

Local Government: Why Does It Exist and Why Should I Care?

POL 04

Have you ever wondered if there was a meaningful way in which you could participate in your community, and perhaps influence the decision-making process for the better? Local government—through collection of property and sales tax—provides essential services to the community, including fire and police services, parks, libraries, road repair, and trash collection. But what relationship does local government have with other regional agencies, the state and the federal government, and most importantly, to us, the public?

This course will examine the very core of our local government with a series of key expert guest speakers. The conversation will include topics of importance, such as how our elected officials develop policy, the Ralph M. Brown Act (which insures transparency in the decisionmaking process), pension reform, ethical considerations, referenda, unfunded mandates, environmental review of new development, and much more. Taught by a current sitting mayor, the course will be fully engaging, with a great deal of questions and answers, and participation in a mock City Council meeting. By the end of the course, students will have gained a deeper understanding of how local governments work and how they can be a force for public good.

Schedule: 10 classes, September 24 - December 3, 7:00 – 8:50 p.m.

Class 1

Local Government, 101
Mayor Jennifer Hosterman
Mock City Council

Class 2

Nelson Fialho, City Manager
The role of the City Manager in relation to the Mayor and Council
Budget – where does the money come from and how does it get spent?

Class 3

Chris McKenzie, Executive Director, League of California Cities
California Cities, the State Legislature and the Voters--A Delicate

Balance. During its 162-year history, various forces have molded the balance of power and authority among the state and city governments. Today that balance is affected in a profound way by the voters of California when they approve ballot measures. This class will focus on how cities have used the initiative process to achieve greater fiscal autonomy from the state legislature and to advance local control over land use and other matters.

Class 4

Dave Spiller, Chief of Police
Ethics

Class 5

Jennifer Pearce, Planning Commissioner
Land Use issues generally, environmental review

Class 6

Jim Miguel, Fire Chief
Pension Reform

Class 7

Nancy O'Malley, Alameda County District Attorney
Local Government?

Class 8

Jonathan Lowell, City Attorney
State interference with local control

Class 9

David Stark, Government Affairs, Bay East Realtors
Lobbying and the importance of getting involved through Commissions and Committees

Class 10

Class Bucket – whatever you would like further explored