



**TOWN OF ARLINGTON**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS**

51 GROVE ST, ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02476  
TELEPHONE (781) 316-3108 FAX (781) 316-3109

To: Jim Feeney  
From: Charlotte Milan  
RE: proposed Civics Day event at Town Hall, March 18, 2017

EcoFest is taking a hiatus this spring, which leaves the original reserved date, Saturday March 18, available for another event. Rather than give up this time slot, I propose that we host a civics day. After casually checking in with a few departments, below is an outline for how such an event might be structured and planned.

Goal: "Connecting the dots between the work we do and the people who find it meaningful"- Adam Kurowski

Structure: A fun, free, all-ages Saturday day event at Town Hall that invites to public to engage with Town departments and town-wide initiatives. Interactive "stations" would be set up around the auditorium and expand into the side hallways and upstairs into the Lyons Hearing Room.

Outcomes: residents will meet employees and leadership, learn how to access information via the website and social media, and engage in educational activities around form of government and how to become aware of and active in how the Town functions.

Organizing body: Up to five employees ("organizers") will meet three times to manage logistics and outline a promotional plan. All departments will promote internally and to their constituents, selected (invited? all?) departments will be invited to design an interactive activity, using support and idea generation from the organizers in order to keep to the event goal.

Event title: We need a great one that expresses interactivity and fun.

Examples of interactive, educational activities (any five of these would be sufficient to hold an event):

**Our Vehicles: What They Do** Interactive vehicle show potentially including Town Manager's EV, street sweeper, front loader, fire ladder, ambulance and police car. In Town Hall parking lot with employees greeting the public and inviting exploration.

**GIS Mapping** What can you find out from looking at a map? Interactive online and paper mapping activities, building public access to our online resources.

**How We're Governed** Selectmen and Clerk's Offices collaborate with the League of Women Voters, Governance Task Group and the Diversity Task Group to host a mock Town Meeting and/or hold an information session for potential new Town Meeting members. Could include "What's a Warrant?"

**Information and Me** Web QA, Town Notices, Arlington Advocate, the Arlington libraries and ACMI Inc team up to show off all our information outlets and give hands-on computer search demonstrations.

**Our Open Spaces and Special Places** Recreation, natural resources, Historic gems and park volunteerism serve us all and make the Town a great place to live.

**Engage, Support and Change** Vision 2020 hosts a volunteer engagement activity that help match people with committees and boards that are doing the work visitors care about.

**Moving Around** Biking, walking and senior transportation service access contribute to our vibrant community.

**Events and Tourism** What's our master fun schedule? Highlight the coming year so no one misses Porch Fest, Feast of the East, parades and commemorations, Town Day and the Arts Summer Block Party.

**March is Reuse Month** Single use is out, ReUse is in! From clothes and textiles to grocery bags, we can make an environmental impact starting in our own closets and by developing new shopping habits. Together we'll make grocery bags from old tee shirts and find out about the long international road our donated clothes take as they gain a second (or third) life. Student Green Teams, *Trashformations* recycled student art exhibit (5th year!), compost give-away, rain barrel and compost bins sales, FoodLink snacks.

**Additional Departments that could be approached:**

Council on Aging- the importance of social connectivity throughout our lives

Human Rights Commission- our welcoming community

Planning- Master plan progress and zoning maps

Health and Human Services- caring for all, our social safety nets

Assessor- database searches

Public Safety- community policing

## **Overview of *Civics Day* and guide for preparing department *Civics Day* activities**

WHAT: Civics Day 2017- a free public event

WHEN: Saturday, March 18, 2017, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

WHERE: Town Hall Auditorium, throughout building as needed

WHO: Town departments are invited to host a table/booth for the purpose of meeting the public and sharing about the activities that are vital to public life in our community.

"Government" happens far away by people we don't know. Town government happens at the end of our driveways and in town center by people we see at the grocery store.

The idea of *civics* harkens back to a time when school children learned about forms government and were instilled with a responsibility to participate. While the basics of federal and state government are still taught, local participatory government, or how things actually get done in our neighborhoods, is sometimes a mystery to residents.

Civics Day is a chance for Arlington departments to invite the general public to learn about what we do. In addition, we can expose visitors to the multiple ways they can participate in making Arlington a great place to live, work and play.

We hope to attract new people to Civics Day- newcomers from near and far, those with new free time, and folks just now becoming interested in getting involved locally.

The following are some guiding ideas that answer: what might the public gain from attending and how will our departments potentially benefit from the interaction?

### **Learning and understanding**

New information is stimulating, and the opportunity to *get something* from Civics Day will motivate visitors to come out on March 18. Town departments have the information people want, and Civics Day provides a chance for the general public to wander and explore departments or issues they don't seek on a regular basis.

Make displays big and bold so that they can be seen across the room. The more interactive, the deeper the engagement and learning.

Don't assume visitors know what your department does. In order to place visitors at ease, consider asking, "would you like to hear more about what our department does?" and practice a brief answer, rather than asking "do you have any questions?"

### **Having fun and interacting with employees**

This event is interpersonal. Even if providing critical information and services is at the core of what you do, how you make people feel will have an impact on what they take away from the interaction.

Since this is an all-ages event, consider having a kid-friendly activity available, as that can help parents have more attention to spend on your conversation.

### **Getting involved, taking action**

If all the volunteers took the year off, how differently would your department activities function?

Not everyone is able to or interested in volunteering, but there are many concerned and capable residents with talents our town could benefit from. It will continue to bring energy and passion to events, committees, boards and leadership if we have a clear pipeline for new volunteers to enter. If your department doesn't depend on volunteers, send energized folks to the *Get Involved* table. If you do need volunteers, make sure the *Get Involved* table has your updated contact information and list of open volunteer positions.

Attempt to include some action item residents can take relating to the issues you're highlighting on Civics Day. Whether that's bookmarking the Town's website in their browser, taping a phone number to the fridge, joining a focus group or attending an upcoming training, having a next step ready for visitors will deepen their sense of connection to the value and workings of their government.

Thank you for considering participation in Civics Day 2017.

Please send the following information to Charlotte Milan (x3108 or [cmilan@Town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:cmilan@Town.arlington.ma.us)) in order to reserve your space.

1. Contact Name
2. Department (or group/committee/nonprofit that you have invited to participate as a department partner)
3. Is one 8' table sufficient for your display? If not, what kind of space works best for your activity?
4. Do you need access to electricity?

NOTES: In the Town Hall auditorium, tape is not allowed on the wood paneling. The TH parking lot will be used by DPW, Police and Fire vehicles that day for a kid's *Meet the Vehicles* activity, so employee/participant parking will be on the side streets.

#### Confirmed Participants:

DPW Highway- Meet the Vehicles (Dan Warren, Kurt Kelly)

Engineering- new crosswalk beacon on Mass Ave at Swan Place (Joe Szafarowicz)

Tree Warden- how to plant and care for a tree/street trees (Tim Lecuivre)

Veteran's Service (Jeff Chunglo)

Food Pantry (Andi Doane)

Community Safety- meet Meet the Vehicles, community policing (Jim Curran)

Geographic Information Systems- Mapping where we live and play (Adam Kurowski)

School Green Teams- hack old t-shirts into reusable grocery bags (Rachel Oliveri)

Libraries (Maura Deedy)

Arlington Community Media, Inc. (James Milan)