

# **LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN CONNECTICUT, 3<sup>rd</sup> EDITION**

## Instructor's Guide

### Chapter 21

#### **Class Discussion**

1. Have the students openly discuss the level of technology in the school that they have access to for education. Ask for their opinion on it, and what they would like to see (this could be good feedback for the school's IT department).
2. What changes have the students seen in their own lives in technology in the last 5 years?
3. What hardware would students like to have right in their own classroom?

#### **Class Assignments**

1. Research the Connecticut Education Network (CEN) and how it will impact them in the classroom. Have them explain what the network is all about.
2. How could the use of technology change education in the classroom?
3. Has technology improved education in the last 5 years?

#### **Field Trips-Other Ideas**

- Arrange a visit to the school's IT center and have the staff explain the hardware and software and how it is being used in the school district
- Visit the town hall and have a town official explain how technology is used in town operations, and what they would like to have.

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### Chapter 22

#### **Class Discussion**

1. Do students see the need for other municipal officials?
2. Are there special needs or requirements that municipalities must provide for when they are located in different parts of the state? Connecticut is a diverse state with a variety of climates and sub-climates, topography, hydrology and geology? Identify some of these municipalities and discuss what special requirements might be required.
3. Connecticut is also a diverse state with a variety of races, cultures, and demographics. Are there special municipal needs to service this diversity? Some municipalities house large universities, military bases, resort and entertainment businesses, medical complexes, and agricultural concentrations. There are municipalities with high densities of housing and others with low densities. Identify some of these municipalities and determine what types of special services might be required.

#### **Class Assignments**

1. Break the class down into different groups and assign a specific geographic region of the State of Connecticut to each group and ask them to determine if there might be any special need for additional staffing, or unique officials that may be needed.
2. Pick a diverse group of municipalities by size, location, population, demographic factors such as income, education, race or cultural diversity (the state of Ct. publishes this data through their EDRG – Educational District Reference Group listings – another source is the U.S. Census Bureau) and assign various municipalities to each group to research to determine if there is a need for special staffing or regulatory oversight.
3. Have students “inventory” their community and surrounding communities and compare the number and type of officials to determine why there may be differences and have them report to class.

#### **Field Trips and Other Ideas**

- Have some of the special or unique local officials (i.e. Harbor Master, Animal Control, Veteran's Agent, Housing Code Enforcement Officer) visit the class and describe what they do and why their position exists.

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#### **Class Discussion**

1. Put on the board the months for two years (J,A,S,O,N,D,J,F,M,A,M,J, etc)as shown on Figure 23-1, and have students give their opinion of the level of governmental activity by the different months. Plot this on the board.
2. Save this calendar, and then subsequent discussion on when is the best to affect government policy and to try and influence the political leaders.
3. Compare the students' calendar to the Figure 23-1 and have a discussion on the differences.
4. When does the municipal audit start? What period does it cover? Why is there an audit?

#### **Class Assignments**

1. Research how big the town budget is, how much is spent for education, and how is the budget adopted. Has the budget ever failed to get adopted? What happened?
2. Research to see if the major town boards hold meetings in the summer. (Have students first identify the major town boards, i.e. Board of selectmen, town council, planning and zoning, board of education, board of finance, etc.)

#### **Field Trips-Other Ideas**

- Invite the CEO to the class to discuss the calendar that the students have developed and obtain their opinion on it.
- Invite the town finance officer to come to the class to discuss the budget preparation, keeping track of expenditures, and what the auditors look for.

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### Chapter 24

#### **Class Discussion**

1. Are any public utilities provided by the community that you live in?
2. Briefly describe the goals of energy conservation?
3. Which utilities are most commonly provided by a municipal government?
4. Which utilities are most commonly provided by the private sector?
5. When it comes to public utilities, do you think that state government has adequate regulations to protect the public?
6. What public utility is the most essential that we cannot live without?
7. Do you think that cities and towns should Wi-Fi certain parts of your community?
8. If so, which areas of your city or town should provide Wi-Fi services to citizens?
9. Do you think that this is a valuable public service? If so, who should pay to Wi-Fi selected areas of a community?

#### **Class Assignments**

1. Prepare a list of whom you could have come to your class to explain about available utilities in your city or town. Is there any single person in your city or town government that could properly explain all available public and private utilities?
2. Research PURA on the web and prepare a list of what they regulate.
3. What do you think is the most important utility that should be conserved to protect the environment?
4. Ask your parents/guardians what are the most expensive utilities in the house. Do they fluctuate from month to month? Why?
5. Divide the class us into teams and see who can come up with the most utilities that are available and who provides them.

#### **Field Trips-Other Ideas**

- Have the students on their way home prepare a list of all the utilities they see. Are they above ground, below ground or not visible? Have them identify if the utilities are in the road, alongside the road, or other locations. (Hint: Look for man holes and pipe caps in the roads for utilities such as sewers, water, gas, electric)

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### Chapter 25

#### **Class Discussion**

1. Economic development is a way to raise revenues without increasing taxes. Do you think that most citizens appreciate economic development for this reason?
2. Explain the primary benefits of economic development to the local government (ties back to Chapter 10, Where Does the Money Come From?).
3. Some economic development incentives are service oriented and some are financially oriented. Which ones do you think help attract private sector investment in a community?
4. Do you know what economic development incentives are provided by your community?
5. Outside of revenues, what are the other benefits of economic development to a local government?
6. Does anyone know where the State DECD is located? Visit the DECD website.

#### **Class Assignments**

1. Find out who is in charge of economic development in your community? Is it a dedicated person or is the responsibility vested with the CEO or Town Planner? Discuss where would be the best place to have this responsibility and why.
2. Does your city or town have approved economic development incentive programs? Is there anything on the town website that addresses economic development.
3. Research the use of economic development incentives in your community. Ask the CEO if they were successful.
4. Should the Economic Development Director (if there is one) report to the Chief Executive Officer or the Planning Director, and why?
5. How would you educate the private business sector about your community's economic development incentives?"
7. Divide the class into groups and see what incentives each group can come up with to promote economic development. Debate the proposals.
8. Check out your city or town's website. Are the municipal economic development incentives properly explained to the public?

#### **Field Trips-Other Ideas**

- Go to your city/town hall and talk to your Economic Development Director or person who has this responsibility about the incentives provided by your community to the private sector.
- Invite a representative from the local Chamber of Commerce to class to talk about economic development in town, what is going on, and his/her ideas about improving economic development.
- Do you think your local public officials know the economic development incentives offered to cities and towns by their state government? If not, how would you help educate them?

# **LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN CONNECTICUT, 3<sup>RD</sup> EDITION**

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### Chapter 26

#### **Class Discussions**

1. Why and when did Connecticut eliminate county government?
2. What has replaced county government?
3. Is there more or less access to public officials and citizen participation in local government with Connecticut's current system of local government?
4. Would the efficiencies of eliminating municipalities and concentrating the delivery of services into counties or regional governments reduce participation and access to local government officials?
5. What services currently delivered by your local government do you think could be better delivered by a regional government and why?

#### **Class Assignments**

1. Invite the head of your local government to your class and ask them about regional government. Which regional government does your municipality belong to, what services does the regional government provide?
2. Invite your school principal or superintendent to visit and discuss the pros and cons of a regional school district.
3. Break the class down into different groups assigning a functional area of local government (i.e. police, fire, public works, recreation) and have them decide whether some of these functions could be performed on a regional basis and which ones might not and why?

#### **Field Trips and Other Ideas**

- Class visitations by local government officials, the Mayor, Town/City Manager, First Selectman, school Superintendent are all great opportunities to talk about the current structure of local government in Connecticut, the opportunities and problems of regionalization at both the policy level, and the service delivery level.

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### Chapter 27

#### **Class Discussion**

1. Does your City/Town Hall have news coverage provided by a local newspaper? If so, does your local government have a full-time news reporter?
2. Does your local newspaper have their newspaper on a website for the public to read? Do more people use the website and the web for news or read hardcopy?
3. Do your public meetings have a news reporter present to provide press coverage of the meeting?
4. Are all notices of public meetings appropriately posted so citizens know about these meetings? Where are these notices posted?
5. Does your city or town also receive news coverage from local radio or television stations?
6. Do you think that both good and bad news makes the local media, or just the bad news?
7. Did you ever hear of the FOIA before you read this book? Why is it an important agency?
8. What topics can be discussed in an Executive Session? Can a vote be taken in Executive Session?
9. Are you aware of anyone in your community filing a complaint with the FOIC? What was it about?

#### **Class Assignments**

1. Find out if your city or town government has a municipal ethics commission. Is there any ethic clause in the town charter or town ordinance? If not, how do you think municipal officials should handle ethics violations in your community?
2. Have you ever read about any possible ethics violations from your local public officials?
3. Does your community provide any ethics training to newly elected or appointed public officials?
4. Check-out your city or town's website to see if any mention is made of their ethics code or expected ethical practices.
5. Do you feel that most types of ethical behavior in local government reflect common sense?
6. Have you ever attended a meeting of your city or town's ethics commission or the State's FOIC?
7. Are you aware of "closed sessions" held by your elected officials on any topics that relate to ethical issues? When was the last one, and what topics did they discuss?

#### **Field Trips-Other Ideas**

- What local public official would you have explain your city or town's ethics code to your class?
- Find out the next meeting of your city or town's ethics commission and attend their meeting.
- Invite a member of the press to class to discuss the impact of the FOIC on local government information.

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### Chapter 28

#### **Class Discussion**

1. What are the three big items in labor negotiations that are very important to employees?
2. Pensions are an important benefit package for employees. What is the difference between a defined benefit pension and a defined contribution pension?
3. When you enter your first job, which type of pension would you prefer? Why? Is age a factor in deciding which type of pension benefit is best for the employee? Why?
4. What is Social Security? Why is it important? What age does it start?
5. Do you think it will be in existence when you retire?
6. What is Medicare? Why is it important?

#### **Class Assignments**

1. Determine what type of pension plan is offered in your town. Compare this to the teachers' pension plan.
2. What is the advantage to the town in the arrangement for teachers' pensions? (Hint: the State and the teachers pay for the pension plan; it is no cost to the town.)
3. Ask your parent or grandparents what type of pension plan they have? What do they think about the type? What would they like to have? Also ask them if there are in Social Security and what it means to them.
4. Ask your teacher what type of pension plan he/she is in and what do they like and dislike about the plan. (Note: the school business manager can help with this)

#### **Field Trips-Other Ideas**

- Visit the town hall and find out who handles pension. Ask them what type of plans they offer and are they fully funded.
- Visit the business office of the board of education and ask the same questions, both for teachers and other employees, such as secretaries and custodians. Compare the plans. Break the class down into different groups and have them defend the advantages and disadvantages of the two types of plans.
- Ask your teachers if he/she is in Social Security? What are their thoughts on this?



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#### **Class Discussion**

1. What political decision-making would qualify to be a “public policy”?
2. Are all major public policies considered, debated, and approved at public meetings?
3. Why would you expect public policy recommendations to be made by your city or town government’s professional staff?
4. Can you name some of the most influential special interest groups in your community?
5. Do you think that citizens should be involved in the public policy setting process?
6. Give some examples of distributive public policies. Regulatory policies. Constituent policies.
7. What two membership municipal organizations represent cities and towns at the State level of government? Do they try and influence public policy?

#### **Class Assignments**

1. Select a recent town or city public policy issue in your community and identify who was involved and why they were involved (budget, zoning approval, new school, all day kindergarten, security guards in school, etc.).
2. Do you think that your town or city adequately addresses public policy issues? Select a few and discuss with the class on their opinions.
3. Has any student ever attended a public meeting? What topic? What was the key public policy issue?
4. Pick a major public policy issue and have students debate if the local elected officials represent the citizens.
5. Has a member of any of any special interest groups every knocked on the door to present their viewpoint? How about at a public venue with a table set up to distribute information?
6. Do you think that the local political process is much different than the state’s political process?

#### **Field Trips-Other Ideas**

- Make arrangements for an elected or appointed official from your city or town government to explain the public policy process in your community? Have them identify who is involved, both overtly and covertly in the background.
- Attend at least one public meeting to gain insight into your local government’s public policy setting process. Students can go together and then make a report on the meeting.

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### Chapter 30

#### **Class Discussion**

1. Have the class list the types of jobs that exist in in town hall; put the list on the board. Then ask the students what education they would need to have these types of jobs.
2. What are the good paying jobs? Rank highest to lowest. What is the relationship of the job to its educations requirements and pay levels?

#### **Class Assignments**

1. Have the students find out all the jobs at town hall and what the titles are.
2. Have the students find out all the different types of jobs there are on the board of education side.
3. Put the lists on the board and compare the job opportunities between the two.
4. See if more students would prefer to work for the town or the board and why.

#### **Field Trips-Other Ideas**

- Have the students write a paper on the job in local government (town or board of education) they would like to have. Have them explain why. Have them write out the educational level that is required for the specific job.
- Invite a career counselor from the board of education or from the college attend class and discuss careers.
- Invite a specific person to talk about their job. Select people based on the interest of the students, i.e. teacher, police officer, first selectman, town manager, finance officer, public works employee, animal control officer, etc.