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YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT AT BEVERLY HILLS CITY HALL Beverly Hills Students Learn about Local Government

Beverly Hills, Calif. - Beverly Hills Community Services hosted its annual Youth in Government Day for Beverly Hills eighth grade students last week (May 6, 2015). The event brings civic awareness to youth and the importance of being involved in local government.

Sixteen students were selected to participate in a mock city council meeting based on their outstanding essays. Their essays provided arguments on how they would encourage the City Council to allocate monies to enhance Beverly Hills La Cienega Park so it best serves the community. The Youth Councilmembers discussed the issue in a traditional public meeting format in the council chambers at Beverly Hills City Hall. (Youth Councilmembers: Mayor Mia Grossman, El Rodeo; Vice Mayor Adriel Ghadoushi, Hawthorne; City Council Members Arjun Batra, Horace Mann; Tiffany Chieu, Beverly Vista; Ava Hekmati, El Rodeo; City Treasurer Max Uzzan, Hawthorne; City Manager Sam Stahl, Horace Mann; City Attorney Danna Rosman, Beverly Vista; City Clerk, Sean Toobi, El Rodeo; Police Chief Willy Magnin, Hawthorne; Fire Chief, Sophia Cohen, Horace Mann; Department Director Capital Assets, Jonah Okum, Beverly Vista; Department Director Community Services, Isaiah Beenhouwer, El Rodeo; Department Director Community Development, Alexia Moshirfatemi, Hawthorne; Department Director Communications, Audrey De Leon, Horace Mann; Recreation & Parks Commissioner, Nathan Kim, Beverly Vista.)

To prepare for the mock city council meeting, students conducted table talks with elected officials, commissioners and staff which gave students an opportunity to learn more about councilmembers' role in setting policy and acting as liaisons between the city and the general public. It also gave them an idea about how councilmembers concern themselves with the daily affairs and future development of the city.

During the mock city council meeting, students presented ideas and recommendations to design a park enriched with services that appeal to the community while considering the diverse needs, competing interests, design impact and costs to the city.

“We approached this as a very serious exercise with students,” said Steven Zoet, Community Services Director. “Their ideas and engagement on the subject of redesigning La Cienega Park is a real-world city business. We need the entire community to be thinking critically about our priorities and goals in creating a public space that elevates the quality of life in Beverly Hills.”

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As part of the program, students also got to tour the Beverly Hills Television Station studios where television host John Loesing of the award winning news program “Beverly Hills This Week” gave advice on conducting oneself on camera to prepare students for the taped mock City Council Meeting.

In addition, students toured City Hall and the City’s Emergency Operations Center at the Police Department. The day concluded with a debrief, evaluations and the Youth in Government Certificate Presentation Ceremony.

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