

Hello Portage Residents, Mayor John Cannon here. I start today's conversation with something very important: Voting. Last week I mentioned the importance of voting in local elections. Portage had an outstanding turnout, one which didn't get the media attention it deserved.

Last Tuesday we had record turnouts for a Local Municipal Primary. I have yet to break down the statistics, but last Tuesday, 4,451 folks voted for Mayor, which is a record for Portage. Four years ago, in the year 2015, we had 3,182 votes. Four years prior to that, in the year 2011, we had 4,074 votes. If that number sounds daunting to you, and you wonder if your vote REALLY counts, then know this, as I said last week, it is common for candidates in Portage to win by just a few votes. Portage Mayor has recently been won by a margin of 300 to 400 votes.

Many of you who join me in these weekly conversations understand the importance of voting as a civic duty. Spreading awareness is key. Thank you to Portage residents, Democrat and Republican. We did well last week. Both parties made records. Good job to all!

So let's move onto a new topic. We started these conversations together in early March. Along the way, we have promised to be honest and straightforward with each other. It's what I've been calling "Straight Talk."

I'd like to address something head on, something that is on the mind of many residents; and if it's not on your mind, I guarantee you've noticed. So let's address it together today. I've said it many times before, Portage is truly resilient. With the disappointing closure of a few local business such as Harbor Automotive, Steak and Shake, and Lowes, many optimistic residents have asked me as Mayor to open certain types of businesses in their place. They have ranged from more restaurants, to retail establishments such as Marshalls, Home Goods, and everyone's beloved Target. Mayors are just one branch of your City's local government. Yes, we can, and do, encourage businesses and industries to lay roots in Portage. As a matter of fact, we have an economic development department that promotes Portage and even 'Courts' them into establishing their business in Portage. During this 'Courting' Process... Similar to Dating I suppose... It is totally up to private businesses to make these plans. The reason it is up to private businesses to make these plans is simple. Opening a business is never a sure thing. They require money, time and resources. Businesses open at their own risk, hoping to outweigh the risk with reward, and profit.

Risk can, and often time does, come with reward. Bass Pro took a risk and invested millions of dollars when they came to Portage. Bass Pro has since reaped the rewards. Walgreens, on the corner of Willowcreek and Central has reaped the rewards. Walgreens has done so well in Portage that they relocated across the street in a brand new building, helping the city redevelop that corner, improving curb appeal.

Now where cities do have say, is where zoning is concerned. One example of the importance of zoning is preventing a big manufacturing business that makes a lot of noise from opening up in the middle of your neighborhood, or even around the corner.

Your city leaders over the years have encouraged private development to happen here in our city limits. Some of those efforts have been very successful; but ultimately, it's not up to us; but Portage has had a big boom in growth. Much of that growth is because certain demographics are needed for a business to open within a community. These demographics include income level, low crime, roads, and infrastructure. Now Portage? We happen to have all of that going for us. Years ago, K-Mart closed. Meijer saw an opportunity in Portage and rejuvenated the building and redeveloped the land on Highway 6. This made way for the plaza that is home to Panera Bread, Dominos, and others. Similar developments came into place when Walmart opened years ago, when Kohls opened, and Portage 16 I-Max, and so on.

These store closures are disappointing, but in the long term, they are just making way for the new. In the case of Harbor Automotive, which has been closed for about 6 months, there are plans for a new car dealership moving into there soon. Portage is always on the move. Stay Tuned!

Onto a new topic, since taking office in March, we've talked about Transparency, Communication, and Trust. As you drive through road construction here in the City of Portage, you will notice signs saying what type of project is happening and what source of funds is paying for it. This is an initiative started by me, as Mayor, to be transparent and open to residents when you see your city's funds being spent on big projects.

The last topic on today's agenda is a follow-up from an agenda item I shared with you during last week's conversation. My meeting last week with Senator Todd Young's staff went very well. They returned to Washington DC knowing Beachfront Erosion is causing a serious threat to our National Park. Be it known to Portage tax payers that in recent weeks, your Mayor's office has been in contact with both US Senators and our Governor regarding the threat of beach erosion.

Yesterday, I spoke at our Police Memorial which is held every year during the second week of May. I asked our officers to reflect upon the noble responsibility they have to our residents. I asked them to remember it comes with responsibilities both on and off duty. As a Public Official, I have the same responsibilities. Now, I ask that you to reflect upon the bravery and sacrifice our Police Officers bestow upon our community, not just while they're on duty, but in their daily lives, and I ask you to pray for all of our first responders. May God watch over them in their work.

Until next time, God bless you, and see you soon.