

Local students go behind the scenes at Youth in Government Day at Costa Mesa City Hall

About 80 students from Costa Mesa, Estancia, Newport Harbor and Early College high schools took over City Hall on Wednesday morning April 20 to take part in the inaugural Youth in Government Day.

The students got a behind the scenes look into how city government works, spending time with public services, police, fire, city administration, parks and community services and finance teams to learn the intricacies of the job.

The students were welcomed to City Hall by Mayor Steve Mensinger, Councilwoman Katrina Foley and City CEO Tom Hatch.

Mayor Mensinger talked to them about the importance of being a leader and how the city needs more people to step up into leadership roles.

“You being here today makes you a part of that group,” he said. “We are looking forward to having you as future leaders.”

Councilwoman Foley told the group how important it is to vote and how much local government can change things.

“Costa Mesa City Hall is the place where you can effect the most change that you can see in your daily lives,” she said.

Next, CEO Hatch talked about the importance of local schools, which he called the “lifeblood of the community.” He also told the students how he was attracted to a career in government because it is a place where you can quickly solve problems.

After the morning welcome session, the students split up and spent time in their assigned groups where they learned about finance, policing, fire service, city administration and parks and recreation.

After an afternoon lunch, which included a presentation by County Registrar of Voters Neal Kelley, the students filed into the council chambers to hold a mock City Council meeting.

The council members included Mayor Maraide Green, of Estancia High School, Mayor Pro Tem Andrew Ghobrial, of Costa Mesa High School, Council Members Jennifer Contreras, of Costa Mesa High School and Council Members Roman Giglio and David Coreas from Early College High School.

Also on the dais were City CEO Catherine Pimentel from Costa Mesa High and City Attorney Julia Paluch from Estancia. Estancia's Abby Dunham played the part of City Clerk and Tia Gordon of Costa Mesa was a staff presenter. Andrew Garcia of Costa Mesa and Ulises Rodriguez from Early College were public commenters.

The mock council heard a presentation by Architect Steve Johnson of the firm Johnson Favaro regarding the plans for a new teen area in the city's soon to be re-built Donald Dungan library. After hearing the presentation and asking great questions, the council approved the plan 5-0.