



John M. Cannon

Mayor

Efficiency & Excellence

October 9, 2019

Re: October 7, 2019 Post-Tribune Article

For Immediate Release to the Press:

The timing of the Post Tribune's article about former Mayor Snyder's picture is suspect at best. The hypocrisy of the elected officials commenting in the article is overachieving. Those elected officials, led by Council President Lynch, are focusing on a picture hanging in a hallway; yet they themselves have yet to publicly condone the suspicious nature of payments the Portage Clerk-Treasurer made to his then girlfriend and mother of his children that Council President Lynch has had knowledge of since early 2019.

This shows that they are only focused on theatre and not on actually moving the City forward as they claim. Since taking office, I have and will continue to focus on addressing the needs of our City – public safety, infrastructure and roads, negotiation and signing collective bargaining agreements, and demanding action on chemical spills. Meanwhile, others are worried about a picture. It is clear where their focus and priority is.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John M. Cannon".

John M. Cannon, Mayor

The portrait of Portage's disgraced former mayor still hangs in city hall. A social media post defending the decision referenced Holocaust museums.

By AMY LAVALLEY
POST-TRIBUNE |
OCT 07, 2019 | 4:42 PM

Portage Mayor John Cannon said the portrait of disgraced former Mayor James Snyder, taken down in mid-February when Snyder was convicted on federal corruption charges, went back up sometime in May. (Amy Lavalley / Post-Tribune)

Portage Mayor John Cannon is defending both his decision to restore the portrait of disgraced former Mayor James Snyder in City Hall, and recent comments on his campaign Facebook page referencing Holocaust museums in his decision to repost the portrait.

Cannon, a former city councilman who was selected by caucus to complete Snyder's term and is running for mayor on the Republican ticket in the general election, said the picture, taken down in mid-February when Snyder was convicted on federal corruption charges, went back up sometime in May. "It's part of the historical record. The man was elected twice as mayor," he said.

On a post to Cannon's campaign Facebook page last month, someone asked why Snyder's picture was still hanging in City Hall. "If we have learned one thing in history is if we forget it we are doomed to repeat it. That is why there are Holocaust museums," part of the campaign Facebook response said. "Snyder's photo will hang there until the end of time. His story, will be etched in Portage's history, hopefully not ever repeat itself."

Council President Sue Lynch, D-At large, who is running against Cannon for mayor, said after the picture went up again, she got several calls complaining that it was back.

"He's a disgraced mayor. He shouldn't be up there with those who didn't disgrace the city," she said, adding she found the mention of Holocaust museums "outrageous."

Cannon said that comment wasn't meant to compare the portrait to Holocaust museums, but to note knowing about history so it's not repeated.

"In this case, the history of what happened to James Snyder is so a mayor won't do it again," he said. Councilman Collin Czilli, D-5th, who said he took the portrait down the night of Snyder's conviction in mid-February on two of three federal corruption charges with Cannon's assistance, found Cannon's comment about Holocaust museums "despicable."

"There is no situation in which the Holocaust is comparable to any other situation in history unless it's a genocide of the same magnitude," Czilli said, adding Holocaust museums are meant to remember those who were murdered under the Nazi regime. "It's just insane to me that anyone would make that comparison in the first place."

He, Cannon and Lynch were in the lobby of City Hall and noticed Snyder's picture the night Snyder was convicted. Cannon, Czilli said, held a chair still while Czilli took down the picture.

"He was there," Czilli said, and was OK with taking the picture down. "He did not indicate otherwise." Czilli said he does not feel that Snyder's picture should be hanging with those of mayors who weren't convicted while they were in office. "It's not erasing history. We're not going to forget he was mayor," Czilli said, adding Snyder's name is on building plaques throughout the city that will remain.

Cannon, who admitted Snyder's time as mayor ended "badly," said that other communities with leaders who were convicted while in office have not erased their names or their former presence.

Lake Station officials are considering just that, though they haven't made a decision yet. In August, some city leaders said they wanted to remove former Democrat Mayor Keith Soderquist's name removed from commemorative plaques and the city's trash and recycling cans before his March release after serving a four-year sentence in federal prison for public corruption.