

Thanks for joining me today. In today's city address I will discuss Independence Day Activities coming up on Thursday, July 4th and a few important details important to residents and visitors. I'll touch on something I promised to do months ago... Improve the efficiencies of permitting for work done here in the city of Portage. The last thing on the agenda today is an exciting move that will save tax payers money and put one of our city assets to better use.

But first, as you may have read in the local news, information was brought to me in April. In accordance with Indiana code 24-4-5-7, I appointed a 3-member committee to look into allegations of unapproved payments by our Clerk-Treasurer's office to several vendors, all of whom have a common person at the other end of the transaction. I received the committee's final report on June 25<sup>th</sup>. A special Board of Public Works meeting is scheduled on July 3rd. I will be asking that the Board of Public Works ask for repayment. I am directing the City Attorney to Prepare an Ordinance requiring that all checks processed by the Clerk's office have Two Signatures. I ask the City Council President to place the new ordinance on the Agenda for the August 6<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting. The report of the committee has been offered to the City Council Members to read and examine and to ask questions of the Committee. The Committee's Report has also been turned over to the proper entities for review. My role as Mayor is to be the overall Steward for our City. This includes looking out for tax payers' dollars, and in doing so I am requesting any and all unapproved money is paid back to the tax payers.

Now on to some more productive happenings in your city...Building permits are required for bigger projects. They're important for the City because it means people, whether a residential home or a commercial or industrial business are improving or adding something to better their property. This in turn betters the Portage community.

The permitting process is important. It ensures projects are being done in a safe manner by qualified workers using acceptable standards and materials. It also ensures the type of project is one that fits in with the City of Portage. For example, it's against code to build a 100-foot tall house. If someone came to the building department for that, we'd have to put the brakes on that project; but what the permitting process should not be is inefficient or burdensome.

Your entire Community Development Department and Building Department has had two meetings in the recent weeks, and together we have brainstormed ways to revamp the process of getting permits and variances for residential, commercial and industrial building applications. The goal is to quicken the process without leaving out important details. One of the early results the team has reported back to me is expediting right-of-way permits, which are when people do work on sidewalks and drive ways. I have heard builders and developers loud and clear say they want the process simpler and the process shorter. My goal as Mayor is to heed their requests without favoritism or slight of process.

Our Independence Day festivities will be really special this year as Founders Square becomes more developed and lively. The parade walks off at 11:00AM from Nativity of our Savior Catholic Church and goes north to Central Avenue. It then turns east and ends at Founders Square. Gilbert Park will be home to the Parade judges. Gilbert Park will have something new and very cool...live music and food vendors. The Parade has 81 entries, and I will be in the Parade. I look forward to seeing you there. At Founders Square starting at 5:00PM there will be live entertainment for families along with adult beverages. The Official City's Fireworks Display, which have all been paid for by generous local businesses, not City tax dollars, will begin at 9:00PM or at dusk. Rest assured, the show will be unlike any other.

And Fourth of July is a very special day as it is Everett Gasper's 100th birthday party at Millers Merry Manor. He earned two purple hearts. I will be attending his Birthday Party bearing gifts on behalf of our City. And please do me a big favor: Don't be shy to drop off a card to Everett's attention sometime this week.

Saving money where we can is always important in our daily lives; it's therefore important in City government. I identified the possibility of relocating employees from our sewer administration building, where you have in the past paid sewer bills, across the street from City Hall. The City Council Chambers have moved out of our City Hall to ADA-compliant Woodland Park. One of our fire departments were housed here at City Hall and now has a new building a few blocks away. We have space for these employees, so reducing the cost of operating the sewer administration building has been something I've wanted to see the City save money on for some time. Being that I am the chairman of the Sanitary Board, we had a vote, by the board. I asked for the Board's approval to close the building, and a new drop-off box will be installed soon at City Hall's entrance. The future use of the building and land will be up to the Sewer Board.

As we approach our Nation's Birthday- July Fourth, 1776, let's be thankful for our Community, for our safety, our security, and our sovereignty. Let's also be thankful for a robust and growing economy with a variety of employment opportunities across our Country but also here in the Great City of Portage.

Thank you, and God Bless. I will see you soon.