

### **Observation Assessment #3**

**Type of Observation:** City Council Town Hall

**Mentors:** Shona Huffman and Will Sowell

**Location:** Frisco City Council Chambers

**Date:** February 4, 2019

**Time:** 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm

**Assessment:**

This year the introduction to my ISM speech has been built around Parks and Recreation and my dedication to local government through figures like Leslie Knope. What I don't mention, however, is that the specific episodes that I really love from the show are the ones that include Pawnee town hall meetings. All that said, this past week I attended my first Frisco City Council town hall and it was a really interesting event. Just like the Conservative Coalition I attended last week, this was an example of how the officials in city council interact with the residents of Frisco, but even more so than last week because the entire two hours was at the mercy of what question-asking residents inquired on.

One thing that immediately stuck out to me and remained significant throughout the town hall was, interestingly enough, traffic. I knew that the residents of Frisco felt strongly about traffic because even on some of my informational interviews, offhandedly the professionals often mentioned how traffic was something they were always working to improve in local government. Still I had no idea what significance it had to the people until going to that town hall where it seemed the vast majority of public questions were about specific intersections, lights, or construction. There was even a separate representative there that spoke exclusively to answer traffic inquiries. Some reactions I had to the amount of traffic questions are that to me, at least, it seemed that it maybe wasn't the best use of the city's time to have all those representatives listening and only ask one variety of questions. For people that are working on legislation and the future of Frisco, to be specifically there to describe one light seemed somewhat indulgent. That being said, it was a wonderful lesson to me on how what matters to the voters is what matters to city council. Where I got bored after about the third light-related question, ever representative answered with stride and it was cool to see how they professionally navigated even the more hostile additions.

Other prominent aspects included the desire of many to get an animal shelter in Frisco. Again for me it was just the case of not realizing how important and animal shelter was to people for I've never even thought about the lack of one. This really communicated to me how important it is for people to be involved in their government and how events like the town hall are great for as many people as possible to attend because they have the potential to really open up city discussions on important changes or potential changes to the city. Also, there was a moment where a caller expressed her support for the new 2.5 tax cap, which is directly related to my study and fascinating to hear how Shona fielded the question. As with all demographics I've seen her around, she emphasized how great Frisco is first and foremost and crafted her argument for local control around this foundation of maintaining the city's best aspects.

All in all, it was a wonderful night for me to sit in on and even if I ended up hearing more about the roads and pets of Frisco than I had thought I would going into it, I wouldn't have changed a thing.