

City Government Academy Fall 2018 Summary

Summary: To encourage community engagement, the City of Valparaiso offered their own City Government Academy, an opportunity for residents to learn about how city government works in their own community.



Goals: 1) Engage residents in local government through an interactive forum to learn first-hand how the city is structured and managed; 2) Provide an opportunity for residents to better understand the City's decision-making processes and challenges including budget limitations, mandates and maintaining day-to-day operations; 3) Increase awareness on how to access needed services and encourage participants to share this information by serving as a resource for their neighborhoods.

Results:

- 25 participants completed the program and were recognized with a CGA certificate.
- 100% of participants* agree that content met or exceeded their expectations.
- 100% of participants would recommend (or have already recommended) the CGA to friends.
- Due to the knowledge gained at the CGA:
 - 91% of participants are more likely to attend a public meeting.
 - 86% of participants are more likely to contact a city department head directly when they have a question.
 - 82% of participants are more likely to weigh in on decision making at a public meeting.
 - 77% of participants are more likely to be an advocate for the city in their neighborhood.
 - 50% of participants are more likely apply for a seat on a board or commission.
 - 32% of participants are more likely to run for an elected office.
- A sample of responses from participants when asked what they found most valuable:
 - *"The understanding of the extensive work, commitment and devotion the employees of the city have for the community as a whole."*
 - *"Entire program well designed and presented. Exceptional city leaders and administrator."*
 - *"This makes city government so accessible. This program is invaluable to facilitate an active and involved population that represents the diverse demographics of the city."*
 - *"Financial details – amazing how well the city is organized. Excellent use of resources."*
 - *"Tremendous idea, well organized, remarkably informative, made me an even more proud and loyal citizen. Well done!"*

Considerations for Future:

- Increase the number of sessions due to the detailed content of each speaker.
- Increase time for peer networking and sharing i.e. social hour before or after a class, social media connections, more activities during sessions, etc.
- Make the program more "green" by offering digital copies in advance as well as hard copies upon request.
- Include and promote more ways that participants can get engaged with the city outside of the program, next steps after academy.
- Desire to use "alumni" as a resource – keep them engaged on an ongoing basis.

**Final evaluations were submitted by 22 out of 25 participants.*

For questions/comments contact Maggie Clifton, Community Engagement Director, at mclifton@valpo.us.