

Hello and Good Day to the residents of Portage, Indiana. I am John Cannon, your Mayor.

We have had several conversations together, and the feedback is helpful to our dialog together. Residents like the straight talk, but they would like our conversations to dive a little deeper, so today we will do just that.

On our agenda today, we will discuss a not-so-well-known program for pets, exciting news for our Police Officers, an update on crime, an update on our waterway erosion plan, progress made on welcome signage, and lastly an announcement on funding for phase 1 of my administration's sidewalk plan.

To start things off, I wanted to bring to light a useful program that Portage residents may not know about. Portage is home to many pet lovers. With two dogs, both rescues, I am one of those pet lovers. Our Animal Control Department has a Pet Registration program which is FREE to all residents. There are benefits to residents and to the City which I will explain in just a moment. If your animal is NOT licensed and your pet escapes and is found by our Animal Control workers, it is taken to the Porter County Animal Shelter by the Porter County Fairgrounds. However, if your pet is registered with the City, you will be notified, and your pet can be returned directly to your home. Registering your animal is 100% free. There is no cost and no strings attached. This program is designed to help Portage residents and Portage pets. This program also benefits the City because it costs tax payers much less when pets are transported back home. Now if your dog or cat is a habitual escaper, then there can be fines.

There are 3 easy requirements to register your pet in Portage. You just need to go to the Portage Police Station or call Animal Control, who can register your pets at home, at no cost to you. You will need proof of residency within the City limits. Second, you will need proof of liability insurance, homeowners or renters insurance is perfect. Lastly, you need proof of up-to-date vaccinations. On the topic of vaccinations, if your pet is registered with the City and our Animal Control workers know your pet is vaccinated, workers who handle your pet are more likely to give your pet some extra TLC because they will know if your pet is vaccinated.

Both of my dogs have escaped in the past. Because these conspiring knuckleheads are registered with the City, they were brought back home, saving me the time and money of going to Valparaiso. This made things easy and stress-free.

On to a new topic, I have an update for Portage residents on road projects and paving:

In a past conversation, I informed residents that the Paving Priority List has been created and finalized. The current update is that the Paving Priority List is going to bid this week.

Last Tuesday was Student Government Day and was a huge success. The students helped run our City Council Meeting (which is streamed live and archived on YouTube). During the meeting, each student gave a rundown of their day. They toured various City departments such as Streets and Sanitation, Parks, Police, Fire and EMS, and City Hall. One student mentioned their inside look at our Police Department was a very unique experience and made them feel more safe as a Portage resident.

I shared this student's statement with you because we have a few important updates with regard to our City's Police Department.

In prior conversations you have learned that as Mayor one of my jobs is to be in the know and to respond accordingly. One topic both long-time and newer Portage residents value is Preserving and Maintaining our culture. Keeping crime down is often coupled with that conversation. As you may have seen at our new state-of-the-art Police Department, we have new patrol vehicles waiting to hit the streets. Already a budgeted item, last week I authorized the purchase of the next round of patrol vehicles.

Working with your Police Chief, I also gave the go ahead on some other important and overdue equipment upgrades for officers. While I cannot discuss those details publicly, Portage residents should know the upgrades were both overdue and important. The equipment upgrade, joined with new patrol vehicles, will make Officers more efficient, safe and accurate. I hope it is also good for moral.

My last update on our Police Department is something to be proud of. Crime in Portage continues to be on the right path. In the words of your Police Chief: "With crime statistics already at some of the lowest levels in the past nearly 28 years, the City of Portage has experienced a 2% drop in crime in the first quarter of 2019." Good performance yields increased focus. Our Police Department is committed to continuing to keeping Portage safe. The entire Northwest Indiana Community should be aware that our Police Department's foot is firmly on the pedal of keeping residents and visitors safe.

On behalf of Portage residents, I would like to thank our Police Officers, their support staff, and also their families. Excuse the pun, but your new patrol vehicle and equipment upgrades are not the only thing on my radar. Stay tuned.

In earlier conversations I discussed "Welcome to Portage" gateway signage. I am happy to announce most of them were put into place last week by our Street Department. The rest are coming very soon.

I have very exciting news regarding my request for 3 options to solve waterway erosion along Salt Creek and Willow Creek which has caused property loss and damage. Last week, I said our City workers and I were too busy for April Fools Pranks. Well, that wasn't the case with Engineers who made faster than anticipated progress. Engineers had boots on the ground last week. This is important because these waterways go through residents' back yards, and they would like to maintain a land-based yard, not a waterway. As City officials and workers, my administration at all levels recognize the responsibility to minimize the impact humans have on nature and our environment.

The City of Portage has more acres of City parks per resident than many of our neighboring communities. It is in everyone's best interest to keep it that way, and solving waterway erosion is a big step in the right direction.

As a result of bipartisan dialog and weekly meetings with your Clerk-Treasurer, our teams have found over \$300,000 of funds which I will allocate towards Phase 1 of a sidewalk plan. Phase 1 includes connecting the segments of sidewalks that just "end." Many residents, including myself, find this unacceptable. Phase 2 includes connecting schools and parks with sidewalks for our young Portage residents. Phase 3 is the last phase. It is a long-term goal of connecting shopping and retail with our neighborhoods. Phase 3 also includes having sidewalks on each side of each road where appropriate. I understand Phase 2 and 3 of my administration's sidewalk plan are aggressive plans. In an effort to be transparent, we have funds to complete Phase 1 of our sidewalk plan but do not currently have funds allocated to complete Phase 2 and Phase 3.

Although aggressive, they're long overdue and need to happen. As your Mayor, I will do everything in my power to fund and carry out these projects within an aggressive but realistic window of 3-5 years. I also promise to do so without incurring any additional debit for our City. (In a separate 3-minute video, we will get into the sidewalk match program and also how this increases home values, refinancing.)

In closing, I would like to remind residents that at every level of our City's administration, we work for you, not the other way around. Your input is valued and appreciated. It is this dialog that will keep Portage on the right path of moving forward.

I look forward to our next conversation together. Until then, see you soon.