

I hope everyone enjoyed their Holiday weekend; today, more straight talk and some updates on happenings within your City Government.

Last week, your City's NEWLY ESTABLISHED Beautification Committee held a meeting. Items on the agenda included looking at a way to beautify our newly-established Founder's Square downtown area with potted plants and flowers. Also discussed was music, which as you know from a prior City address, proposals are coming soon. The beautification projects were proposed to begin at Founders Square and continue west along Central Avenue. Also discussed was finding ways to establish our own unique "City square vibe," such as a clock tower. Your feedback is always welcome.

Unfortunately last week, we had technical difficulties and our City Council meeting was not broadcast on YouTube. The meeting was recorded live and will be up this week on our website. If anyone has technical expertise, specifically with live streaming on platforms such as YouTube, I am looking to appoint someone to handle this project. It's a good resume builder, and a good way to be in the know within our City.

Our newly established Youth Council was introduced last week at the City Council meeting. Their organization was established to find opportunities within Portage for youth to be involved within the community. As a result, they participated in the 4th of July parade and cleanup activities. Our Youth Council currently stands at 12 members. If you know any of them, please reach out to them and give them a pat on the back.

As many of you know, there was a Special Board of Works meeting held last week. As reported by writers at the Northwest Indiana Times and the Post Tribune, last Wednesday morning our current Clerk-Treasurer promised to provide the Portage Board of Public Works documents involving payments to three specific companies by his office Friday. He committed to do so by the end of the business day on Friday after Board Member Ron Necco asked for copies of contracts as well as 1099 forms, among other documents such as check front and back copies, invoices, and Board of Works dockets. I will remind you these documents have been requested in April and May by myself, our City Attorney and the Investigative Committee.

The promise was not kept, the Clerk- Treasurer asked for more time; it was granted, and most of the documents were provided today at 2:30 pm. You can rest assured your Portage Board of Works takes this allegation seriously and will not take their foot off the gas pedal on any credible allegation of misusing taxpayer money.

Last week we officially opened up bids for more new police vehicles. We hope to have them on the road by fall. By fall, 75% of our fleet will be brand new, and among other equipment purchases, will keep our community more safe.

I enjoyed personally meeting hundreds, if not thousands, of folks on our parade route last week during our Independence Day Parade, which included over 85 float entries. Our Downtown Founder's Square and the immediate area had thousands of people listening to music, viewing fireworks, and partaking in festivities. Much appreciation goes out to our City workers and our Youth Council. I will share with you just one note I received today, "I just had to write to tell you what a great experience the teachers had walking in the parade today! Everything was so well organized, your helpers at Nativity were so friendly, and the citizens of Portage were so supportive of our cause!"-Portage Association of Teachers. I received many more uplifting reports from residents just like that message. Congrats to those who put a lot of hard work into their floats and won awards, including local Portage businesses and organizations. I wanted to thank our Fireworks Sponsors, but I realized the list is rather long. But here we go, Subway, Hellman's Auto supply, Xpress Printing, Great Lakes Engineering, Walsh and Kelly, Hodges and Davis, Pyramid Equipment, Holladay Properties, Indiana American Water, Gasvoda and Associates, Hamady Services, NIPSCO, CR England and our Gold Sponsor Meijer!

Also I spent some time on July 4th at Everett Gasper's 100th birthday party. Happy Birthday again, Sir! You're a true American Hero.

Now, an update on Fallen Timbers... I am 100% committed to making sure your project is done once and for all. Starting soon, Fallen Timbers will be closed from Hamstrom east to Mulberry. The Central Avenue project east of Airport Road is open. Work will continue, but the road will remain open. Hamstrom south of Central to Defiance is still under construction. This section of road will be open soon.

Our much anticipated road reconstruction of Willowcreek, specifically between Highway 6 and Central Avenue, will begin immediately following the Nativity Fest. Paving begins on or around July 15th. Just as the recent Highway 6 repaving required your patience, so will Willowcreek Road, as this is a big project. Road reconstruction will begin with outside lanes followed by center lanes. There will be new inlets put in for stormwater, sidewalks fixed to meet ADA requirements, along with ramps. There will also be new crosswalks with a little extra curb appeal. They will look very nice and make Portage shine even brighter.

If your road needs re-paved and you live in a neighborhood, no...you have not been forgotten. Your projects will also begin soon. If a road repaving projects affects your block or surrounding area, you'll be getting a letter so you can be kept 'In the Know.'

Remember during this year's road reconstruction and repaving projects, quoting, Joyce Meyer, "Patience is not simply the ability to wait - it's how we behave while we're waiting." Remember the safety of our workers is important. There will be extra patrols ensuring this.

It was a busy week last week, and so will the rest of this week. As residents enjoy their summer, you can rest assured you have several City officials, including board members, looking out for you! Until next time, God Bless, and see you soon.