

Hello and good day, Portage Residents. This is your Mayor, John Cannon, coming to you from City Hall. Our past conversations have ranged from educational to informative and have even included a bit of humor. Today's address will focus on highlighting events happening last week, this week, and the following weeks here in YOUR City Government.

On the topic of YOUR City Government, today is a special day. It is Election Day. The Constitutional Republic of the United States is a unique one. It gives us a right to vote for our representatives. Here in Portage, Indiana, at the local level, it allows residents to give public feedback in settings such as our City Council Meetings. No, it is not a General Election; and no, it is not a Presidential Election. Today is a Primary. It's something many argue is much more important. Local elections are all about having a say about what direction the community you live in will go. Local elections are about having a say in who is at the helm, and who you believe is the best person for the job. I encourage all residents, and anybody joining us in today's conversation, to take serious the role we all have in voting. For those of you wondering if your vote counts, know this, here in Portage, and recently too, we have had elections where City Council positions have won by only a few votes.

As you may have seen in the newspaper, last week I convened an emergency meeting with the National Parks Service and your City's Department Heads. Among several quotes in the news stories, I concluded the City has brought awareness and funding to the table. We have 3 other partners in the park...the National Parks Service, the National Lakeshore, and the Army Corps of Engineers. It is time for all 3 partners, sooner rather than later, join us at the table. We must solve our rapidly progressing beach erosion issue. The longer we wait, the more it will cost.

Portage must move in the direction that best serves its residents. Since becoming Mayor, I asked our Traffic Commission to look into having truck routes for the City. They're common in many other cities, but not in Portage. Over the years, many have advocated for them. I'm glad to tell you that the Traffic Commission looked into this idea and approved truck routes. The ordinance is being written as we speak and will be presented at the June Council meeting.

Earlier we discussed the importance of voting. Now, I will discuss the importance of transparency and public opinion. Our Constitutional Republic is a beautiful thing. It lets our voices be heard, and in a variety of ways, not just through voting. In regards to this ordinance and any other ordinance making it to the agenda of YOUR City Council, I encourage residents and others to join us at City Council meetings to express your PUBLIC SUPPORT or opposition of anything happening within the City.

Generally speaking, the ordinance prohibits trucks over 12 tons or 48 feet long on City roads. This doesn't include State roads such as Route 6, Routes 12 and 20, and 249. Just so you are aware, your City's Traffic Commission and I are aware that our City cannot operate without large semis delivering goods to our retailers, grocery stores, gas stations, manufacturers, and you name it. Permitting will be available for certain areas of Portage. I understand this may seem a little radical, but it's not. Many cities do this. An example of this is Lakeshore Drive in Chicago. You may or may not have ever noticed, but semis and heavy trucks are not allowed on there. The only permits available are usually for construction work on Lakeshore Drive itself, or landscaping and bridge work. Goods still get delivered to all of Chicago's many businesses, but just through routes that are made to withstand heavy truck traffic.

Yesterday I met with Governor Eric Holcomb. We discussed a variety of items. Everything we discussed was aimed to help Portage stay on the correct path forward.

Two weeks ago I met with our United States Senator Mike Braun and a few of his staff members. His staff is aware that Mother Nature has not been kind to our lakefront beach and the erosion that has occurred. Our meeting with Senator Braun was productive, and we covered a multitude of items.

This week I will be meeting with the staff of US Senator Todd Young. We have several items on the agenda. Our main focus will be Beach Erosion at our Lakefront Park. Both leaders have been open to discussing several issues we need help with in Portage, including Beach Erosion at our Lakefront Beach.

Last week we hosted our Annual Prayer Breakfast that was held with area Pastors and Ministers. Started in 1952 by President Harry Truman, our Nation has celebrated a National Day of Prayer, which falls on the 1st Thursday of May.

In the following weeks I will be forming a task force to market Portage, Indiana as a location for Illinois companies to relocate to. Portage is home to several companies who moved operations across the Indiana and Illinois state line. A variety of factors have brought them here. Low taxes is the biggest reason. Another reason businesses relocate to Portage, Indiana from nearby Illinois is the business-friendly, worker-friendly, and family-friendly climate we have right here in Portage, Indiana.

Our last agenda item today is an important one. I will be convening a Business Summit with Portage companies and employers. The purpose is to find out what kind of employees they need for the future and use that information accordingly. I and my administration applaud Portage High School, Ivy Tech, and our local trade unions for getting students ready for their next step. They equip our young adults with the tools they need to be productive members of our society, both within and outside of Portage. There is a lot to be said about our future, but we cannot sustain a vibrant Region without a highly skilled workforce. Your City Government will partner with local Businesses and Labor Unions to make sure we are ready to compete against anyone anywhere. I am confident that our future will be bright. Quoting President Reagan, "If you think you can - you can!" and Portage can!

Until we see each other again, God Bless and Thanks. See you soon!