even better place to live. Why wait? Start your journey today and help shape the future of our vibrant city!



7900 South Westnedge Avenue
Portage, Michigan 49002-5160
portagemi.gov | (269) 329-4400

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City Closing Notices

Non-emergency city offices will be closed on the following dates:

Thanksgiving

- » Thursday, November 28
- » Friday, November 29

Christmas

- » Tuesday, December 24
- » Wednesday, December 25

Regular Business Hours

- » Monday - Thursday, 7:30 AM - 5:30 PM
- » Friday: 8 AM - 12 PM

Portage City Council

Portage City Council meetings are held twice a month on Tuesdays at 6 PM at Portage City Hall (7900 South Westnedge Avenue) in Council Chambers and are always open to the public.

The City Manager

The City Manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the city. Citizens are encouraged to contact the City Manager with concerns or complaints about city services by visiting reportit.portagemi.gov or by calling Complaint Resolution at 329-4404.

Televised City Meetings

City Council, Planning Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals meetings can be viewed live on Spectrum channel 995 and AT&T channel 99. All meetings can be viewed via live streaming at portagemi.gov/205.

NOVEMBER 2024

Wednesday	6	6:00 PM	City Council Meeting
	7	7:00 PM	Planning Commission Meeting
	11	7:00 PM	Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
	19	6:00 PM	City Council Meeting
	21	7:00 PM	Planning Commission Meeting

The Portager

The *Portager* is the official publication of the City of Portage, used to inform residents of city services and events, as well as city projects that have significance to Portage citizens. The newsletter is published monthly and delivered to every mailbox in the 49002 and 49024 zip codes.

This month's front and back cover photo features Eliason Nature Reserve.

PORTAGER Editor
Mary Beth Block | blockm@portagemi.gov