Martin County

2401 SE Monterey Road
Stuart, Florida 34996

Legislation Details (With Text)

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On agenda:	4/23/2019	**Final action:**	4/23/2019
Title:	ADOPT A POLICY ON CIVILITY		
Sponsors:			
Indexes:			
Code sections:			
Attachments:	1. Rules of Procedure.pdf		

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
4/23/2019	1	Board of County Commissioners	approved	Pass

PLACEMENT: Departmental

TITLE:

ADOPT A POLICY ON CIVILITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Commissioner Harold Jenkins brought forward to the Board the concept of developing and adopting a policy or statement on civility. The Board of County Commissioners (Board) directed the County Administrator (Administrator) to discuss such an action with each Commissioner and return with a recommendation for the Board's consideration.

DEPARTMENT: Administration

PREPARED BY: **Name:** Taryn G. Kryzda
Title: County Administrator

REQUESTED BY: Commissioner Harold Jenkins, District 3

PRESET:

PROCEDURES: None

BACKGROUND/RELATED STRATEGIC GOAL:

It is not un-common for governmental entities to evaluate and develop a policy or statement relative to civility. The policy or statement that is adopted also becomes, in some instances, a foundation for public speakers that are addressing those governmental bodies and can establish guidelines for how the elected officials interact with each other.

What is Civility? The Institute for Local Government (ILG) defines it in the context of democratic

debate, 'civility is about how people treat each other. Civility involves the display of respect for those who have positions with which one disagrees.' The City of Stuart (City) has adopted a Civility statement that is included within their agenda:
'WHAT IS CIVILITY?: *Civility is caring about one's identity, needs and beliefs without degrading someone else's in the process. Civility is more than merely being polite. Civility requires staying "present" even with those persons with whom we have deep-rooted and perhaps strong disagreements. It is about constantly being open to hear, learn, teach and change. It seeks common ground as a beginning point for dialogue. It is patience, grace, and strength of character. Civility is practiced in our City Hall.'*

Other entities have adopted such policies or statements, as there are many examples for governmental entities. Commissioner Jenkins proposed six recommendations to the Board:

1. Treat everyone courteously;
2. Give open-minded consideration to all viewpoints;
3. Listen to others respectively;
4. Focus on the issues and avoid personalizing debate;
5. Exercise self-control;
6. Embrace respectful disagreement and dissent as democratic rights, inherent components of an inclusive public process, and tools for forging sound decisions.

Establishing a policy on civility or a statement is in no way an attempt to infringe on one's right to free speech. It is merely an attempt to remind individuals who are engaged in the dialogue whether the public to elected officials, or elected officials to each other, to be courteous and respectful.

The Board has an adopted policy for Rules of Procedure for the Martin County Board of County Commissioners which is amended when necessary and adopted when revised during reorganization of the Board. The Board has the ability to amend the policy when it is deemed necessary. The Board could amend this existing policy to address civility, similar to how the term 'politicking' is reflected in the policy. If the Board agreed to do such, staff would recommend the following:

1) Adding a definition on page 3: '**Civil:** The act of formal politeness and courtesy in behavior or speech. Treating everyone courteously, being open-minded and considering all viewpoints. Listening to others respectively and focusing on the issues. Exercise self-control and avoid personalizing a debate. Embrace respectful disagreement and dissent as democratic rights, inherent components of an inclusive public process, and tools for forging a sound decision.'

2) On page 7, staff would recommend amending Section **E. Rules of Debate**, number 5 to state 'A commissioner should be respectful <u>and civil to</u> members of the public, County staff, and other Commissioners and should refrain from engaging in any politicking, personal attacks, abusive or insulting language and redundancy.'

3) Page 10 which is a continuance of Section **J. Appearance Before The Commission**, number 4.b. staff would recommend amending (6) to state 'Be respectful <u>and civil</u> to other members of the public, County Staff, and the Commissioners.'

The Board may also decide to place the approved definition of Civil on the request to speak forms as a gentle reminder for those that address the Board during the meeting.

ISSUES:

None.

LEGAL SUFFICIENCY REVIEW:

To the extent this item contains legal issues; it has been reviewed for legal sufficiency, although this is primarily a matter of Board policy.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

RECOMMENDATION

Move that the Board approve revising the Rules of Procedure for the Martin County Board of County Commissioners as reflected in the three items listed within this item.

ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Move the Board provide staff with further direction.

FISCAL IMPACT:

RECOMMENDATION

There is no fiscal impact.

ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

None

DOCUMENT(S) REQUIRING ACTION:

☐ Budget Transfer / Amendment ☐ Chair Letter ☐ Contract / Agreement
☐ Grant / Application ☐ Notice ☐ Ordinance ☐ Resolution
☐ Other:

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