



**CITY OF SALINAS  
COUNCIL STAFF REPORT**

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**DATE:** MAY 2, 2017  
**DEPARTMENT:** LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES (LCS)  
**FROM:** CARY ANN SIEGFRIED, LCS DIRECTOR  
**TITLE:** YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PILOT PROJECT

**RECOMMENDED MOTION:**

No motion is required at this time.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that Council receive the report and provide direction to staff, as appropriate.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Following the discontinuation of the Youth Commission as a City Council-appointed commission, Library and Community Services staff are proposing a pilot project for an alternative model for youth engagement. The new approach includes a “Summer at City Hall” initiative to begin in June 2017, with the intention of providing youth with an educational and inspirational experience that will support their engagement in civic activities and interest in public service.

**BACKGROUND:**

On February 7, 2017, City Council adopted a new Ordinance related to the powers and duties of its Commissions, Boards and Committees. The new Ordinance removed the Youth Commission from the City’s slate of Boards and Commissions, but staff advised City Council that the Library and Community Services Department would assume the role of managing youth participation in civic engagement and would report back regarding further plans. More recently, on April 4, 2017, Councilmembers Barrera, De La Rosa, and Davis requested that the issue of the Youth Commission be brought back to the City Council for additional consideration.

**DISCUSSION:**

In recent years the structure of the existing Youth Commission seemed to be lacking in ability to involve and inspire youth in civic activities or to bring together youth with a common mission. Over the last year staff has been exploring alternative options that might provide a more productive model for youth engagement in Salinas and became aware of the Institute for Local Government’s work in this area.

The Institute for Local Government has been responsible for highlighting recent successful options for programming through the creation of their Governments Engaging Youth (GEY) initiative. GEY's goal is to create strong partnerships between school districts and local government entities (cities, counties, special districts and courts) in order to offer students opportunities to:

- Gain 21st century work skills;
- Build interest in public service careers;
- Learn how to be active citizens (vote, volunteer, lead, advocate); and
- Bring youth voice to influence community issues.

The GEY does not advocate for a “cookie-cutter” approach, but highlights a number of different successful initiatives in Sacramento, Oxnard, Oakland and Yuba City. Sacramento’s “Summer at City Hall” program is probably the longest running and most successful example. These programs combine education in civics and local government with youth involvement in project development and job shadowing/internship opportunities. Generally interaction with City Council and government officials is an integral part of the programs, with presentation of group projects made to City Council members and/or local government leaders.

Library and Community Services staff, in collaboration with Community Safety staff are working together, using the curriculum content examples offered by the GEY toolkit to finalize the structure of the new program. The curriculum development process is still underway, but current plans include the follow elements for this first year of the program:

- A three-week, Monday through Friday timeframe serving 16-20 students
- Age group: 15-18 (entering 10<sup>th</sup> grade through entering 12<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Course content: City department tours & information, civics education (what it means to be an active citizen), careers in public service, opportunities for volunteer service
- Research/advocacy group project (to be presented to City Council)
- Commitments to further public involvement in specified projects
- Mentoring from older youth already active and involved in public service (18-21)

The program will receive oversight from Library and Community Services and Community Safety staff and will also employ several youth mentors with experience in public service.

Participation in the program will require a commitment to ongoing public service in the next calendar year. Staff is proposing that one of the service opportunities offered to youth would be as a Commissioner on the Library and Community Services Commission. Two (2) youth would be appointed by the Mayor for a one-year term and they would serve as voting members of the Commission. Applications would be made available and interested individuals would be able to apply. Persons under the age of eighteen (18) who are currently enrolled in a local school would be eligible to become a youth member of the Commission.

After completion of the pilot project, staff will assess the strengths and weaknesses of this approach and make more formal recommendations to City Council for the future. A possible expansion of

the project in Summer 2018 might following the Sacramento model where closer collaboration with school districts is offered and students receive school credit hours for participation.

CEQA CONSIDERATION:

**Not a Project.** The City of Salinas has determined that the proposed action is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378). In addition, CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 includes the general rule that CEQA applies only to activities which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA.

STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

Although not specifically referenced in the key strategies for Council’s goal to have “Effective, Sustainable Government,” providing opportunities for youth civic engagement is certainly an unspoken, yet important, component of this objective. In addition, providing opportunities where citizens of all ages can flourish is part of the “Quality of Life” goal.

FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

Funding for the pilot program is currently available in the Library and Community Services operating budget.

ATTACHMENTS:

Presentation