



Date of Council Meeting: September 8, 2015

**TOWN OF LEESBURG
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING**

Subject: Civics Education Program

Staff Contact: Keith Markel, Deputy Town Manager

Council Action Requested: To consider a partnership with Simpson Middle School and Morven Park to provide a half day civics program for 8th grade students at Town Hall on October 2, 2015.

Staff Recommendation: Staff supports the program as long the as it does not expand beyond the scope identified in this memorandum.

Commission Recommendation: Not applicable.

Fiscal Impact: Approximately \$1,500 in Town senior staff time. The School system will provide transportation, and Morven Park will supply chaperons / facilitators for the students.

Work Plan Impact: Minimal. The Town's involvement would include participation from the Mayor and interested members of the Town Council along with half a day of staff time for several members of the Town's senior staff.

Executive Summary: Town Council expressed interest in a community civics program for the fall of 2015. As such, the Town has been discussing a potential program with Leesburg's middle schools and with Morven Park in order to engage and educate students on the importance of local government. The proposal involves a half day civics program for a limited number of 8th grade students to be held this fall at Town Hall.

The date and time for the event is tentatively scheduled for Friday, October 2, 2015 from 9:00am to 12:00pm. Planning is still underway, and if approved by Council, all of the specific elements of the event will be formalized with the teachers at Simpson Middle School and the civics staff of Morven Park.

Background: Last year, the Virginia Municipal League (VML) initiated an essay contest for students called "If I Were Mayor". The aim of this program is to increase the awareness of the importance of local government among Virginia students.

In order to enhance participation in the essay contest from Leesburg, discussions with Abby Pfisterer, Director of Civics Programs at Morven Park, were initiated to explore potential partnership opportunities. During this time, Leesburg's three middle school principals were contacted to see if they would be interested in developing a local

government civics program. Simpson Middle School Principal Chad Runfola expressed interest in exploring this idea further and then participated in meetings with the Town, Morven Park, and his civics teachers to develop a potential program.

As a result, the proposed event would consist of a field trip to Town Hall for approximately sixty 8th grade civics students from Simpson Middle School. Similar to the Leadership in the Law Camp program, these students would be able to take on the role of key positions in local government such as Mayor, Councilmember, Town Manager, Department Director, Citizen, and Media. Each student would be able to research and prepare for their role in a mock Town Council Meeting.

In order to effectively manage the group, the sixty students be divided in half with 30 students participating in the mock Council meeting while the other group gets to learn more about some of the Town's projects and history. If the weather is nice, a walk to the Thomas Balch Library to learn about Town history and a visit to King Street would be conducted. After the field trip, the school would have the 8th grade students continue their learning by researching projects in Town that they find interesting or impact their lives before presenting their findings and recommendations during a "Civics Fair". This would allow them to share what they have learned about local government with the other middle school students with the hope that this would provide information and encouragement for the 7th graders to then write essays in the VML "If I Were Mayor" contest.

PRESENTED September 8, 2015

RESOLUTION NO. _____

ADOPTED _____

A RESOLUTION: AUTHORIZATION TO HOST A CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MORVEN PARK AND J. LUPTON SIMPSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

WHEREAS, the Town Council understands the importance of civics education for Leesburg's students; and

WHEREAS, the Town has been in conversations with the Director of Civics Programs at Morven Park to explore ways in which to engage students in the area of civic education; and

WHEREAS, the J. Lupton Simpson Middle School Principal wishes to partner with the Town to provide a civics field trip for a limited number of 8th students as part of the School Systems "One with the World" learning program.

THEREFORE, RESOLVED by the Council of the Town of Leesburg in Virginia that the Town Manager is authorized to move forward with the planning and hosting of approximately 60 students from J. Lupton Simpson Middle School at the Town Hall for a half-day civics field trip this fall in an effort to promote greater understanding of the Leesburg local government.

PASSED this 8th day of September, 2015.

Kristen C. Umstattd, Mayor
Town of Leesburg

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council