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NNB News : 2014 : 06 : 25 : Young journalist multitasks through marathon meetings

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Young journalist multitasks through marathon meetings

BY JENNIFER NESSLAR
NNB Student Reporter

ST. PETERSBURG – Just before the 8:30 a.m. start of the St. Petersburg City Council meeting, reporter Kameel Stanley took a seat in the corner labeled “Press.” She pulled out the huge agenda package, which warned the meeting would last a long time.

Courtesy Kameel Stanley
Kameel Stanley, City Hall Reporter
A council member walked by.

“I hope you brought a cushion,” he said with a laugh.

Stanley groaned.

“And a neck pillow.”

Their fears proved true. The meeting lasted 11 hours.

The pace of City Hall is slower than what Stanley, 26, is used to. In 2009, the Tampa Bay Times hired her as the early-morning police reporter, a beat packed with action.

Stanley, a graduate of Central Michigan University, had experience interning at other newspapers such as the Jackson (Mich.) Citizen Patriot and Washington Post. At the Times, she covered police and general assignment before her promotion to City Hall last fall.

Despite the prominence of her position, Stanley enjoyed her former beat.

“I definitely miss the adrenaline rush of cops,” Stanley said, “but that doesn’t mean interesting things don’t happen” at City Hall.

Although the June 5 council meeting was slow, Stanley stayed busy covering a variety of issues – the extension of the management contract for Al Lang Stadium and the Walter Fuller Complex, an update on homeless issues in the city, a vote on the downtown waterfront master plan, and another vote allowing customers to bring alcoholic beverages on pedal-powered buses.

At the meeting, Stanley furiously took notes on her laptop. Christopher O’Donnell, the Tampa Tribune reporter seated next to her, did the same.

To complete her work for the day, Stanley needed to multitask. She wrote three stories for the next day’s paper, several blog posts for its website, tampabay.com, and ongoing updates on Twitter.

She said she takes a lot of notes because “you never know what you may or may not need.” At meetings, she is constantly faced with a decision: take notes or work on a story.

The meeting was packed with important issues, but Stanley faced
another challenge: She needed to pay attention to her phone. She had received a tip that Mayor Rick Kriseman would be narrowing the list of police chief candidates. She waited to hear the news while paying attention to the council meeting.

“It was a unique situation,” Stanley said.

While State Rep. Kathleen Peters, R-South Pasadena, addressed the council, Stanley began drafting the police chief story. During the discussion of the Al Lang/Walter Fuller management contract, she received the police chief news. She slipped out of the council chambers for about two minutes to take the call.

Her story on the homeless update made page 1-A the next day. While she was at City Hall, her editor, Heather Urquides, pitched the story at a news meeting.

To break up the monotony of marathon meetings, Stanley tweets about what is happening.

“It’s the quickest and fastest way to get out news,” she said. Twitter allows her to get the news out in seconds, rather than drafting a blog post and sending it to the newsroom to be edited and posted.

Her posts range from serious to funny. Sometimes she just tweets about how she is feeling.

“Pretty sure I’m never leaving City Hall today. Meeting has been going on for 4+ hrs & we haven’t even gotten to the most controversial stuff,” she tweeted before the first break.

When Stanley finally left City Hall, more work awaited her. She returned to the newsroom to keep writing and polishing the story for 1-A and two more for 1-B. She got home at 10.

A 13½-hour work day.
council meeting. Stanley is the City Hall reporter at the Tampa Bay Times.

Kameel Stanley
@cornandpotatoes

We've got a monster agenda at today's @StPeteFL council agenda meeting, and we're jumping around topics like it's gym class

THU, JUN 05 2014 13:15:51

Kameel Stanley
@cornandpotatoes

Up now, @KathleenMPeters, who said "In Tallahassee your legislature is working across the aisle. It isn't broken & it isn't fractured."

THU, JUN 05 2014 13:21:49

Kameel Stanley
@cornandpotatoes

She also apologized about not being able to bring home $$$ for the 2020 antipoverty plan, and vowed to try again

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