

# *Public notices belong in newspapers*

**W**hen the Pine Journal was awarded “newspaper of record” for the city of Cloquet in January, it came with a little good-natured ribbing from the city administrator, Brian Fritsinger.

He said if the city ever got around to launching a Web site, that might be the end of publishing public, legal notices in this newspaper.

This idea, pushed for several years in the legislature as a way for government entities to save cash, has yet to become law.

We say it simply shouldn't.

Yes, a city's, county's or school board's doings should be posted on the Internet in this day and age, but newspapers awarded “newspaper of record,” are already publishing them – both in print and on the paper's Web site.

In the Pine Journal's case, print readership is

holding steady while online readership is growing by leaps and bounds, not just in the local vicinity, but in Minnesota, throughout the country and even around the globe.

So, meaningful public notices, such as those seeking public comment, announcing special meetings and declaring budget statements, are reaching a far greater audience than ever before.

And that is an audience already accustomed to finding that information on newspaper Web sites.

Additionally, if a resident has no Internet access, which can be expensive and unreliable, that person may purchase a newspaper for a mere \$.75 at one of many nearby locations.

Lastly, newspapers are independent of government and were created in part to be their watchdogs. Is it a good idea for government to have sole responsibility and control over the dissemination of its own notices? Publishing them in a newspaper ensures they will be accurate, unchanged and reliable. They also then become part of a permanent record, archived and stored indefinitely.

So to the city administrator, save the significant funds set aside for launching and maintaining that Web site and allow the Pine Journal to do for the city what it has done best for the past 125 years – bring unbiased, accurate information to the citizens who have a right to know.

*Lisa Baumann*

