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**Town Commission**

**Social Media •** *Via Virtual Conferencing*

**Tuesday • June 16, 2020 • 6:00 pm**

**Minutes Workshop**

1.Call to Order: 6:00pm

2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance to Flag

3. Roll Call

*Commissioners Attending:*

* Joseph Aufmuth, Mayor Present
* Timothy Parker, Mayor Pro Tem Present
* Virginia Mance Present
* Troy Blakely Present (joining after roll call)
* Mike Roberts Present (joining after roll call)
* Debbie Gonano, Town Administrator Present
* Andrea Parker, Town Attorney Present

4. Agenda Approval

***Motion made and second (Mance/Parker) to approve the agenda; Passed 3-0***

5. Social Media: A discussion of social media as a means of communicating with Micanopy residents

Stephen Eisenman’s proposed ordinance: *“Micanopy residents are to be notified of regular and special Commission and Citizen Board meetings in a timely and expeditious manner consistent with Section 308 of the Micanopy Town Charter, the Florida Sunshine Laws and Florida Statute 286.011. In addition to posting on the town calendar and in front of Micanopy Town Hall, meeting times and locations are to be conveyed electronically via email communication (if residents elect to receive email) and via Facebook ‘Micanopy Matters’, or now ‘Micanopy Mellow’, or any other prevailing means of electronic social media. Such notice is to be provided not less than one week prior to a meeting, except in the case of emergency meetings which require one day notice. Email and prevailing social media are also to be used, whenever possible, to convey other essential notifications such as emergency warnings in case of disaster, power and water outages, and election dates and locations.”*

Stephen Eisenman had spoken with the Attorney General’s office earlier in the day regarding social media requirements and had assembled the following points: 1) It’s best practice that notification regarding meetings be clear and immediately available. Eisenman felt that the Town website was too complicated to find the agendas. 2) There is no prohibition in the Sunshine Manual for email notification of meetings, and he felt that the Town should make two separate email distribution lists; one for meetings, and a second for emergency notifications. 3) Some municipalities use their own Facebook (FB) page to provide meeting and other notifications which is acceptable since the municipality would control the page. 4) The municipality should be cautious about other FB notification as administration of the page is handed over to a third party. The last two points had caused Dr. Eisenman to rewrite portions of his earlier proposed ordinance. Dr. Eisenman acknowledged that the Town’s meetings are legally posted, but felt that unless the website was checked, you might not know that a meeting had been posted. Further, Eisenman thought that the meetings should be broadcast, like they are in other municipalities. Summarizing, Dr. Eisenman thought that the Town should create its own FB page and broadcast Town meetings.

1) Harriet Festing *(105 NE Bay Avenue)* stated that she and Dr. Eisenman had recently set up the FB page *“Micanopy Mellow,”* and was keeping members updated regarding meeting notification, but she would appreciate better notification through a Town FB page or email notifications.

2) Win Blazier *(201 NE Hunter)* would like better access to meetings and appreciated the Zoom platform.

3) Liz Boothman *(302 Eestaulkee)* also loved the Zoom meetings, but was enthusiastic about FB.

4) Carol Young *(101 NW Seminary)* agreed with Mr. Eisenman and other comments previously made.

5) H. Grace Fuller *(751 NW Seminary)* stated that social media is here and we should use it. She acknowledged that there are unpleasant things on social media.

6) Bud DesForges *(554 NW Seminary)* stated that social media is not going away, and we should jump on the train and do the best we can with it.

7) Ms. Holmes *(Unspecified Address)* was in favor of social media access and wanted the Commission to consider all that was being said tonight.

8) Carol Logas *(unincorporated Alachua County)* the more accessibility that is provided, the better it is for the Town.

9) Commissioner Ginny Mance spoke about budgetary issues, population size, and the need to keep taxes low. The Town has four employees, and we already ask a lot of them. Further, we already have an ADA-compliant Website managed by an outside company and should look to achieve better communication through the existing website. Asking Town Staff to monitor and answer FB posts, in addition to their other responsibilities, is asking too much. The Town has always been satisfied with the means of current communication, and she suspected that between 30- 35% of residents don’t have internet access, and we should not exclude them.

10) Commissioner Roberts asked what the cost might be to hire someone to monitor a Town FB page? Mayor Aufmuth responded that an archive company would charge a membership fee between $2400-$4800 annually for the platform to archive social media posts according to Sunshine Law standards.

11) Mayor Pro Tem Parker thought that the only way a Town-sponsored social media platform could be used would be for Town posts only, no citizen comments. That would still require an archive company to store information. Parker suggested putting a tab outlining *‘Current Events*’ or *‘Postings’* on the website *(or consult the website Town Calendar)*. Further, Parker felt that anyone who could manage to use FB could figure out navigation on the Town website. Also, Alert Alachua would send out emergency alerts to provided phone numbers. The Mayor Pro Tem was not interested in employing additional people to handle social media, but he felt that we should look at making the website easier to navigate.

12) Attorney Parker summarized that every Town is different, but that Micanopy meets its legal requirements by posting agendas on the bulletin board and website. Municipalities with much larger staffs, such as Newberry and Alachua, as well as Alachua County, are very active on social media. High Springs has a FB page for their Parks & Rec program, only; whereas Archer does not have a FB page. Attorney Parker has concerns that if a FB page is maintained, it would be a lot of work for a limited staff, as all such communication would be treated as any other public record. The Town would need to ensure capture and archival of all communications possibly by an outside company, such as ArchiveSocial. Email notification can be done by a policy decision and does not require an ordinance. A policy procedure would prevent exposure caused by conditions beyond our control, such as a power failure. Reading through Dr. Eisenman’s proposed ordinance, Parker has concerns about the requirement to participate in *“Micanopy Matters,”* but Mayor Aufmuth interjected that Eisenman had acknowledged that turning a FB page over to a third party would not be an acceptable option.

13) Mayor Aufmuth wished that we had the resources to participate in social media and to broadcast meetings; but acknowledged that archiving that information could be a burden on our four-person staff which serves six hundred people. There are other ways to connect with the citizens. The Town’s small staff has helped to keep the Town financially solvent. The Mayor was not in favor of hiring a Communication’s Coordinator for legality reasons and felt that option was available to, and best left to, the citizens. Further, he was concerned about internet accessibility for all citizens in Town. It might be a possibility to create a FB page with comments disabled; however, if a person has accesses to FB, they have access to the Town’s website. Any FB page would still require archiving. We will look at making the website more accessible to the public. We have to find a balance with being sensitive to both the community’s needs and needs of our staff.

The Mayor accepted further comments:

14) Harriet Festing stated that it takes less than one minute to put a post on FB and felt that it was well worth the effort to do that because FB sends out notifications to keep the people informed. The Mayor thought we should look into a posting notification system for the website.

15) Winn Blazier thought that email notification of meetings could be used.

16) Steven Eisenman said that his goal was to get email notification to the Town’s people and a passive FB page with disabled comments could be used but doesn’t know what the archive costs might be. Further, he was amenable to changing his proposed ordinance to eliminate the requirement for the Town to use a third-party FB page.

17) H. Grace Fuller finds the website hard to navigate and says that she’s used the *Contact Us* feature with no luck.

18) Bud DesForges says he’s been here 26 years and never missed a meeting that he’s wanted to attend. Further, people need to put forth some effort as citizens. A Town this size can’t afford to spend money out of our reserves for communication technology; he doesn’t want a website where the Town has to get into a conversation or dialog with individuals. If people want to communicate, they can come to the Town meetings.

19) Holmes has a problem navigating the website.

20) Liz Boothman stated that when the Town posts “its little piece of paper,” she will come take a picture of it and post it on *“Micanopy Matters.”* Also, she was in favor of a comment disabled FB page. Town Administrator Gonano answered that the regular meeting agendas are posted on the Thursday prior to the Tuesday meeting.

21) Carol Young stated that she loves the *“Micanopy Matters”* and *“Micanopy Mellow”* FB pages, but that neither should ever have been considered for official communication as there is a bad taste in some peoples’ mouths about those FB pages. She has never felt that either of those pages represented the Town. She was in favor of a Town FB page.

22) Carol Logas summarized that needs have been identified and a good faith effort needs to be found to address concerns.

23) Commissioner Mance detailed Sunshine Law requirements: 1) meetings of public boards or commissions must be open to the public, 2) there is reasonable notice of such meetings given, and 3) minutes of meetings are taken and promptly recorded. She felt that the Town meets all those requirements and thinks that notification from the website is a good idea.

24) Commissioner Roberts stated that we have two employees working in the office and wondered about the Town’s liability for honest mistakes made by staff. Attorney Parker answered that it would depend on whether the mistake was policy related or ordinance related. As long as minimum requirements are met an inadvertent mistake could be acceptable.

25) Mayor Pro Tem Parker wanted to look into simplifying website navigation problems. He asked citizens to forward suggestions to Town Hall. Further, he was concerned about legally archiving other media forms. Emails are good, but he thinks it’s not reaching all citizens.

The Mayor thanked everybody for participating and will work with Town Administrator Gonano to see about various formats and work flows and work with Attorney Parker regarding some issues that will need to be addressed.

6. Adjourn 7:03pm

**MINUTES APPROVED:**

**As submitted \_\_\_\_\_\_ as amended \_\_\_\_\_ at Town Commission Meeting \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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**Joseph L. Aufmuth, Mayor Debbie Gonano, Town Administrator/Clerk**