

Hello, your mayor here. As summer heats up, so does your City's prep for Independence Day, Beaching enjoyment, our Marina usage and our Festivals at Founders Square. At the same time, so do paving and road reconstruction projects. In 1997, a gallon for gasoline was \$1.22 and Microsoft became the world's most valuable Company; and yes, Willowcreek Road was paved for the first and last time! So I think it's about time to pave Willowcreek Road. Starting on or about July 15, that project will begin; this a huge undertaking, so please be patient.

Today's address will be filled with updates and happenings in your City government, so let's dive right in. Our City Council Budget Committee met; I attended the meeting. We discussed the shortfalls in the 2019 budget; the cause of this shortfall is that the budget was not funded enough for certain line items in 2018 for 2019. We have identified the issues and already had a plan in place to correct that has been submitted to the Clerk-Treasurer's Office for corrections by the Council at our July 2nd City Council meeting.

Last week I hosted a Round table discussion, the topic was our current and future workforce needs for our employers. With the booming economy, the workforce is mostly working filling the record amount of jobs, and more jobs opportunities are on the way. Our local employers are searching for the best and the brightest workers. We are offering assistance to our Employers and Unions, to find them great employees. Speaking of jobs, the Portage Township. Schools are looking for Bus Drivers for the upcoming school year. Please contact the Portage Township Schools at 219-763-8080.

This past week my office invited in the Porter County tourism folks in for a discussion on notifying our visitors to use West Beach for Beach enjoyment. Just located off of Route 12 on County Line Road, our West Beach has been named as one of our Nation's best and safest beaches. New signage will direct visitors and all of us to West Beach. Speaking of beaches, Portage has been ranked the 29th best beach city in America last week by Walethub.com.

Moving on to some news that has been on my mind since I assumed this office: Safety, E911 and Communications, though a very complicated subject. Quick facts: Portage Police cannot communicate with surrounding Counties via Police Radios, which is unacceptable to me! The radio system is required by the State, managed by the County, but dependent on the Telecommunication companies. When governments' agencies and big corporation red tape come together, normal, as in this case, it's a delay game and excuses.

As a result of this mess, I asked for a meeting with E911, the County Commissioners, County EMS and our Police Department. I learned a great deal. Following this meeting I headed to an event hosted by the Governor in the area. In attendance were State Senators as well; I bent the Governor's and the one Senator's ears about this safety issue. They both kindly said they would look into it ASAP. After these conversations, I felt progress moved forward and we are praying the communication system will be up and functional by August.

Some other good news: I asked for a proposal on my desk by August 1st for a Downtown Sound System Project. I am excited that in the near future we will be able to enjoy music at Founders Square and the surrounding areas.

This past Saturday was a huge day that kind of summed up the kick off to the summer. I visited our Marina for Customer Appreciation Day, our SWAT team's Fundraiser for equipment upgrades, and many Portage High School graduate's Open Houses congratulating our Graduates. I also visited our wonderful Country Side Park, just off of Route 6 near County Line for an annual Festival highlighting our Portage history. Please, if you have not visited our history museum in our historic barn, really it is a homestead, please do. Please thank our wonderful volunteers; they are keeping the start of Portage Pride's beginnings alive. Also on Saturday morning I attended a great event for the American Cancer Society's GEARS for HOPE Bike ride to raise awareness and funds for Cancer Patients' transportation needs. Over 45 bikers and volunteers raised money for this important cause. Organizer of the Event, Wendy Mang, thank you! As you can tell, your Mayor and his office is on full working mode. This office is open to suggestions and comments anytime, anywhere, and yes, I have heard many.

Some upcoming events to be on the lookout for: 4th of July Parade and Fireworks on the 4th, Willowcreek Road paving on or about July 15th, and please be aware of a lot of road work and maintenance going on in the city. Please think about safety when driving on our roads. As a reminder, Central Avenue east of Airport is now open; please be patient with the other road construction in that area.

Good, new, and recognition is what we have grown to expect for Portage. Portage Pride will continue as long as we believe in ourselves and our abilities to listen and learn. Until next time, God bless you and See you soon.