

Hello there, this is your Mayor John Cannon here. I hope you were able to enjoy yesterday's Late April snow for what it was. Before we get started today, I'd like to thank Congressman Pete Visclosky for the \$200k in matching federal grant money which will be used at our city Park, Imagination Glen.

As a leader, you have good days and bad. What is important is no matter what kind of day you have, that you move forward. In today's conversation we will talk about some breaking news that was brought to my attention which will require immediate action by your city employees. We will then go over a setback that your Mayor's office was made aware of by one of our state lawmakers, Senator Karen Tallian. Lastly, we will talk about last week's Rebuilding Together event that took place last Saturday here in the City of Portage.

Last week a breaking update came into your Mayor's office. I've said it in past conversations with you and I'll say it again-- Mother Nature has NOT been kind to our Lake Michigan Beach, and our new park, Portage Lakefront and Riverwalk. Those of you who have visited the park before may know of the walking path that goes along Burns Ditch. Burns Ditch is the route that separates our Park from US Steel, and is the route boats use between our City Marina and Lake Michigan. A breaking update came to my office last week saying that the paths along Burns Ditch are eroding. Immediate action, such as closing of this path, is likely.

I'd like to now segway a sobering reality...Mayor's often advocate for federal and state budget money to be used for projects in their cities. One example of this is the \$200,000 grant we received with the help of our Washington, DC Congressman Pete Visclosky. Portage is no stranger to this process. Working with our state lawmaker Senator Karen Tallian, we recently requested three project items to be included in the state budget for the year 2020. To make a long story short, we were informed by Senator Tallian that those efforts simply failed. It was disheartening news to many here at City Hall. Your city employees and Mayor's office have worked REALLY hard to get these three state funded projects completed here in our city. We have had conversations, meetings and open ended dialog with folks in charge of the state budget down in Indianapolis.

One of the items we were hopeful to get help with is for is a portion of a study that the Army Corps of Engineers would like to conduct for our Lakefront Beach erosion problem. The study costs \$1.6 Million. The Army Corps of Engineers is willing to cover half of the cost, so \$800,000 remains. Your City Council members have already authorized \$200,000 for the study; that leaves \$600,000 left for others to help fund. Last week I was informed by Senator Talian that all three projects (one of which was the remaining cost of the beach erosion study) will not be included in the 2020 state budget.

Opened officially in November 2008, this 57-acre park is the result of a joint effort between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. National Park Service / Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, and the City of Portage. The 57 acres of land itself is owned by the U.S. National Park Service as part of the National Lakeshore. The park is managed by the Portage Parks and Recreation Department. As Mayor, I take maintaining all of our City assets, including our parks, very seriously. I am advocating that other government entities take the maintenance of this park and the severe erosion problem serious, too.

We have had conversations with the Department of the Interior. Unfortunately, things move slow in government. We are doing our best to move fast. Time is of the essence, and the erosion keeps eating away at our park. I would like to remind you that our Park Department maintains this park. I also remind you that unlike most other Parks on Lake Michigan, there are no fees to enter the park, and there are no fees for parking. Portage is a welcoming community, and as Mayor, I would like to keep this park free for all to enjoy, but erosion continues limiting the access of this park, and the study must be completed.

Now we will move onto more information we received about our Roads...As you all know from last week's conversation together, I met with the Director of INDOT. The purpose of our meeting was that the segment of Willowcreek Road between Highway 20 and the Toll Road needs paved. Various semi and truck traffic for the mills and other local industrial businesses have taken its toll on the road. This is a good thing; it means our economy is churning; but what's not fine is for Portage residents to be on the hook for 100% of the cost to repave this road.

Last week I made the case to the Director of INDOT that this segment of Willowcreek Road is being used as a State road, not a City road. I stated that if the State wants to continue using this local road as a State road, they will need to send us funds so it can be paved. Another option is they can designate this segment of road as a state highway. One of these two solutions is what is fair to Portage taxpayers. My team and I recognize this stretch of road is VERY important to our local businesses, to our steel mills, to their suppliers, and to our International Port. It is important to all of us. We did not walk away with a deal, but we also couldn't expect a deal to happen that quick. We asked for a lot. The Director of INDOT is clear where Portage stands, and we look forward to working with him in the near future. During last week's meeting with INDOT, we received news that the Toll Road partners with the City of Portage for the repaving of the intersection at Willowcreek and Houston Street - Which is the stoplight where you enter and exit the Toll Road.

Let me be very clear - Residents and businesses already pay their fair share of taxes to Indianapolis. I am not afraid to present a case and chase dollars from the Toll Road, our State House, or anywhere else. I will continue being the best steward of Portage's tax dollars. Rome was not built overnight; please be patient.

Last weekend I visited the Rebuilding Together sites. It wasn't my first time being involved, but as Mayor I have a different outlook on things. Many organizations have helped with Rebuilding Together in the past. None of them do it for self-recognition, but the overwhelming presence of the individuals that make up the Local Carpenters Union Local 1005 made me take a step back and realize what generous folks we have in our community...Willing to step up and devote time, energy and expertise to help those in need.

In closing, I want to take a moment and reflect on our City and its people. What I see every day as your mayor is heartwarming, to say the least. Each of you that belong to a civic organization, your church, PTA, Portage Youth Basketball, and those that just step up to help a neighbor...I cannot be prouder and am humbled by each of you. For your hard work and dedication to our community, I'd like to express a "Thank You" and "You should be proud of yourself." You are Portage Pride.

Thank you for your time. God Bless, and see you soon.