



**Office of the City Attorney  
City of Yakima**

**MEMORANDUM**

January 27, 2022

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Sara Watkins, City Attorney

SUBJECT: Memorandum on Mentorship/Internship Program with the City of Yakima

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A. Background information

In 2016, the City of Yakima entered into a Settlement Agreement with the Plaintiffs in *Montes and Arteaga v. City of Yakima, et al.*, a case addressing the Voting Rights Act. That Settlement occurred after the Court ruled in Plaintiffs' favor regarding the election districting and voting in Yakima. The Settlement Agreement included a donation of \$100,000 from Plaintiffs to the City of Yakima "to promote equity and equal opportunity for previously underserved Yakima residents, as mutually determined by the parties."

The City Council in 2017, with the agreement of the Plaintiffs, voted to use the money in two different ways. The first use of a part of the money, \$25,000, went to pay for the City's Equity Study. The results of that Study can be found on the City's website here: <https://www.yakimawa.gov/council/equity-study/>.

The remaining \$75,000 of funding is to be used as follows:

\$75,000 of the funds will be used by the City of Yakima for the mentorship-internship program of the City of Yakima for Yakima School District high school students. The funds will be used to pay the wages and benefits for the interns during the time when they are employed by the City. It is anticipated that the mentorship-internship program will continue for a minimum of three years or until the \$75,000 has been expended.

Due to COVID, there have been no participants for the past two summers. There currently is enough funding left for one more year of the program—this year's program.

## B. The Mentorship-Internship Program

The program is an exciting opportunity for students to learn about and increase their knowledge of government. It offers high school students the opportunity to study the local government process up close, and if selected for employment next spring, to gain paid work experience at the City during the summer. The program has two components: the mentorship program and the internship program. To participate in the paid internship portion, a participant must first complete the mentorship program.

### 1. Mentoring Program involving Participation in Civic Affairs and City Government

Students may apply to participate in the program who are in high school in the Yakima School District in the 10th, 11th or 12th grade. Seven students will participate in the program. This means that it is anticipated that there will be 3 students from Davis, 3 students from Eisenhower, and 1 student from Stanton. However, if one school does not have enough applicants, this may change. Information has already been sent to each of the schools to explain the program and encourage students to express interest to the school's counselors. Students have until February 25<sup>th</sup> to contact their counselor to express interest, and it is anticipated that counselors will have chosen students to participate shortly thereafter.

Initially the City Council members will meet with the students, discuss the program and expectations for those students who will be participating in the mentorship program, and answer questions. We are anticipating that this will be done as a group on March 15, 2022, the hour prior to the City Council meeting. Please calendar yourself to be available starting at 4:30 p.m. at City Hall on that day so you can meet your mentee and answer questions.

The students are expected to "job shadow" with their City Council member while the Council member is participating in City Council activities on three different times through the rest of the school year for approximately one to two hours on each occasion. These can be City Council meetings, study sessions, or other external committee meetings in which a councilmember attends, such as the Homeless Coalition. The student is required to attend at least one hour of a City Council meeting or City Council committee meeting during the mentorship. Those students who attend the meet and greet on March 15<sup>th</sup> will be encouraged to stay for the City Council business meeting and check that item off of their list of requirements.

### 2. Paid Internships at City of Yakima

If a student participates in and meets the expectations of the mentoring program during the school year, the student is eligible to apply for a paid internship position working at the City of Yakima during the summer months. Full time and/or part time positions will be available for the seven students who participated in the mentorship component, if they meet the requirements and apply for employment. The application and hiring process for the paid internship positions will start in approximately late May 2022. The interns who are hired will begin employment in June 2022.

Interns hired for the summer will be matched with the offices of City staff based on the needs of the City and their interests. In the past, interns have been matched in the Community

Development Division, Legal Department, and Public Works Department. Interns share these basic responsibilities and also may take on a variety of special projects.

- Attend some City Council committee meetings and City Council meeting
- Attend meetings, hearings, and court matters with staff members
- Assist with daily office work and City work tasks, which could involve field work
- Participate in intern classes, workshops and training
- Maintain professional, non-partisan conduct

C. Your Role in the Process

Councilmembers are at the center of the mentorship portion of this program. One of the goals of the program is to allow high school students to experience what it is like to be a councilmember and leader of the City, how government operates, and what it takes to run a city the size of Yakima. Here are some things you can do to ensure that your mentee has a good experience and completes the mentorship portion of the program, making them eligible for the paid internship over the summer:

1. Maintain contact with your mentee throughout the rest of the school year.
2. Send your mentee the link to the public NOVUS agenda packet for each council meeting and/or study session and encourage them to attend.
3. If you serve on community committees as part of your role as a councilmember, invite your mentee to one of those meetings.
4. Be available to answer questions about your role as a councilmember and city government in general.

Each mentee will be provided paperwork to complete the mentorship program. A copy of that paperwork is attached for your reference.

Although the Legal Department facilitates this program, it is the Councilmembers who are responsible for ensuring that the mentorship experience is positive for the participants. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.