

Board of Review to Meet in March

The City of Portage Board of Review, appointed by the City Council, is responsible for hearing property tax valuation appeals from Portage property owners. The board may address property valuation (SEV), assessment roll classification changes, and Property Tax Poverty Exemption requests.

2026 Assessment Change Notices

The City of Portage will mail Annual Assessment Change Notices for all real properties the week of February 16, 2026. These notices contain critical information including:

- » Changes in assessed and taxable values from 2025 to 2026
- » The status of the Principal Residence Exemption (PRE)
- » Whether the property's taxable value was uncapped due to an ownership transfer

Please note that delivery times may vary. If you do not receive your notice shortly after this time frame, contact the City Assessor for assistance.

Discuss Property Valuations With the Assessor

Property owners are encouraged to address any questions or concerns about their property assessments with the City Assessor before the 2026 Assessment Roll is certified. After the roll is certified and forwarded to the Board of Review, the City Assessor cannot make any changes to the property valuations for 2026.

Many concerns can be resolved before appearing – or without needing to appear – before the Board of Review. Certain questions, such as those related to assessment change notices, can often be handled over the phone. However, more detailed inquiries may require an informal review with assessing staff. To ensure ample time for discussion, property owners must contact the Office of the City Assessor no later than Friday, February 27, 2026.

Board of Review

If you believe your property valuation is inaccurate, and assessing staff were not able to address your concerns, you may appear before the March Board of Review to appeal the valuation. The board will meet on Tuesday, March 3 at 9 AM for their Organizational Meeting.

Appointments to meet with the Board of Review can be made on the following dates:

- » Monday, March 9, 9 AM - 12 PM & 1:30 PM - 4:30 PM
- » Tuesday, March 10, 9 AM - 12 PM & 1:30 PM - 4:30 PM
- » Wednesday, March 11, 1:30 PM - 4:30 PM & 6 PM - 9 PM
- » Thursday, March 12, 9 AM - 12 PM & 1:30 PM - 4:30 PM

The board will then meet on Tuesday, March 24 at 9 AM to finalize the roll.

How to Appeal to the Board of Review

Property owners wishing to appeal to the Board of Review can schedule an appointment by calling the Office of the

City Assessor at (269) 329-4433. Alternatively, appeals can be submitted in writing. Written appeals must be received in the Office of the City Assessor no later than 5:30 PM on Wednesday, March 11, 2026. These appeals must include:

- » A completed form L-4035: Petition to the Board of Review (available at portagemi.gov/156), and
- » Supporting documentation (see Preparing for an Assessment Review or Appeal)

You may submit written appeals by:

- » Mail to 7900 South Westnedge Avenue, Portage, MI 49002
- » Email to assessingdept@portagemi.gov
- » Drop-off at the Office of the City Assessor
- » Drop off in the 24-hour drop box at City Hall

All appeals, including written submissions, must be received before the final meeting of the March Board of Review.

Understanding Taxable Value Changes and Property Assessments for 2026

Taxable value change is limited by the Inflation Rate Multiplier (IRM) set annually by the State Tax Commission, unless new construction or a transfer of ownership has occurred. For 2026, the IRM is 1.027, meaning taxable values may increase by 2.7% unless:

- » New construction or physical changes have been made
- » Omitted property was discovered
- » Ownership of the property has transferred

Under Michigan law, the selling price of a property is not the presumptive true cash value. While the selling price is considered, it is not the sole factor in determining a property's assessed value. The Assessor and the Board of Review rely on many factors to determine a property's value, ensuring a fair and equitable assessment process.

Preparing for an Assessment Review or Appeal

Property owners meeting with assessing staff or appealing to the Board of Review are encouraged to provide supporting documentation to strengthen their case, such as:

- » Documentation of recent sales of comparable homes in the neighborhood
- » Current appraisals of the property
- » Receipts or invoices for recent construction or improvements
- » Photographs showing property damage or deterioration
- » Other information pertinent to the property's assessment

The City Assessor may also provide evidence supporting the valuation listed on the assessment roll or use the information during the review process to make any necessary or required adjustments.

If property owners are unsatisfied with the results of the Assessor's review process, they retain the right to appeal to the Board of Review for further consideration.

Questions? Call (269) 329-4433 to speak with Assessing staff.

Do You Qualify for a 2026 Property Tax Poverty Exemption?

The City of Portage Board of Review may approve a property tax exemption for residents who meet poverty income level guidelines. To qualify for this annual exemption, applicants must:

- » Be currently receiving the Principal Residence Exemption (PRE)
- » Meet the income and asset requirements outlined below

City of Portage Income Guidelines	
Household Size*	Maximum Income
1 person	\$19,563
2 persons	\$26,438
3 persons	\$33,313
4 persons	\$40,188
5 persons	\$47,063
6 persons	\$53,938
7 persons	\$60,813
8 persons	\$67,688

* For households with more than 8 persons, add \$6,875 for each additional person.

Applicants must provide proper documentation of income, such as:

- » Federal and state income tax returns for all individuals residing in the principal residence
- » An affidavit for any resident not required to file federal or state income tax returns for the current or preceding tax year

In addition, household assets (excluding the principal residence) must not exceed \$25,000 and must be reported on the application. A list of all required documentation is included on the application form.

The *Property Tax Poverty Exemption Application* form is available at the Office of the City Assessor or online at portagemi.gov/156. To ensure consideration at the March Board of Review, completed applications must be submitted to the Office of the City Assessor by March 2, 2026.

The Board of Review will evaluate applications based on the City of Portage income and asset guidelines. Applicants are not required to appear before the Board of Review in person. Exemptions granted are subject to audit by the Michigan Department of Treasury.

For questions or additional details, contact the Office of the City Assessor at (269) 329-4433.

Make a Splash This Summer: Lifeguards Wanted



Looking for a summer job that makes a difference and keeps you by the water? The City of Portage is hiring lifeguards for the upcoming summer recreation season, and we're inviting you to join a team that helps keep our community safe at Ramona Park Beach.

The lifeguard season runs from mid-May through Labor Day, with flexible schedules ranging from 30 to 40 hours per week, including weekends and holidays. Applicants must be at least 16 years old. Red Cross Lifeguard Certification is preferred, and training opportunities may be available.

Pay starts at \$15.23 per hour, making this a great opportunity for students or anyone looking for a rewarding, active summer job.

How to Apply

Interested candidates should review the full job posting and apply online at portagemi.gov/200. Applications are also accepted at the Department of Human Resources at City Hall, 7900 South Westnedge Avenue.

Questions? Call Human Resources at (269) 329-4533 or text (269) 998-1385 for more information.

The City of Portage is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

YAC Winter Event: Valentine's Day Fun!

Celebrate Valentine's Day with creativity, connection, and community spirit! Join the Portage Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) for a free, family-friendly Valentine's Day celebration filled with hands-on activities and an opportunity to support a meaningful local cause.

Heartfelt Activities:

- » Cookie decorating
- » Make-your-own Valentine's Day cards
- » Carnation Station
- » Outdoor scavenger hunt

The YAC will also host a "Have a Heart" donation drive benefiting Hospital Hospitality House of Southwest Michigan whose mission is to make it easier for families to



support their loved ones receiving medical care by providing a homelike, comforting place to stay. Learn more at hhkz.org.

Have a Heart Wish List

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Garbage bags (13 & 30 gallon)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Laundry soap
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paper plates	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dishwasher pods
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plastic cups	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paper towels
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Toilet paper

Donations can be dropped off at Portage City Hall (7900 South Westnedge Avenue) from February 9 - 13, or at the Valentine's Day Fun event.

- » Saturday, February 14 | 11 AM - 1 PM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » FREE | No registration required

Black History Month Karaoke & Lip Sync Battle

Did you know that James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938), an accomplished author, poet, and civil rights activist, wrote the 1900 hymn "Lift Every Voice and Sing," often referred to as the Black National Anthem? The music was composed by his brother, J. Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954). Written more than 125 years ago, the hymn's words remain powerful and deeply relevant today:

*Lift every voice and sing,
'Til earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty*



Inspired by that same spirit of unity and expression, the City of Portage invites the community to its second annual Black History Month Karaoke event with a fun twist.

Last year celebrated Motown Hits. This year, we're turning up the energy with Lip Sync for 2026. Show off your performance skills, hit the dance floor while our house DJ spins crowd favorites, and enjoy a variety of delicious dips provided at no additional cost. For more information call (269) 324-9284.

- » Saturday, February 20 | 5 - 7 PM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » FREE | No registration required

YOUR BACKYARD IS BIGGER THAN YOU THINK

Kalamazoo Book Arts Center Art Samplers

Linocut

Create your own unique artwork with instructors from the Kalamazoo Book Arts Center. Carve a unique design into rubber-stamping material with linocut tools. Students will practice reproducing their image on paper. This project uses sharp tools and is designed for participants ages 12 and up. Art supplies will be provided for each session. Participants may bring their own supplies, if desired.

- » Tuesday, February 3 | 6 - 7:30 PM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » \$40 per person | Registration required

Japanese Bookbinding

Learn to make your own journal using a soft cover Japanese binding technique. A Japanese "stab book" is a soft cover book featuring decorative stitching in the binding – and the best part is no glue required! Decorative cover pages will be available. Participants take home their hand-made journals for drawing, writing, or scrapbooking. This program is designed for ages 10 and up. Art supplies will be provided for each session. Participants may bring their own supplies, if desired.

- » Tuesday, February 17 | 6 - 7:30 PM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » \$40 per person | Registration required

Black History Month Presentation: Green Book

Presenter: Candacy Taylor

The 11th annual Black History Month Presentation will feature author, travel writer, and explorer, Candacy Taylor. Taylor is the author of, "Overground Railroad: The Green Book and the Roots of Black Travel in America." The Green Book assisted African American travelers on the road with information, including safe places to eat and essential services during a time of institutionalized racial segregation. Candacy Taylor is the leading Green Book expert in the country. "Overground Railroad: The Green Book and the Roots of Black Travel in America" made The New York Times' most notable books of the year, Oprah Magazine's top 26 travel books, and National Geographic's top 10 list of books by women. After the program, stick around for autographs



KALAMAZOO
BOOK ARTS CENTER

and book signing. A limited number of books will be available at the event (\$20 cash only) or bring your own copy.

- » Friday, February 6 | 6 PM
- » Air Zoo (6151 Portage Road)
- » FREE | No registration required

Valentine's Day Skate

Celebrate Valentine's Day with someone special at the Ice Rink at Millennium Park! Glide hand-in-hand to your favorite love songs and ballads at the Ice Rink at Millennium Park. Whether it's a date night or a fun outing with friends, this charming outing is the perfect way to share the love.

- » Saturday, February 14 | 5 - 8 PM
- » Millennium Park (280 Romence Road)
- » \$5 Open Skate, \$3 Skate Rental | No registration required

Kalamazoo Nature Center's Animal Ambassadors

Creature Features

Learn about the habitats, diets, and adaptations of Kalamazoo Nature Center's animal ambassadors. Get an up-close look at different bio facts and meet a live animal handled by one of the KNC-trained educators. This program is designed for all ages. Participants under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a chaperone.

- » Saturday, February 7
- » Session 1: 10 - 11 AM | Session 2: 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » \$5 per person | Registration required by February 6

Who Eats Whom?

Build a food chain from the ground up and follow the energy from producers to consumers, from sunlight to soil. Get active, meet a live animal, and discover who eats whom in the forest. Learn about the flow of energy, components of the food chain, animal traits, and survival. This program is designed for 1st - 5th grade students, but all ages are welcome. Participants under the age of 18 must be accompanied by a chaperone.

- » Saturday, February 21
- » Session 1: 10 - 11 AM | Session 2: 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)
- » \$5 per person | Registration required by February 20



Kalamazoo
Nature
Center

Animals that may be present at these programs include a corn snake, milk snake, eastern box turtle, frog, Madagascar hissing cockroach, or a curly-haired tarantula. The presence of specific animals is not guaranteed.

Winter Blast

Half Marathon, 10K, 5K

The highly anticipated Portage Winter Blast returns for its 13th year on Sunday, February 22, bringing together runners and spectators for a Half Marathon, 10K, and 5K celebration of health, wellness, and fitness. The weekend kicks off with a Health and Wellness Expo, and packet pickup will take place on Saturday, February 21, at Loy Norrix High School.



This signature event is a partnership between the Kalamazoo Area Runners (KAR) and the City of Portage and offers participants the opportunity to run through the scenic Portage trail system. Courses feature a mix of paved bike paths and roadways that wind through Portage's picturesque parklands. All races start and finish at Loy Norrix High School (606 East Kilgore Road), where ample parking and runner-friendly accommodations are available.

After crossing the finish line, participants can enjoy post-race refreshments, sponsor tables, live entertainment, and an awards celebration. The Half Marathon is capped at 1,500 participants. Please note that local roads will experience intermittent closures during the event, with all roads fully reopened by noon.

- » Sunday, February 22, 2026 | 8 AM
- » Loy Norrix High School (606 East Kilgore Road)

Farmers Market Vendor Meeting

Are you curious about selling your products at the Portage Zhang Farmers Market? Come to this informational meeting to learn what is involved to become a vendor and what is new at the market in 2026.

- » Thursday, February 26 | 6:30 - 8 PM
- » Portage Parks & Recreation (320 Library Lane)

YOU HAVE MORE FRIENDS THAN YOU KNOW

AARP Tax-Aide Assistance

AARP Tax-Aide Volunteers offer free tax preparation by appointment. All volunteers are IRS-trained and certified. This service is free, with a focus on taxpayers age 50+, low-income individuals, and those with disabilities. PZSC and AARP membership is not required. PZSC staff cannot provide tax-related guidance.

- » Tuesdays, February 3 - April 14 | 9 AM - 2:30 PM
- » FREE | Registration Required

Memory Café

A Memory Café brings together individuals with memory loss and their care partners to socialize, share experiences, and engage in meaningful activities. Sessions may include art, music, games, and storytelling, all in a safe and supportive environment. The goals are to reduce isolation, encourage connection with others facing similar challenges, and support well-being for both individuals with memory loss and their caregivers. This program is offered in partnership with the Memory Care Learning Center and is

Portage Zhang Senior Center Events, Activities & Classes

Explore More. Have Fun. Live Well.

Find us at 203 East Centre Avenue | mypscc.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 adult.

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.

facilitated by trained staff and volunteers. Space is limited.

- » Wednesday, February 11 | 10 - 11:30 AM
- » FREE and open to the public | Registration required

Feature Presentation

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

Born with the appearance of an elderly man, Benjamin Button ages in reverse-experiencing love, loss, and the passage of time in a truly extraordinary way. Light refreshments provided. Rated PG-13.

- » Wednesday, February 18 | 2 - 4:30 PM
- » FREE | Registration required



Mac & Cheese Cook-Off

We're gearing up for the ultimate comfort-food showdown at our Mac & Cheese Cook-Off and we're looking for your entries! Chefs of all skill levels are invited to enter their best homemade mac and cheese – classic, spicy, loaded, baked, or wildly creative. All entries will be sampled by attendees,

who will vote for their favorite. To enter, call (269) 548-4052.

Don't miss this fun, delicious, family-friendly event filled with good food, good company, and plenty of melted cheese. Come hungry and help us crown this year's Big Cheese! Tasting will end at 4:30 PM.

- » Thursday, February 26 | 3 - 5 PM
- » FREE and open to the public | Registration required

Michigan Secretary of State Mobile Office at the PZSC

The Secretary of State Mobile Office visits the Portage Zhang Senior Center on a quarterly basis! This convenient mobile unit can help you:

- » Obtain or update a State ID
- » Complete driver and vehicle services
- » Renew license plates
- » Register to vote

For a quick, friendly experience, appointments are encouraged.

- » Thursday, March 19 | 10 AM - 3 PM
- » FREE (SOS fees apply) | Registration encouraged





Winter Reminder: Check on Neighbors and Loved Ones

As winter weather settles in across Michigan, the City of Portage encourages residents to check in on neighbors, friends, and family—especially older adults, those living alone, and individuals with limited mobility. Cold temperatures, snow, and icy conditions can quickly create unsafe situations.

- » Stay connected: Stop by, call, or send a message to make sure loved ones are safe and warm.
- » Offer assistance: Help with snow removal, grocery shopping, or transportation to essential appointments.
- » Share information: Make sure others know about local warming centers, emergency contacts, and utility assistance programs.
- » Stay alert: If someone appears disoriented, unusually tired, or their home feels cold, they may need immediate help.

Small acts – like clearing a sidewalk or delivering a warm meal – can make a big difference. By looking out for one another, we help keep our community safe all winter long.

Resources

- » Portage Public Safety
Emergency: 911
Non-emergency: (269) 488-8911
- » Portage City Hall: (269) 329-4400
- » Portage Community Center: (269) 323-1942
- » Consumers Energy: 800-477-5050
- » Twelve Baskets Food Pantry: (269) 532-4912
- » Milestone Senior Services: (269) 382-0515
- » Portage Zhang Senior Center: (269) 329-4555
- » Portage District Library: (269) 329-4544

New Columbarium Now Available at Portage South Cemetery

The City of Portage is pleased to announce the addition of a columbarium burial structure at Portage South Cemetery (10401 South Westnedge Avenue). Columbarium burials provide a permanent, above-ground, and cost-effective option for the interment of cremated remains.



The center, circular columbarium features 64 single interment niches, while the outer four “walls” include 192 double interment niches. Residents of the City of Portage may purchase a single niche for \$700 or a double niche

for \$1,000. Prices include the engraving of the niche cover plate; the cost of the opening and closing – between \$250 to \$400 – is separate.

This new structure complements the city’s traditional cemetery offerings. Portage maintains four municipal cemeteries, with Central Cemetery and South Cemetery currently accepting new interments. Burial services, including grave openings and closings, are coordinated by the Department of Public Works and arranged through the Office of the City Clerk. Fees vary depending on the type of burial and time of week, and plots can be purchased in advance.

The city also provides and pours monument foundations for headstones and regulates their placement to ensure safety and maintenance. Floral decorations and plantings are permitted within specific guidelines to preserve the beauty and accessibility of cemetery grounds.

For more information on purchasing a columbarium niche, traditional burial plots, or cemetery rules, contact the Office of the City Clerk at (269) 329-4511.

2025 Winter Property Tax Reminder

Payment for City of Portage 2025 winter property tax bills is due by 5:30 PM on Monday, February 16, 2026. If you did not receive your tax bill, please contact the Portage Treasury Office at (269) 329-4455. Property tax information is updated daily and is available at portagemi.gov; search Property & Tax Lookup. Failure to receive a tax bill does not exempt you from making timely payment. A 3% late fee is charged to all late payments.

Payment Options:

- » Mail payment to the City of Portage. Payments must be postmarked by the USPS on or before February 16, 2026, to avoid a 3% late fee.

- » Use the 24-hour drop box at City Hall.
- » Call 1-844-943-3997 to pay by phone (fees apply).
- » Visit portagemi.gov and select “Bill Pay” to pay online or set up auto payment.
- » Visit the Treasury Office:
Mon - Thu: 7:30 AM - 5 PM and Fri: 8 AM - 12 PM.

Reminder: Payments for deferred summer taxes are due by February 16, 2026.

All 2025 real estate property taxes that remain unpaid on March 3, 2026, will be turned over to the Kalamazoo County Treasurer for collection, where additional fees will be added.

Questions regarding tax bills may be directed to the City of Portage Treasury Office at (269) 329-4455.



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

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Leaf Collection to Resume in the Spring



Heavy snowfall and prolonged cold temperatures shortened the fall leaf collection season. To ensure leaves are collected citywide, the Department of Public Works will collect both bagged and loose leaves this spring as part of the regular brush collection program, beginning the week of March 30, 2026.

All areas of the city will receive leaf collection. Collection will follow the brush collection schedule, which includes four zones, rather than the typical eight leaf collection zones. Visit portagemi.gov/282 to view the zone map, collection dates, and preparation guidelines for leaves and brush. For questions, please call the Department of Public Works at (269) 329-4444.

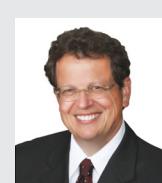
Once leaf and brush collection is complete, the Spring Cleanup Program for household bulk rubbish will begin on Monday, April 27, 2026.

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.



Mayor Patricia M. Randall
(269) 329-4400
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Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson
(269) 303-5459
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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.

FEBRUARY 2025

5	7:00 PM	Planning Commission Meeting
9	7:00 PM	Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting
10	6:00 PM	City Council Meeting
19	7:00 PM	Planning Commission Meeting
24	6:00 PM	City Council 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 the Ice Rink at Millennium Park.

PORTAGER Editor
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