

Statement of Stephen K. Postema

Final Regular Ann Arbor City Council Meeting, March 7, 2021

Mayor and Council, my colleagues in the City Attorney Office, and the employees of the City:

Usually when I approach the podium in Court I say my name and add on the phrase: “on behalf of the City of Ann Arbor.” I always felt proud saying that tag line. Tonight I am here just on behalf of myself at my final Council meeting.

First, I want to thank my family. While I was preparing my application for this position in 2002, it was an inconvenient time to switch jobs for a number of reasons, but my wife Chrissy had reviewed my materials and said: “I’m all in. You will get this job.” But she said this before I had even filed anything yet with the City. It is great to have a partner with **unfailing confidence** and **steadfast encouragement**. Since 11th grade at Pioneer High School I might add. While, she cannot be here tonight I know the t.v. is on and she is in her chair at home. Thanks to all of my family, two of my four children are here tonight, Jake and Tess. They too have been supportive and have absorbed a great deal of law along the way.

The past several years have been unprecedented with unique challenges. In governance and with a pandemic of historic proportions.

During this time the City has persisted with providing services.

And it persisted precisely because of the employees of this City.

And so secondly, I want to thank the City employees tonight. It has been an honor to work with you and provide advice and assistance.

It is said that “**Wisdom** is knowing what to do next. **Skill** is knowing how to do it. And **Virtue** is doing it.”

To my fellow City employees, I am grateful that you have the **Wisdom**, the **Skill**, and the **Virtue** to take great care of the City.

Whether you manage our infrastructure, or finances, or personnel.

Whether you protect and serve.

Whether you provide programs for the residents or take care of the parks. You are unsung heroes who keep a city going. Thank you.

Likewise, I am honored to advise the City Administrator and Service Area Administrators as they carry out their leadership.

Mr. City Administrator I have appreciated your focus on **employee well-being, civility, and public purpose**. I have enjoyed talking with you about your philosophy of leadership and your willingness to come and lead and serve the City.

Third, to the office that I have been privileged to lead:

When I was hired the City was in very serious peril. The Council gave me a broad mandate. Importantly the Council entrusted me with the task of building a legal team. And I have done so.

I have had the pleasure of working closely with all of you. Some for over 18 years and some for just 6 months.

I leave this week with tremendous pride in the Office and the work that you have done here. I thank you for your **knowledge, professionalism, and steady focus**.

The concept of a team has always been important to me, and you know this because we talk about it every week. The reason for this in our office is that it is through **respect** for each other, through our ability to **challenge** each other, through all with a **shared vision** that we do our best work.

Team you have advised me with:

Clarity of thought.

Graciousness of concern.

Generosity of time.

And I have shared with the office before the old adage: "We are what we repeatedly do. And **Excellence**, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Team, I know you will continue this **habit of excellence**.

And I know you have already have --and will continue-- to welcome and assist my successor, Atleen Kaur, in this position.

Lastly, to the City Council.

I thank you for the opportunity to have served in this position for so long. I have had the pleasure of advising two mayors and over 40 Councilmembers.

Council: All of the great issues of the day are in front of us.

Sustainability. Justice. Infrastructure. Racial Equity. Housing. Never ending social needs.

Layered over this: a brooding sense of hopelessness that the pandemic has left as a rancorous residue.

Leadership and wisdom will be needed to address these important issues. My hope is that Council will face these challenges with patience and focus, and that Council will act and deliberate out of service and understanding.

And Council I leave you too with some words of inspiration, paraphrased from a great leader: President Obama.

He said that our job as leaders: “is to make sure that even as you make progress, that you are also giving people a sense of hope and vision for the future.”

In conclusion: I stand here before you with a sense of accomplishment. With the knowledge of the flow of history in this City over the last 19 years, With the knowledge of the work that was needed and was done.

And, ultimately, despite all, I am here with a sense of optimism for the future.

It has been such an honor to serve the City which has given me and my family so much. Ann Arbor. My hometown. Our City.

Thank you.