

Dear Chairperson Brunelle & Town Council Members:

I apologize for the delay in circling back with the meeting I had with New London Neighborhood Coordinator, Yamilla Mateo on 8/28/24. Here I present my notes and subsequent thoughts from the time spent with her.

First, I should note that the passion and enthusiasm Ms. Mateo exuded was remarkable - such a positive attitude filled with hope and excitement and passion for what she does. There she was, clearly a person dedicated to and in love with her community and its residents. It was one of the most inspiring memories I took away from sitting with her. Her goal is "shaping the culture of leaders" in New London.

Most of the material that she presented is in line with my vision for our own Governance community outreach program. Also, it should be noted that New London has been providing these classes to its residents for approx. 20 yrs.

THE CLASSES:

There are several pieces of the town governance pie that New London addresses in their Academy program:

- Town Departments (Fire, Police, Public Works, etc)
- The Mayor's vision
- Housing (Seniors, HUD)
- Commissions
- State Reps - guest speakers

THE NITTY GRITTY

Each Dept Head/Chairperson creates and presents for up to one hour. These presentations can be recycled from class to class as much of the information is fairly standard. There are PowerPoint presentations presented by each department head or commission chairperson (or designate) in addition to handouts. Residents can discuss how to get a new curbside recycling bin, where to pay taxes, why their mailbox in the winter always takes a beating from plow trucks and what to do about it, etc etc. Yamilla provides requirements to each dept head/chairperson for what should be covered, but they are responsible for putting together the actual content/presentation. Their business cards and/or contact info is included in the hand out material.

Each class per week is 3 hrs. The class runs 5 wks. Registration is free but is required. Residents only. Since Yamilla took over the position, these Academy classes are expected to be held only once each year. She plans to increase.

Presentations typically include who does what when and why. Commissions discuss processes and regulations but steer clear of any specific applications, obviously.

OBSTACLES:

The biggest obstacle Yamilla noted is space. Ledyard's biggest challenges in addition to space will be time and resources.

INITIAL SUGGESTIONS/FEEDBACK:

These suggestions are severely limited but in no way should it be contrived as a complete list:

1. Develop a Commission on Education to provide a vision and mission statement, and then to organize and execute the goals and objectives of providing much needed information to our residents, new and existing, as declared in the vision and mission statement. This commission would be tasked with: determining what information is required (content); developing a community outreach plan (dissemination of info, social media communications, promotions at local events, etc); working with local constituents and stakeholders to coordinate classes (secure time and location; technology - online access; and scheduling, etc etc); respond to feedback from class "graduates"; other.
2. Hire a planning consultant (one time) to coordinate with our current Land Use Dept to develop a relevant presentation on Town Planning and Land Use functions in CT. This presentation should include the legal framework surrounding the roles and functions of the dept. I make this suggestion for a consultant knowing how busy our Planning and Land Use dept is currently. Ultimate content would come from our own Planner and Land Use Dept staff.
3. Coordinate involvement with our State Reps
4. Others?

CONCLUSION

There is so much more we could offer by means of education and town government outreach, but Rome was not built in a day. If the foundation laid is secure and strong, we can continue to build on it. The key is sustainability and access. To that end we must pursue!