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Howard goes on the web

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HOWARD — The Town of Howard is taking a step into the 21st century, with a push from a resident looking to join the ranks of the Town Board.

All things Howard related can now be found online at www.townofhowardny.com, a website put together by Eric Hosmer, a candidate for a vacant seat on the Town Board.

The website has not yet been officially adopted by the Town of Howard, but has found some appreciation on the board.

“The website could be called a ‘collateral benefit’ owing to the resignation on the Howard Town Board, which created a vacancy to be filled by an off-year election,” Councilman Richard Stewart said.

The website itself features a colorful masthead photograph, depicting the rolling hills of the municipality. It’s multi-functional, with links to local laws, meeting minutes, contact information for various town departments and community organizations, as well as features like a local weather forecast, community calendar, local history and a photo gallery.

Not a web designer by trade, Hosmer said he was motivated to build the website to encourage public participation in the community.

“We have more than 1,400 residents, and more than 800 of them are registered voters, but you may only get 10 people turning out to town board meetings,” he said, hoping that sharing information with the public would serve as an additional check on local government and encourage further transparency.

“There’s nothing hidden anymore. The packets that go in front of board members are all online now.”

According to Hosmer, he decided to build the website after hearing from neighbors while campaigning for the vacant town board seat.

While the website was inspired on the campaign trail, it hosts no political material. Hosmer's campaign has its own website, www.hosmer4howard.com.

"I'm doing this on my own dime because I believe in keeping people informed," he said. "If I get elected on Nov. 6, I'm signing myself up for this higher level of accountability as well ... I want people to know as much as possible."

The proof of the website's worth is in its use, according to Hosmer. It has garnered thousands of views since going online in July.