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Chiefland leader takes oath of office; *Golfing buddy jokes about cart conferences*



Levy County Court Judge Tim Browning (right) administers the oath of office to Chiefland City Commissioner Norman Weaver.

Story, Photos and Video

By Jeff M. Hardison © April 23, 2019 at 11:09 a.m.

CHIEFLAND – The newest member of the Chiefland City Commission took the oath of office Monday night (April 22) in the Hardy Dean Sr. Municipal Building (Chiefland City Hall).

<https://youtu.be/h4BZ7pwYgzc>

In this video, Levy County Court Judge Tim Browning (right) administers the oath of office to Chiefland City Commissioner Norman Weaver.

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Members of The Chiefland City Commission look at documents Monday night during the regular twice-a-month regular meeting. Seen here (from left) are Vice Mayor Tim West, City Commissioner Rollin Hudson, Mayor Chris Jones, City Commissioner Donald Lawrence and City Commissioner Norman Weaver.

Robert Norman Weaver Jr. was administered the oath of office by Levy County Court Judge J.T. “Tim” Browning.

Weaver, who goes by “Norman,” was recently appointed after the Feb. 25 death of Chiefland Mayor Betty Walker, 72.

Before the start of the meeting Monday night, Chiefland City Commissioner Donald Lawrence joked about playing golf with Weaver and those two men conferring about city matters upon which they would vote.

Both gentlemen know, however, to never speak about matters upon which they may vote, when they are out of the view of the public, including while participating in the sport at the Chiefland Golf & Country Club.

In Florida, the Sunshine Laws were created so that members of the general public always have opportunities to see and hear their leaders discuss matters -- before those leaders vote on those matters, as well as to have open access to view or make copies of public records.

The public’s right to be able to see the process by which leaders determine how they will vote on matters is seen by almost every Floridian as sacrosanct.

The Chiefland City Commission is among those groups of municipal legislators who must conduct public business in the view of the public. A minute few elected people complain about what they consider to be an inconvenience to them in regard to them having to exercise self-control over what they say to other members of boards upon which they sit, and vote.

Both of these gentlemen have easy access to a book to help them understand this law. It is known as the known as the Government-in-the-Sunshine manual.

Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody notes the following on her office’s website:

To assist the public and governmental agencies in understanding the requirements and exemptions to Florida's open government laws, the Attorney General's Office compiles a comprehensive guide known as the Government-in-the-Sunshine manual. The manual is published each year at no taxpayer expense by the First Amendment

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Foundation in Tallahassee.

Florida began its tradition of openness back in 1909 with the passage of Chapter 119 of the Florida Statutes or the “Public Records Law.” This law provides that any records made or received by any public agency in the course of its official business are available for inspection, unless specifically exempted by the Florida Legislature. Over the years, the definition of what constitutes “public records” has come to include not just traditional written documents such as papers, maps and books, but also tapes, photographs, film, sound recordings and records stored in computers.

Florida's Government-in-the-Sunshine Law was enacted in 1967. Today, the Sunshine Law regarding open government can be found in Chapter 286 of the Florida Statutes. These statutes establish a basic right of access to most meetings of boards, commissions and other governing bodies of state and local governmental agencies or authorities.

Throughout the history of Florida's open government, its courts have consistently supported the public's right of access to governmental meetings and records. As such, they also have been defining and redefining what a public record is and who is covered under the open meetings law. One area of public concern was whether or not the Legislature was covered under the open meetings requirements. To address that concern, a Constitutional amendment was passed overwhelmingly by the voters in 1990 providing for open meetings in the legislative branch of government.

The Attorney General's Office has consistently sought to safeguard Florida's pioneering Government-in-the-Sunshine laws. Our attorneys have worked, both in the courtroom and out, to halt public records violations. In 1991, a decision by the Florida Supreme Court raised questions which made it clear that the best way to ensure the public's right of access to all three branches of government was to secure that right through the Florida Constitution.

The Attorney General's Office then drafted a definitive constitutional amendment, which guaranteed continued openness in the state's government and reaffirmed the application of open government to the legislative branch and expanded it to the judiciary. This amendment passed in 1992.