



Minutes

**Town Commission
Special Meeting
Tree Removal & Petition – Citizen Comment
Tuesday • February 14, 2017 • 6:30 pm**

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1. Call to Order: 6:30 pm
 2. Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance to Flag
 3. Roll Call:
Commissioners Attending:
 - Joseph Aufmuth Present
 - Michael Berkowitz Present
 - Virginia Mance, Mayor Present
 - Timothy Parker Absent with notice
 - Mike Roberts, Mayor Pro-Tem Present

 - Debbie Gonano, Town Administrator Present
 - Stephen Lee, Town Attorney Present
 - Patty Polk, Deputy Town Clerk Absent with notice
 4. Agenda Approval:
 - A. Agenda Approval
Motion made and seconded (Berkowitz/Aufmuth) to accept the consent agenda; passed 4-0

5. Opportunity for Citizen Comment on Tree Removal and Petition
Mayor Mance presented background information and opened the floor to citizen comments. Some citizens present and commenting: Jeanne Henrickson, Norman McDougal, Andy Turner, Lara Colley, Debra Kennedy, Gary Denton, Brenda Flowers, Jerry Freeman, Shawn Updgrave, Christine Steurer, Megan D'Andrea, Dan Young, Darryl Cooke, Lorri Moore, Carol Young, Joe Hight, Cynthia Hight, Layla Ruffino, Jeffery Forbes, Megan Forbes, Stephanie Bartsch, Pastor Christopher Stokes, Jeff Ripple, Win Blazier, Grace Fuller, Layton Glenn, Julie Penrod-Glenn, David Massey, Joanne Denning, Jeff Thomas, Monica Fowler, Ms. Thomas, Matt Palumbo, Tom Brady, Fro Warren, Bud DesForges, Ed Burnett, Erin Burnett, Paul Cohen, Richard Shutterly, and Holly Morris.

Consensus of the citizens' present is that they are unhappy with how the downtown landscaping project was handled as the tree removal was not discussed at a regular meeting, professional plans should have been submitted, the tree committee was bypassed, the Planning & Historic Preservation Board was ignored. The citizens expressed displeasure with the Town Administrator and Commission and would like an apology, as they felt that the downtown National Historic District had been altered and that the historic nature of the Town had been changed to the point that it could not be corrected and would never be the same. The group complained that the landscaping design was not right for Micanopy, complained that the hardscape features (lights and benches) were inappropriate, and expressed that they enjoyed the previous atmosphere and nature. Additionally, a national petition had been started, receiving over 100 signatures within 24 hours (admittedly including other than Micanopy residents). The citizens wanted to know the procedure for future tree cuttings and commented that the shade from the removed cedar trees would be missed. The Tree Committee claimed to have been locked out of the town hall building for their February meeting; but it was later determined that, per previous established procedure, the Librarian granted access to the building. Some residents suggested that the process needed to be respected and that residents need to show their support by regularly attending meetings, joining committees, and providing input; although it was proposed that some residents could be afraid of retribution if they speak their thoughts.

Commissioner Aufmuth apologized to the citizens stating that he was sorry for the way that the project was handled and understood the anger being expressed. Further, the tree ordinance will be discussed again at an upcoming meeting as it has been for 6 months; we are trying to get a balance between property rights and protecting the trees, and your participation is welcome. Commissioner Berkowitz has been filling in temporarily for the last few months. The Commissioner offered his apologies and indicated that he was appointed after this was approved. Commissioner Berkowitz stated that he loves all trees and, although he respects other peoples' opinions, he didn't have a problem with the tree removal, although the procedure could have been communicated better. Mayor Pro-Tem Roberts apologized to the citizens and the way that it was handled but felt that the Town needs to move forward. Commissioner Roberts stated that he loves the town, loves the trees, and has given 20 years to the Fire Department. Mayor Pro-Tem Roberts stated that sitting on this dais is not an easy position; and if the public doesn't know how decisions are made, it would be easy to sit in the audience and point fingers in judgment. The downtown medians have changed several times in the last fifty years. Commissioner Roberts summarized that the Town Administrator works at the pleasure of the commission, and if you want to point fingers at the Town Administrator, then you have to point fingers at the Commission. Mayor Mance agreed that it is not easy to sit in this seat. She values David Holton's opinion about limbs falling on a daily basis, as David is a very knowledgeable member of our staff. She loves the trees and it is the reason her family moved here. All future trees will be diagnosed by professionals. The Mayor stands behind the staff of the town and welcomes any communication that people have and plans to improve our process. Summing up to say, Mayor Mance is sorry that everyone had to be upset and that tree needed to come down. Mayor Pro-Tem Roberts asked Jeffery Forbes to discuss some trees coming down outside of the Town limits. Payne's Prairie has property that adjoins the ball park and the State will begin an upland pine habitat restoration project.

Thank you all for coming and our website is micanopytown.com to view the meeting minutes under Town Departments.

6. Adjourn: 8:10 pm

MINUTES APPROVED:

As submitted _____ as amended _____ at Town Commission Meeting _____

Virginia Mance, Mayor

Patty Polk, Recorder