



**Meeting Minutes**  
**Township Board of Portage Township, St. Joseph County, Indiana**  
April 21, 2026  
Office of Portage Township Trustee  
340 Columbia Ave., South Bend, IN 46601  
[Online Link](#)

- I. Call Meeting to Order – Meeting called to order at 5:05 p.m.
- II. Roll Call – Ryan Hill, Muhammad Shabazz, Cheryl Ashe, Lana Cleary
- III. Approval of Agenda - Muhammad Shabazz motioned to approve the agenda for April 21, 2026. Ryan Hill seconded. Motion approved unanimously.
- IV. Approval of Minutes
  - a. Board Meeting March 17, 2026 – Muhammad Shabazz motioned to approve the March 17, 2026, meeting minutes. Cheryl Ashe seconded. Motion approved unanimously.
- V. Public Comment - None
- VI. New Business
  - a. Housing Quality Study / Housing Policy Discussion - Trustee Critchlow discussed ongoing concerns regarding deteriorating housing conditions in South Bend and efforts being made to research housing quality and code enforcement practices. He stated that conversations have been taking place with community organizations, including We Make Indiana, regarding potential policy changes and housing enforcement solutions. Trustee Critchlow asked the Board whether there was interest in supporting research efforts, fact-finding initiatives, or collaboration with organizations studying housing policy and enforcement practices in other cities.

Board discussion included:

Existing housing studies previously conducted by Notre Dame and other organizations;

The need to identify effective policy tools and enforcement mechanisms;

Concerns regarding Section 8 housing availability and housing accessibility;

Concerns regarding housing conditions at local apartment complexes and senior housing facilities; Drug activity and safety concerns within certain housing developments;

The role of city code enforcement and enforcement limitations under Indiana law;

Potential community engagement efforts, including surveys or public forums to gather resident input. Cheryl Ashe expressed support for participating in discussions and stated she would support spending funds on research or fact-



finding efforts related to housing policy solutions. Ryan Hill stated there was interest in exploring specific proposals and opportunities for partnership. Muhammad Shabazz noted that community participation and outreach efforts may present challenges. No formal action was taken.

VII. Old Business – None

VIII. Trustee's Report

- a. Budget / Assistance Review - Trustee Critchlow reported that assistance requests have increased following the end of seasonal moratorium protections. He stated that the Township has not yet received its circuit breaker report and, until that report is received, current assistance levels will remain unchanged.

Discussion also included:

- Increased utility assistance requests, particularly related to water bills;
  - REAL Services utility assistance limitations;
  - Rising South Bend water and sewer rates;
  - Concerns regarding water leaks contributing to high utility bills.
- b. Facilities – Trustee Critchlow reported that seasonal mowing operations have begun at Portage Manor Cemetery. He also reported that:
    - Flower box improvements are planned at the Senior Center;
    - Fence installation planning continues at Portage Manor Cemetery;
    - A cemetery ceremony involving American Legion Post 284 and local veterans organizations would be held on April 23, 2026.
  - c. St. Joseph County Fire Territory - None
  - d. Community – Trustee Critchlow discussed upcoming community events and ongoing Township outreach efforts, including food pantry donation drives and community engagement activities.

Cheryl Ashe reported on a recent film event attended by approximately 49 participants and discussed outreach efforts related to Township services and community assistance programs.

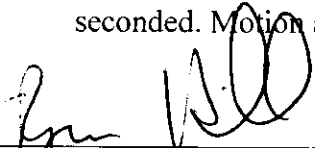
Board discussion also included:

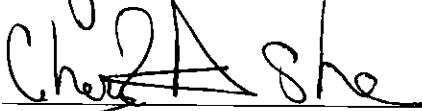
- The Township's Community Conversation dinners;
- Policies regarding political campaigning at Township-sponsored events;
- Potential guest speakers and community organizations for future dinners;
- The possibility of fundraising or sponsorship opportunities to offset dinner expenses.

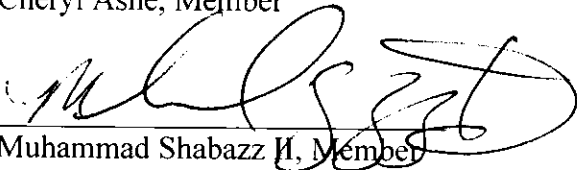


- Ryan Hill suggested developing a centralized resource guide listing community organizations and assistance programs available throughout St. Joseph County. Cheryl Ashe volunteered to assist with compiling resource information.
- e. Staff – None
- f. Other – Additional discussion occurred regarding:
  - Community resource coordination;
  - Housing and shelter assistance resources;
  - Development of a comprehensive assistance directory;
  - Future discussion regarding costs associated with community dinners and balancing outreach efforts with direct assistance funding priorities. No formal action was taken.

IX. Adjournment – Cheryl Ashe motioned to adjourn the meeting. Muhammad Shabazz seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

  
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Ryan Hill, Board Chair

  
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Cheryl Ashe, Member

  
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Muhammad Shabazz II, Member

Attested to:

  
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Jason Critchlow