

Your Mayor here, Coming From your City Hall. Sometimes as a leader and a public official, you make mistakes. Other times you may neglect to do address an item on your ever growing to do list. It's a part of being human, and as we try to avoid it, it happens to the best of us. I've made it a point to mention when elected officials linked to Portage pass away to give them and their families some recognition. I did so in March when a member of our Township Trustee Advisory Board, Terry Whitten passed away. I did the same thing in April when Senator Richard Lugar passed away. Unfortunately, US Senator Birch Bayh passed away in March, and I did not give him nor his family the recognition they deserve.

Now Senator Birch Bayh should not be confused with his son, Evan Bayh, who was our two-term Governor and a two-term Senator. Birch was an accomplished and longtime US Senator who represented the best state in the country...Indiana. He served 3 terms, a total of 18 years. Senator Birch Bayh can be remembered for putting politics aside, and putting his country, and the State of Indiana first. What I admire most about him...He was a part of, and authored, a multitude of MEANINGFUL legislation. Senator Bayh is the only person since our Founding Fathers to author TWO Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. The first one is the 25th Amendment. The 25th Amendment lays out something very important...Presidential succession. The other Amendment to the US Constitution that Senator Bayh authored is the 26th Amendment. The 26th Amendment lowered the voting age to 18. Bayh drafted landmark federal legislation known as Title 9. Title 9 barred sex discrimination at schools and colleges and greatly expanded sports programs for women. Senator Bayh was quoted saying Title 9 likely had a more profound impact on more Americans than anything else he was able to do. As impactful as Title 9 has been for the United States, I have a fun fact about Title 9. In its full text it is only 37 words. I mentioned that Senator Bayh left politics aside and put America...Indiana first. He is quoted as saying that whatever success he may have had in the Senate is because of strong support among colleagues of both the Democrat and Republican parties. He is also quoted as saying something important. He didn't think both parties working together was that unusual. Senator Bayh served in the U.S. Senate for 3 terms, from 1963 to 1981. My late condolences go out to his family.

Now we will focus on activities happening within YOUR city government. This week was a budget week.

In regards to your City's Fire Department...Last week we started collective bargaining negotiations for the folks represented as Firefighters and Emergency Medical technicians. Some folks don't realize we have unionized employees. We do in fact. Our Police, Fire, Streets, Sanitation, and Parks Employees are all unionized. Soon, many of our City's clerical workers will be represented and unionized as well.

Last week, leaders and elected officials around the Northwest Indiana Region met for a roundtable meeting at the Northern Indiana Regional Planning Commission. For short, it is called NIRPC, which is the way many folks pronounce it when abbreviated. During the meeting, I represented the City of Portage. As explained on the NIRPC website, they are a regional council of local governments serving the citizens of Lake, Porter, and LaPorte counties in Northwest Indiana. It is organized under the provisions of Indiana Code 36-7-7.6. NIRPC provides a forum that enables the citizens of Northwest Indiana to address regional issues relating to transportation, the environment, and community & economic development. During the meeting, we adopted the 2050 plan for transportation in Northwest Indiana. The plan sets priorities for long-term road funding, pollution standards, rail traffic, and public transportation.

If you have tuned into our prior conversations, you know the plan for going forward with paving Willowcreek Road. I reported to over 30 present members of NIRPC our city's intention to establish truck routes in our city, to make things fair for Portage tax payers. Last week, I spoke with the Director of the Indiana Toll Road; I explained our intentions to restrict Heavy Truck Traffic on Willowcreek Road along with our other roads. Out of courtesy, I informed him that the Exit from the Toll Road to Willowcreek will be restricted, in fact barring heavy Trucks. I also told the Director that Portage is still looking for a partner that can help with paving the Willowcreek over pass, from the Route 20 to the Toll Road Entrance and Exit. We will see what happens.

Last week was the Mayor's Senior Advisory Committee's Senior Health Fair. This is an important event, held every year at Woodland Park. Over 200 seniors visited the Fair. The vendors offered consultations and advice to Senior Citizens and their family members.

I'd like to briefly talk about what Senior Citizens mean to Portage's future. Quoting President Reagan, "If you don't know where we have been, you won't know where you are going." I have a long held belief that Senior Citizens are the strongest connection we all have to our past.

Documenting events and happenings, Recipes and Birthdays, are one thing. Passing down experience, knowledge and traditions, these are quite special. I'm proud that Portage, Indiana has a strong Senior Citizen population. They are one part of a unique Bridge that links our past to our future.

Last weekend, I attended the Teacher's Toast to Education event at Woodland Park. On the subject of bridging our past with our future, I felt it was interesting that both events coincided this week.

I have a unique insight on teaching. My brother taught for over 15 years. So if you ever hear me say that I believe teachers are unappreciated, I mean it.

In closing, I want to shine light onto something that I brought to attention last week at our May City Council meeting, which was streamed live and archived on the City's Official YouTube page. It's an appropriate dialog after discussing the good will of Democrat US Senator Birch Bayh. We are currently in an election year for your city's local government. I do not want partisan dialog, and yes, even bickering to weaken us during this election year. I would remind folks that City Hall is a place where a diverse group of city workers and elected officials come together to work for you, the tax payer. City Hall is off limits to partisanship. Once someone has walked through the doors of the City Council Meeting and City Hall, we should all put our partisanship aside and work for the betterment, of yes, you.

Until next time, God bless you, and see you soon.