

# City of Portland

Portland, Michigan

## Minutes of the City Council Meeting

Held on Monday, July 19, 2021

In the City Council Chambers at City Hall  
259 Kent St., Portland, MI 48875

Present: Mayor Barnes, Mayor Pro-Tem VanSlambrouck, Council Members Fitzsimmons, Johnston, and Sheehan; City Manager Gorman; City Clerk Miller, Police Chief Thomas

Guests: Tom Simmons; Don Way

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Mayor Barnes with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion by Fitzsimmons, supported by Johnston, to approve the agenda as presented.

Yeas: Fitzsimmons, Johnston, VanSlambrouck, Sheehan, Barnes

Nays: None

Adopted

Under Public Comment, Tom Simmons, resident at 103 S. East St., expressed his concerns with the mediocre landscape restoration following the James Street Improvement Project in 2017. He is unable to get grass to grow due to poor soil and continued washing out after heavy rains. He further stated that he has asked the City to take responsibility for correcting the issues and concerns of he and his neighbors.

Don Way, resident at 104 S. East St., also expressed his concerns related to the landscape restoration following the James Street Improvement Project. He stated that the boulevards are a disaster and he can't get grass to grow.

City Manager Gorman stated after the initial restoration CL Trucking & Excavating went back to make additional corrections. Both Fleis & VandenBrink and the DPW Director have addressed the situation. The City does not disagree with the stated concerns but it is so far away for the time of the project the City will have to assess the situation and find funding for further correction; all things are an issue of time/resources/personnel. The City will continue to work with the homeowners.

Under City Manager Report, City Manager Gorman stated the City will be submitting paperwork this week to apply for funding through the American Rescue Act.

The new Sparrow facility opened to patients on Monday, July 19, 2021.

Construction crews broke ground on the Toan Park Improvement Project today. He reminded residents that Water St. and the River Trail between Grand River Ave. and Bridge St. as well as the park itself will be closed throughout construction.

The Planning Commission met on Wednesday, July 14, 2021 and reviewed a proposed revision of Division 8, O-R Office/Research Form-Based District, Section 42-280 of the Code of Ordinances for the property located at Cutler Rd. and Grand River Ave. A Public Hearing on revisions to the ordinance will be held at the Wednesday, August 11, 2021 Planning Commission meeting. The Planning Commission also discussed Rindlehaven, owned by Mayberry Homes, and their desire to amend the current PUD.

Golden Bridge Manor was purchased some time ago. The current owners are planning renovations to the property at a cost of approximately \$1million. They are seeking a new PILOT agreement.

Under Presentations, DDA Director ConnerWellman provided her report on downtown activities. The ground breaking ceremony for the Toan Park Improvement Project will be held Thursday, July 22, 2021 at 8:00 A.M.

Under New Business, the Council considered Resolution 21-39 to approve the purchase of a turbine blower for the Parks Department in the amount of \$7,320.00. The blower will be utilized to clear the River Trail on a weekly basis as well as other areas and will replace the current blower that is nearly 20 years old and in need of repair.

Motion by Johnston, supported by Sheehan, to approve Resolution 21-39 approving the purchase of turbine blower for the Parks Department.

Yeas: Johnston, Sheehan, VanSlambrouck, Fitzsimmons, Barnes

Nays: None

Adopted

The Council considered Resolution 21-40 to approve an Employee Referral Program Policy as EMS agencies across the nation are struggling with staffing issues.

City Manager Gorman further outlined the staffing concerns with Portland's Ambulance Department.

Mayor Pro-Tem VanSlambrouck noted that he has spoken with several constituents that have expressed their concerns with the potential privatizing of the Ambulance Department and the effects that might have. He stated that he reassured them that there is no plan to privatize the Ambulance Department and that the Council and City staff are working diligently to solve the issues.

Mayor Pro-Tem Johnston echoed the same sentiments as Mayor Pro-Tem VanSlambrouck and stated she wants the best for the City of Portland and its residents.

Mayor Barnes noted the Ambulance Department is not a money-making fund; it is a fund that operates to sustain itself. The staff of the Ambulance Department are highly trained individuals.

He further noted the Council did discuss privatization as a talking point but it was never considered as a possibility.

City Manager Gorman stated the City is working to solve the issues of the Ambulance Department without transferring monies from the General Fund which would take away other services from the residents. The goal is to make substantive changes with long term solutions. He further explained the funding of the department; paramedics have read meters in order to supplement the funding of the department. The proposed Employee Referral Program Policy is a measure to let the employees know the City takes this issue seriously.

There was further discussion and clarification of the misinformation posted on the Portland Community Facebook page.

Motion by VanSlambrouck, supported by Johnston, to approve Resolution 21-40 approving a City Employee Referral Program Policy.

Yeas: VanSlambrouck, Johnston, Fitzsimmons, Sheehan, Barnes

Nays: None

Adopted

Motion by Fitzsimmons, supported by VanSlambrouck, to approve the Consent Agenda which includes the Minutes and Synopsis from the Regular City Council Meeting held on July 6, 2021, payment of invoices in the amount of \$253,453.58 and payroll in the amount of \$122,913.28 for a total of \$376,366.86. Purchase orders to Fleis & VandenBrink in the amount of \$6,676.37 for services related to the Safe Routes to School Project, Total Technical Assurance Group in the amount of \$10,000.00 for Broadband Development Services, and the State of Michigan in the amount of \$152,727.41 for the Safe Routes to School Project were also included.

Yeas: Fitzsimmons, VanSlambrouck, Johnston, Sheehan, Barnes

Nays: None

Adopted

Under City Manager Comments, City Manager Gorman had no further comments.

Under Council Comments, Council Member Johnston noted the Portland Civic Players Summer Theatre shows will begin later this week and into the weekend.

Mayor Pro-Tem VanSlambrouck noted that there still has been no information from the Federal Government related to the 800 MHz radios.

Mayor Barnes noted the Portland Blue Sox were recently scheduled to play in a tournament at Fort Wayne in Detroit but had to cancel; they are hoping to participate in a future tournament there.

Motion by Fitzsimmons, supported by Johnston, to adjourn the regular meeting.

Yeas: Fitzsimmons, Johnston, VanSlambrouck, Sheehan, Barnes

Nays: None

Adopted

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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James E. Barnes, Mayor

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Monique I. Miller, City Clerk