



# Information Item

Date: May 7, 2013

To: Mayor and City Council  
From: Rod Gould, City Manager  
Subject: Santa Monica Citizens Academy

## **Introduction**

The City of Santa Monica will launch the first offering of a Citizens Academy in spring 2014 to educate residents about their local government and encourage participation in local public policy making.

## **Discussion**

The Santa Monica Citizens Academy will be a free 7-9 week program designed to help Santa Monica residents learn about their local government and how it and other community institutions and non-profits operate. Coordinated by the City Manager's Office, the Academy will entail 6-8 classes of several hours in the evening or half days on weekends.

## Application Process

Residents of all ages and backgrounds who have in the past or are currently considering serving in leadership roles in the community, or are curious as to how the City and its partners make decisions, allocate resources, and get things done will be encouraged to complete a brief application. A selection committee will review all applications and select a class of between 20-25 residents. Applications will be made available in early 2014.

## Curriculum

Each class will involve broad based conversation and information sharing with focus on a particular issue area. Subject matter experts among City staff or partners in the community will lead the classes. Depending on the issue, different speakers will attend, provide additional insight and answer questions. For example, a session could be how the City, College, and schools are governed with possible speakers including the Mayor, Superintendent or a member of the College Board.

Other topical areas could include:

- Public safety (police, fire, emergency services)
- Public infrastructure
- Planning and economic development
- Education and childcare (Cradle to Career)
- Transportation and parking
- Quality of life and human services
- Regional government
- Administrative matters (finance, human resources, technology and sunshine laws)

The curriculum will focus on the different nature and needs of the community's social, economic and community institutions – and the role and importance of each to the overall wellbeing of the city.

The Academy will grow based on experience and feedback from participants. Residents who participate in the Academy will gain a fuller understanding of what is going on in the city and how to engage the democratic process to improve policy prescriptions, programming and communication.

A total of \$12,000 will be included in each year of the proposed FY2013-15 budget to fund the Academy.

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