



Iowa Newspaper Association Bulletin

www.INAnews.com

Government needs room for common sense

RANDY EVANS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
IOWA FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COUNCIL

People like to talk about what the law says. And in Iowa, the law has a lot to say.

Just look at the Iowa Code. It now fills eight volumes and costs \$295 for a complete set.

But common sense costs nothing — although the 18th Century thinker Voltaire once observed, “Common sense is not so common.”

Two examples involving government in Iowa in recent weeks clearly show the Frenchman was onto something.

For about 13 months, most state and local government boards and councils have held “virtual” meetings because of the Covid pandemic. With government buildings closed, the public has been able to “attend” these meetings using Zoom, Facebook, YouTube or similar remote access applications.

The Internet has allowed Iowans to monitor issues coming before their city councils, school boards and county boards of supervisors. When an important topic has come up, people have still been able to address their elected officials.

That is good. After all, the government belongs to the people. It does not belong to the members of government boards or people working for these government entities.

But now that Covid vaccines are available to all adults, government buildings are reopening and some boards want to pull the plug on remote access to their meetings. That is not good.

While Iowa’s public meetings law does not require remote access to be provided, the law also does not prohibit government from making access to meetings available to the public using this technology.

More about this in a moment.

A second example:



Randy Evans

Iowa’s public meetings law says people have a right to attend meetings of state and local government boards, except when a few specific topics are discussed. But there is a frequent point of confusion: While citizens must be allowed to attend, nothing in the law requires boards to allow members of the public to speak at the meetings.

That is entirely up to the board, council or commission. And this is where common sense should come in.

One of the hottest issues in Des Moines for the past 12 months, and in many other U.S. cities, too, has been the way police handled protests following the death of George Floyd.

In Des Moines, there are sharp divisions locally. On one side are people who defend law enforcement. On the other side are those who see what they consider to be racial injustice and unwarranted violence by police.

The issue came to a head in April when the public learned that two officers who will be teaching de-escalation techniques to fellow cops were themselves involved in incidents that led to the city paying about \$1 million to settle lawsuits citizens brought against the city.

The most egregious case involved a man from Lime Springs, who was intentionally dropped to the pavement face-first after his arms were handcuffed behind his back.

The Des Moines council sets aside 30 minutes at each meeting for public comments. Many boards around Iowa have similar policies and limit speakers to a few minutes each.

When more people want to speak than can be accommodated in the allotted time, boards often take speakers in the order they sign up or draw names from a hat to determine who gets to speak.

When an issue of considerable controversy exists, boards sometimes schedule a special meeting so everyone can be accommodated.

But the Des Moines council did not do that. Instead, they divided the 30-minute time block among the 71 people who signed up to speak. The result — with each speaker receiving 25 seconds — made a mockery of citizen participation in their government.

COMMON SENSE - cont. on page 4

CALENDAR of EVENTS

MEETINGS

INA, INF, INA Services
Company Board Meetings
Friday, June 18

WEBINARS

Using Good Old Photoshop
in New Ways
Thursday, May 20

meeting minutes

INA Services Company Board of Directors | April 23, 2021



INA Services Company Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

The INA Services Co. Board met via Zoom at 11:41 a.m. with the following members present; Ron Gutierrez, Clinton Herald; Deb Anslem, Davenport Quad-City Times; Terry Christiansen, Fort Dodge Messenger; Tony Baranowski, Iowa Falls Times-Citizen; Travis Mayfield, Maquoketa Sentinel-Press; Chad Pauling, Sioux City Journal and Matt Bryant, Washington Southeast Iowa Union. Also present were Samantha Fett, INA Services Co; Jana Shepard, INF; Susan Patterson Plank, INA.

Votes Taken:

- A. On a motion by Bryant, seconded by Baranowski, the minutes of the January 28, 2021 board meeting was approved.
- B. On a motion by Baranowski, seconded by Bryant, the board voted not to approve the Public Service Announcement request by Office of State, Long Term Care.

Other Items Discussed:

- A. The board heard a sale update from Fett.
- B. The board heard a presentation on the grocery survey sent to members of the INA.
- C. Samantha Fett resigned as Sales & Marketing Director, effective April 30th.
- D. The board received a board attendance report.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Samantha Fett

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515-283-3100 (paid service)

Join us for our Iowa Newspaper Summer Workshop!



Arrowwood Resort & Convention Center in Okoboji, Iowa.

REGISTRATION: \$25.00

WHEN: Thursday, June 17, 2021

WHERE: Arrowwood Resort & Convention Center
1405 Highway 71, Okoboji, IA 51355

HOTEL RATE: \$124 +tax (Thursday evening)
Check in: 4:00 p.m. | Check out: 11:00 a.m.

HOTEL RESERVATION CUT OFF: Friday, May 28
Must call the front desk at (712) 332-2161 to reserve hotel room. Say you are with **Iowa Newspaper Association.**

TIME: Check-in/registration starts at 11:00 a.m. on the Sundeck Patio

Lunch will be included during our moderated panel discussion, followed by idea exchanges from 1:00-4:00 p.m. Happy hour starts at 5:00 p.m. on the Sundeck Patio with an optional dinner at 6:00 p.m.

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/INAsummerworkshop21> to register online today!



City council member: ‘You can stick that Sunshine Law where the sun don’t shine’

CLARK KAUFFMAN
IOWA CAPITAL DISPATCH

A council member in a tiny Iowa town that admitted violating Iowa’s public records law has told townspeople they can “stick that Sunshine Law where the sun don’t shine.”

The comments, by Otho council member Jimmy Beekman, were made at an April 13 council meeting, one month after the council agreed to undergo training in how to comply with Iowa’s Open Records Law and Open Meetings Law.

In January, Otho resident Kay Bergren filed a formal complaint with the Iowa Public Information Board, alleging the Webster County town of 442 people was violating the Open Records Law, also known as the Sunshine Law.

Bergren complained that she requested public records from the mayor the previous month and never received them. She claimed she also was denied copies of city ordinances, with city officials telling her she could review the documents at City Hall “once city hall opens back up” after the pandemic. According to Bergren, the city then adopted a records policy that required payment for access to public records and made it retroactive to her request.

With that change, the fees for record retrieval were set at \$30 per hour for the first hour, and \$10 for each additional quarter-hour. Copies of records were priced at 30 cents per page, and the policy required citizens to put their requests in writing using a specific city form.

Once the Iowa Public Information Board (IPIB)



Clark Kauffman

became involved, the city council agreed to acknowledge during an open, public meeting that its requirements for requesting records, the examination of records, and the fees charged for records did not comply with Iowa law. The city council also agreed to open-meetings and open-records training for themselves and for the city clerk.

But at an April 13 council meeting, held after that agreement with IPIB was reached, Beekman publicly denounced citizens who had “reported” them to state officials for alleged violations of state law. Beekman said that in his 23 years on the council, he had never had to deal with so much “crap” from people.

“We’ve had several instances where the council has been turned in to the state, to the DNR, to the sheriff’s department, for different things — most of them not true,” Beekman said. “One of them was for the meeting we had after the (official) meeting was ended one night, where we went out to the shop and was looking at lights that we had talked about during the meeting ... You residents, or whoever turned us in for that, why didn’t you turn the Webster County supervisors in for the same thing?”

Beekman went on to say that someone had complained to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources about water-sampling issues that were later determined to be unfounded, and that an individual who “don’t even live in Otho” complained to someone at the state about

SUNSHINE - cont. on page 4

Yes, the public meetings law does not require the council let anyone speak. But Voltaire's admonition should guide Des Moines' mayor and council members to use common sense to find a way to make citizen input a meaningful part of city government.

These officials are paid well for their service. The mayor receives \$52,000 annually, each council member receives \$26,000, and the city manager who works for them is paid \$245,000.

Likewise, government boards that are thinking about ending remote access to their meetings should remember what that guy Voltaire said.

The pandemic opened the eyes of government officials across Iowa about ways to better serve the citizens by making meetings more readily available and accessible — especially for people who are ill or disabled, or those who do not have transportation available, or

who have child care obligations or a schedule conflict.

Meetings are not open to the public because everyone in town is going to attend. They are open to the public because that is an important way for local taxpayers to monitor what their government boards and councils are doing.

Providing remote access via a home computer or smart phone is one more way of engaging with local taxpayers, and that ought to be a good enough reason to continue making remote access available.

It's just common sense.

Randy Evans is executive director of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council. He can be reached at IowaFOICouncil@gmail.com.

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an issue he didn't specify.

"We now also have to go to a class to take, to learn how to be a councilman, I guess," he said. "We're tired of spending money on this childish crap ... This might not be appropriate, either, but you can take your Sunshine Law and stick it where the sun don't shine."

When asked about that comment, Beekman said Friday, "We're all fed up with what's going on ... It's harassment of the city council, and we're all sick and tired of it."

Six days after the public meeting where Beekman made his comments, council members underwent training on the state's Sunshine Laws. During the session, council members asked the trainer from the Iowa League of Cities whether the city is required to give the public an opportunity to speak during council meetings — "Not at all, not at all," the trainer replied — and why the city must comply with requests for records made by out-of-towners.

"If you've got somebody who's not a taxpayer, and they're not a citizen, and they're not an attorney general or anybody associated with the county, why should we have to supply them paperwork about what's going on in our town?" one council member asked. The trainer noted the law doesn't give city residents a greater right of access than other members of the public.

City officials say Otho now charges \$17.50 an hour to retrieve public records, an amount that's equal to the city clerk's rate of pay, plus 30 cents per page for any copies that are requested.

Mayor Mark Groat told the Iowa Capital Dispatch the complaints city officials have faced in recent months

were unexpected and, for the most part, unwarranted. "I've been mayor probably for over 20 years and we've never had issues like this, where whatever we do is wrong," he said.

Groat noted that while Beekman was flustered at the April 13 meeting, he didn't publicly name any of the people with whom he was upset. "You know, the council makes \$25 per meeting," Groat said. "And being a small town, we're on the council to help this town as much as we can. It's not like it's a money-making deal. And then we have to put up with this stuff."

Bergren said she remains frustrated with the attitude council members demonstrated at the April 13 meeting and April 19 training session. "It's just such an unusual situation with everything going on in this town," she said.

Deputy Editor Clark Kauffman has worked during the past 30 years as both an investigative reporter and editorial writer at two of Iowa's largest newspapers, the Des Moines Register and the Quad-City Times. He has won numerous state and national awards for reporting and editorial writing. His 2004 series on prosecutorial misconduct in Iowa was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting. From October 2018 through November 2019, Kauffman was an assistant ombudsman for the Iowa Office of Ombudsman, an agency that investigates citizens' complaints of wrongdoing within state and local government agencies.

This article was originally published by Iowa Capital Dispatch. Visit <https://iowacapitaldispatch.com/2021/04/30/city-council-member-you-can-stick-that-sunshine-law-where-the-sun-dont-shine/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=4165abb8-a11e-4717-9013-7cabac5aed45> to read the article online.

FREE MEMBER EXCHANGE

▼ HELP WANTED

FEATURE/SPORTS REPORTER. Feature/Sports reporter needed for The News of Kalona Iowa. Must be able to cover meetings, do features and help with covering high school sports events. Full or part time position Must also be able to do some photography. Hourly pay depends on ability and experience. Contact Ron Slechta, The News 319-400-7072 or publisher@thenews-ia.com

GENERAL ASSIGNMENT REPORTER/PAGE DESIGNER. The Fort Dodge Messenger is looking for a talented journalist to join its newsroom team. Experience required in writing, photography and page design. Experience with Adobe Photoshop and InDesign preferred. Need to be skilled at generating story ideas, developing sources and working quickly with minimum supervision. Please send resume and cover letter to Bill Shea bshea@messengernews.net

NEWS EDITOR/REPORTER. Come join our team! Mid-America Publishing and Printing is now seeking a part time news editor/writer for the News Review in Sigourney, Iowa. The successful candidate will possess creative writing skills as well as be able to shoot photos and video to post to social media platforms and our website. You will join a team of three others in Keokuk County and when working for Mid-America become part of a network of dozens of other news professional throughout the state.

The editor will write news and items of general interest plus attend various events such as chamber of commerce, school board and city council meetings, business openings, high school fine arts events, local celebrations, and any other newsworthy happenings that may be of interest to the local community as time permits. Requires the ability to regularly write feature stories and conduct interviews, plus investigate news of all types in and around Keokuk County.

Great opportunity to develop professionally, get involved in the local community and collaborate with professionals from 23 similar publications within Mid-America. Call Matt at 515-988-3726 for more details, apply online at Indeed.com or pick up an application today at The News Review offices at 120 E Washington St, Sigourney, IA! 05.19

NEWS EDITOR/REPORTER. Come join our team and do what you love! Mid-America Publishing and Printing is now seeking a full time news editor/writer for the The Hampton Chronicle in Hampton, Iowa. The successful candidate will possess creative writing skills as well as be able to shoot photos and video to post to social media platforms and our website. You will join a team of four others in Franklin County and when working for Mid-America become part of a network of dozens of other news professional throughout the state.

The editor will write news and items of general interest plus attend various events such as chamber of commerce, school board and city council meetings, business openings, high school fine arts events, local celebrations, and any other newsworthy happenings that may be of interest to the local community as time permits. Requires the ability to regularly write feature stories and conduct interviews, plus investigate news of all types in and around Franklin County.

Great opportunity to develop professionally, get involved in the local community and collaborate with professionals from 23 similar publications within Mid-America. Call Matt at 515-988-3726 for more details, apply online at Indeed.com or pick up an application today at The Hampton Chronicle offices at 9 2nd St NW Hampton, IA! 05.19

NEWS EDITOR/REPORTER. Come join our team! Mid-

America Publishing and Printing is now seeking a full time news editor/writer for the Eclipse in Parkersburg, IA. The successful candidate will possess creative writing skills as well as be able to shoot photos and video to post to social media platforms and our website. You will join a team of three others in Butler County and when working for Mid-America become part of a network of dozens of other news professional throughout the state.

The editor will write news and items of general interest plus attend various events such as chamber of commerce, school board and city council meetings, business openings, high school fine arts events, local celebrations, and any other newsworthy happenings that may be of interest to the local community as time permits. Requires the ability to regularly write feature stories and conduct interviews, plus investigate news of all types in and around Butler County.

Great opportunity to develop professionally, get involved in the local community and collaborate with professionals from 23 similar publications within Mid-America. Competitive benefits include health, dental and vision insurance, generous paid time off and 401K w/ match. Great opportunity to get involved in the community and network with professionals from 23 similar publications. Call Matt at 515-988-3726 for more details, apply online at Indeed.com or pick up an application at 503 Coates St., Parkersburg, IA 50665. 05.19

NEWS REPORTER. The Le Mars Daily Sentinel, a four-day-a-week newspaper in northwest Iowa, seeks a motivated news reporter who can generate ideas, turn in accurate and well-organized stories, meet daily deadlines and work well with our newsroom. The ideal candidate must have experience using InDesign and be comfortable with digital photography. The Daily Sentinel also offers a competitive starting salary and solid benefits package. Please forward resumé, cover letter and clips to Kim Fickett, senteditor@gmail.com, or mail to Editor, Le Mars Daily Sentinel, 41 First Ave. N.E., Le Mars, IA, 51031.

REPORTER. The Spencer Daily Reporter, a family-owned newspaper in northwest Iowa, is seeking a talented reporter to join its award-winning editorial team. We focus on community journalism - the kind of issues which matter to those in our community. We look to give folks the "why" on issues effecting their lives. With strong mentors on the team, this is a position which allows reporters to hone skills while making a difference in the region.

As part of a three-newspaper group in the Iowa Great Lakes region, you'll be part of a close-knit team which works together on enterprise projects on issues in the region.

The Daily Reporter is a user-friendly workplace. We strive to accommodate your skill set, while helping you to be the best you can be.

Photography skills are a plus, but not required. Competitive wages, benefits, PDO time and a 401k are included in the hiring package.

Send resume to:

Paula Buenger, Publisher
Spencer Daily Reporter
PO Box 197

Spencer, IA 51301

Or via email at: pbuenger@spencerdailyreporter.com

REPORTER. The Southeast Iowa Union is a regional daily newspaper searching for its next rising star reporter to cover stories throughout Southeast Iowa communities including Mt.Pleasant, Fairfield and Washington, Iowa. This



Iowa Newspaper Association
Bulletin

www.INAnews.com

▶ IN THIS ISSUE...

- Using Good Old Photoshop in New Ways

View and submit ads on the Internet at www.INAnews.com. Students and professionals may also submit their resumé's for online viewing.

There is no charge for most of these ads. They are a free service to INA active (newspaper) members only. The name of the newspaper in the ad must be the same as published in the current INA Directory.

If you are trying to help an employee relocate, please send us the ad information on your letterhead, rather than having the employee write us. We will not run ads for persons living in a member's town without first clearing the ad with the publisher.

Please have copy to the INA office no later than noon on Monday. The INA will make the determination of whether an ad qualifies for free or paid publication. If payment for an ad is not enclosed with the ad, the INA will require payment in advance before the ad will be published.

Ads for products or services which could be marketed for a profit may be published for a fee of \$10 per insertion, paid in advance, with a 40-word maximum.

Recruitment (help wanted) ads for positions in states other than Iowa may be published for a fee of \$25 per insertion, with a 100-word maximum.

For more information, contact Cicely Gordon at cgordon@inaneews.com.

MEMBER EXCHANGE - cont. from page 5

position will be based in our Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, office. Our ideal candidate is hard-working, motivated and a self-starter willing to work with a team to produce exciting print and digital news products. You'll cover a wide variety of topics, from government meetings to community celebrations throughout Southeast Iowa.

We are a part of a progressive employee-owned print and digital media company including our daily regional publication, as well as our parent company, The Gazette in Cedar Rapids. Our ideal candidate will be someone who is curious about our communities and residents and is as comfortable covering a city meeting as you are writing a great feature or diving into an in-depth story. You'll work on multiple stories simultaneously and can jump between projects easily. We're looking for a candidate that has solid news judgment and is someone that finds themselves asking why or how, in addition to just telling readers what. You should be comfortable shooting video and still pictures and able to write a good outline. You'll be thinking about engaging with the audience through digital channels and be thinking how to present news and connect to the audience in an ever-changing media landscape. You should enjoy trying new things.

This is a full-time position with benefits including health, dental, vision, 401k, and participation in the employee stock ownership program.

You should have an undergraduate degree in journalism, English, communications or a related course of study. Prior experience is desired, but we'll consider you if you are a recent college graduate. You'll need a valid driver's license, a dependable car and a history of safe-driving habits. EOE pre-screening drug and background tests required.

To apply, go to Folience.com/careers. 05.19

SPORTS EDITOR. Mid-America Publishing and Printing would like to announce an opening for a full-time sports editor for The Eldora Herald-Ledger, a weekly newspaper based in Eldora, Iowa, covering sports and recreation in and around Eldora. Requires the ability to write feature stories and interview, plus investigate news of all types related to Iowa sports. Come join us and work with an award-winning team in an exciting, fast-paced industry. Competitive compensation and excellent benefits including generous PTO, health, dental, vision 401k w/match and a great newspaper team to work with!

If you possess creative writing skills, are able to shoot photos and video and can manage social media platforms, then we encourage you to apply for this position today. Knowledge of high school sports is needed along with a willing attitude and interest in all things sports and recreation. Previous writing and newspaper experience is a big plus.

Great opportunity to get involved in the community and network with professionals from 23 similar publications. Call Matt at 515-988-3726 for more details, apply online at Indeed.com or pick up an application at 1254 Edgington Ave Eldora, IA 50627. 05.19

SPORTS EDITOR. Mid-America Publishing and Printing would like to announce an opening for a full-time sports editor for The Hampton Chronicle, a weekly newspaper based in Hampton, Iowa, covering sports and recreation in and around Hampton. Requires the ability to write feature stories and interview, plus investigate news of all types related to Iowa sports. Come join us and work with an award-winning team in an exciting, fast-paced industry. Competitive compensation and excellent benefits including generous PTO, health, dental, vision 401k w/match and a great newspaper team to work with!

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▼ FOR SALE

Color Web Printers has the equipment, resources and experience to handle your newsprint needs. We provide full color printing, stitching, inserting and postal services. To discuss your print needs please contact: Joe Wise, 319-265-6826, Joe.wise@colorwebprinters.com

For sale: Northwest Iowa weekly newspaper with supplement and printing shop. County legal plus legal for four towns. Newly remodeled brick/block building, equipment, large inventory included. Selling because of age/health. Phone 712/230/1405 or e-mail rouse@nethtc.net

Considering a sale of your newspaper but not sure where to start? Iowa's newest media broker, Scenic Trail Media Brokers, LLC, is here to help you. Scenic Trail Media Brokers will work with you in every step of the process to properly market your newspaper to help you attract the right buyer for your property. We'll work with you until the final closing to make sure you get top dollar. Call Ryan Harvey today at 515-689-1151 or reach him by email at scenictrailmediabrokers@gmail.com for more information.



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USING GOOD OLD PHOTOSHOP IN NEW WAYS

Thursday, May 20 · 1-2 p.m.

Registration fee: FREE · Deadline: May 17

IN THIS WEBINAR...

Old habits die hard. When it comes to working faster and getting better results, it's time to try to break the old production habits and learn new ways. Photoshop has so many improvements that we are often surprised by how to rethink the way we work on photos.

Russell Viers wants us to put the past behind us and look at new ways to get better results and start using the new versions of our old friend Photoshop.

THE PRESENTERS...

Russell Viers



Russell Viers is an Adobe Certified Instructor in InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator. He specializes in print production and started his career in 1981 as a reporter/photographer for a small daily newspaper. Through the years, he has been involved in most aspects of publishing. Since 1997, Viers has presented in 23 countries for publishing events including AdobeMAX, where he was honored as an AdobeMAX Master. In addition to speaking, he has helped many major publications and designers learn techniques to work faster and improve quality including Better Homes and Gardens, Ladies Home Journal, American Greetings and many others!



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