

## Portage City Council rejects new rules for home-based businesses

By Tom Haroldson | Special to the Kalamazoo...

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**PORTAGE** — An expanded home-based business ordinance was shot down Tuesday after Portage City Council members said it was too invasive, flawed and could cost jobs.

The proposal was designed to protect neighborhoods by broadening enforcement rules from the current “passive” home businesses by adding “active” ones that could have more traffic, noise and employees.

Instead of protection, though, the new ordinance could kill the home business or cause it to jump through far too many hoops, council members agreed.

“In today’s economic climate I’d rather present a friendlier business atmosphere than this proposal,” said Councilwoman Patricia Randall.

“I just don’t think we should be creating something that makes it harder to employ people,” said Portage resident Andrea Stork, one of several residents who unanimously agreed — as did the council — that the ordinance was too flawed.

The home-occupation zoning regulations would have expanded the city’s current ordinance that permits low-intensity home businesses considered “passive” and are reviewed and approved for a permit by the city administration.

The proposed new rules would have retained the “passive” category but added a new one — called “active” — that are “more intensive home-based businesses.” Active businesses would have needed approval from the Portage Planning Commission.

But council members said while the intentions were good the ordinance could create more problems.

“This is all about jobs,” said Councilwoman Margaret O’Brien, who works out of her home as a Realtor. “Times have changed and more people are working out of their homes out of necessity. You have to be careful you’re not shutting down entrepreneurship.”

The ordinance was crafted based on other cities home-occupation ordinances and after months of study and hearings by the Portage Planning Commission. The Planning Commission unanimously approved the amendment.

The council voted 7-0 to turn down the proposal and by the same vote sent it to the council’s new Neighborhood Revitalization/Engagement Committee for further review.