



Western Connecticut
Leadership

A Program of



Civic Engagement Session October 22, 2018

Goal and Objectives

- ❖ To illustrate how individuals can effect change in their local communities.
- ❖ To demonstrate the operation of Connecticut state and municipal government
- ❖ To provide an overview of the major issues facing Connecticut, with emphasis on citizen participation.

Important Session Information

Session Leaders

Bill Morton, WCL '17
Paul Steinmetz, WCL '17

Advisor

Ellen Carter, Director of Community Leadership, *Connecticut Community Foundation*

Session Attire

Dressing for comfort is appropriate. Walking shoes are recommended.

Venue

Old Woodbury Town Hall
5 Mountain Road
Woodbury, CT 06798
[Map link](#)

Parking

Parking is available on Mountain Road or along Main Street South. You may also park at LaBonne's Market (238 Main Street South). Spaces are available to the right of the store - then take the short walk across the street.

Agenda

- 8:30 – 8:50 Arrival and Light Breakfast
- 8:50 – 9:00 **Welcome**
Bill Morton, WCL '17 and Paul Steinmetz, WCL '17
- 9:00 – 10:30 **The Role of Media in the Political Landscape**
Chris Gardner, Director of Communications, *Yale School of Medicine*
Mark Pazniokas, Capital Bureau Chief, *CT Mirror*
- 10:30 – 10:45 Break
- 10:45 – 12:00 **How Civic Engagement is Local and Regional**
Moderated by Humphry Rolleston, *WCL '16*
Rick Dunne, Executive Director, *Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments*
Neil O'Leary, Mayor, *City of Waterbury*
Jocelyn Ayer, Community & Economic Development Director, *Northwest Hills Council of Governments*
William Demaida, Chair of Republican Town Committee, Waterbury
- 12:00 – 1:00 Lunch
- 1:00- 2:15 **Impactful Change in our Community**
Roberta Willis, *Former member of the Connecticut House of Representatives*
- 2:15- 2:30 Break
- 2:30 – 2:45 **Foundation Bite**
Ellen Carter, Director of Community Leadership, *Connecticut Community Foundation*
- 2:45 – 4:00 **Running for Congress in Connecticut's 5th District**
Moderated by Larry Rifkin, *WCL '17*
Manny Santos, Republican Candidate
Jahana Hayes, Democratic Candidate
- 4:00- 4:15 **Wrap up discussion and Preview of next session**
- 4:15 – 5:00 **Alumni Partners Reception**

Speaker Biographies

William Morton, WCL '17

Bill and his wife Kathy moved to Connecticut in 2014 to be closer to their son and his family. Prior to retiring in 2012, Bill was the Founder and CEO of Medical Device Consultants, Inc. (MDCI). Founded in 1980, MDCI was a regulatory consulting firm and clinical research organization specializing in obtaining regulatory approval to market medical devices in the US, Europe and Canada. MDCI's headquarters was in Attleboro, MA with offices in London, Paris, and San Diego. MDCI was acquired by Aptiv Solutions in 2011.

Bill currently services on the Board of Directors of ECAD (Educated Canines Assisting with Disabilities) a nonprofit organization that breeds and trains Service dogs for the disabled—including military service personnel with physical wounds and PTSD, and children with autism and other disabilities.

Contact info: wammdci@comcast.net

Paul Steinmetz, WCL '17

Paul is the director of Public Affairs and Community Relations at Western Connecticut State University in Danbury, responsible for public relations, publications and event planning. Before joining WCSU in 2006, Steinmetz was editor of The News-Times of Danbury. He is also the founder of [Writing Associates](#), providing publicity and writing services for businesses, organizations and individuals. He and his wife have four children and live in Washington, CT.

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Chris Gardner

Director of Communications, *Yale School of Medicine*

Chris Gardner is Director of Communications for the Department of Psychiatry at Yale School of Medicine. He promotes the work of the department's 850 faculty members and trainees via the web, social media, and a monthly newsletter. He maintains the department's portfolio of 60 websites and manages its messaging service and media relations.

Prior to working at Yale, Chris enjoyed a 20-year career at the Republican-American newspaper in Waterbury, where he worked as Bureau Chief in Southbury and Local News Editor managing local news coverage in the suburbs west of Waterbury. He received two first place awards for investigative reporting from the New England Newspaper & Press Association for uncovering wasteful spending in municipal government.

Chris is a lifelong resident of Newtown, where he lives with his wife, Kathleen, and their children Andrew and Caroline.

Mark Pazniokas

Capital Bureau Chief, *CT Mirror*

As CT Mirror's Capitol Bureau Chief Mark covers state politics and elections as well as legislation and the legislative process. Before co-founding CT Mirror in 2009 Mark was a reporter for The Hartford Courant and The Manchester Journal Inquirer. He is also a former contributing writer for The New York Times. In 35 years as a reporter, he has covered some of the most compelling political stories in Connecticut, including the impeachment inquiry and resignation of Gov. John G. Rowland in 2004, the nationally watched Senate race won by Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman as an independent in 2006, and Linda McMahon's efforts to remake campaigning in Connecticut by spending \$100 million on runs for U.S. Senate in 2010 and 2012. The Washington Post included Mark on its list of best state capitol reporters in the U.S. in 2014. Mark is a graduate of Boston University.

Jocelyn Ayer

Community and Economic Development Director, *Northwest Hills Council of Governments*

The Northwest Hills Council of Governments is the regional planning agency and coordinating body for 21 municipalities in CT's northwest corner. Since 2008, Jocelyn has lived in northwest Connecticut and worked with towns in the region to plan and implement their land use, community, and economic development initiatives. She recently completed the region's Plan of Conservation and Development update and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. These plans contain strategic actions to attract young residents to our region, support farms, protect natural resources, meet the needs of our older adult residents, and become a hub for rural innovation and entrepreneurship.

Jocelyn feels passionately about the need to provide a range of housing options that all residents can afford and has worked on housing issues since her first job as a VISTA volunteer with Habitat for Humanity. Prior to her work with NHCOCG, Jocelyn worked as the [HousingUs](#) Program Director for Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation and as Senior Housing Planner for the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. She staffs the Northwest Connecticut Regional Housing Council and is a member of her town's affordable housing commission.

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William DeMaida

Chair of Republican Town Committee, Waterbury

A retired social studies and civics teacher, Bill DeMaida now puts his energy into civic engagement in Waterbury, where he resides. Bill served as the chairman for the Waterbury Republican Town Committee's 74th District from 2000-2012, before becoming the city-wide chairman in 2014. In this role he recruits candidates for municipal and state offices, raises party funds and encourages civic involvement throughout the year, not just during election season. In addition to his Town Committee responsibilities, Bill is a commissioner on the Board of Parks for the City of Waterbury

and is the Vice President of the Committee for a Better Waterbury or Spirit of Waterbury. Spirit of Waterbury is a 501(c)(3) organization whose purpose is to raise awareness of the city by coordinating local arts collaborative groups, downtown merchants and others to promote special events, such as the recent *Hidden Spaces, Secret Places* urban initiative.

Rick Dunne

Executive Director, *Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments*

At the merger of the Valley Council of Governments (VCOG) and the Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley in 2014, Rick was hired to be the Executive Director of the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG) where he oversees administration of regional policy and planning (including transportation, conservation and development, environmental, homeland security), brownfields redevelopment and shared municipal service provision.

Prior to the merger, Rick was the Executive Director of the VCOG and remains Co-Director of the Greater Bridgeport / Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization. He has also served as the Chairman of the Connecticut Association of Councils of Governments, the lead advocate for regional solutions to municipal issues. Before his tenure at VCOG, Rick spent a decade as the director of development and administration for the City of Derby, CT where he administered the local HUD Community Development Block Grant program, directed Fair Housing Activities, supervised municipal land use planning and coordinated transportation activities with the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Rick previously worked as Policy Director for the Connecticut General Assembly's Connecticut Institute of Municipal Studies where he supervised policy development and drafted legislation on issues ranging from Neighborhood Revitalization to Property Tax Relief. Rick resides in Derby with his wife Diane and daughter Ali.

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Neil O'Leary

Mayor, *City of Waterbury*

Mayor O'Leary joined the Waterbury Police Department in 1980 and rose through the ranks, becoming Chief of Police in 2004, serving in that role until his retirement in 2009. Subsequently, he was recruited by the town of Wolcott to serve as Police Chief. In 2011, O'Leary stepped down to successfully run for Mayor of the City of Waterbury.

Mayor O'Leary's career has been marked by a deep commitment to Waterbury with a "can-do" attitude to effect positive change through collaboration and community building. As Police Chief, his innovative and aggressive approach to law enforcement has been credited with steadily decreasing the City's crime rate. In 2004, O'Leary founded the new Waterbury Police Activities League (PAL), which has become a national model for police prevention and service. In 2007, O'Leary's career in law enforcement received national attention. His tenacity in standing by a local rape victim, known to the public as "Jane Doe," and ultimately solving the crime 11 years later,

became the focus of an NBC Dateline report originally aired that year. Mayor O'Leary now serves on the Board of Directors of "Jane Doe No More," a nonprofit founded to "improve the way society responds to victims of sexual assault."

Lately, Mayor O'Leary has focused his efforts on a comprehensive downtown revitalization project dubbed Waterbury NEXT. It is a \$20 million public-private partnership designed to reinvigorate Waterbury's Downtown by increasing the housing stock to draw young professionals to the area and improving the streetscape around the green.

Contact info: <http://waterburyct.org>

Humphry Rolleston, WCL '16

Humphry and his wife Paula (class of 2015) moved to Litchfield in 2014 following his retirement from McKinsey & Company in New York. Prior to McKinsey, Humphry worked for The Economist in both London and New York for 22 years. Since his participation in WCL, Humphry has been a volunteer at the Litchfield Historical Society Museum, the Gertrude Jekyll Garden in Woodbury, Kids Play in Torrington and appeared in *Spamalot*, *Mamma Mia*, and *It's a Wonderful Life* at the Landmark Theatre Company at the Thomaston Opera House.

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Roberta Willis

Former member of the Connecticut House of Representatives

Roberta Willis recently retired from the CT General Assembly, after having served for 16 years as State Representative from the 64th District representing the nine towns in northwest Connecticut. During her tenure, she was the House Chair of Higher Education and Employment Advancement championing higher education for our students.

The CT Board of Regents for Higher Education praised her as a "tireless advocate" for students who fought to protect and expand state scholarship funds, pushed for capital investments to improve college campuses, and championed stronger sexual assault policies on college campuses, which has been described as a national model. Before her retirement, in a surprise move, the legislature voted unanimously to rename the Governor's Scholarship Program, the Roberta B. Willis Scholarship Program, in her honor.

Raised in the northwest corner of Connecticut, Roberta has always been deeply connected and committed to her community. For more than 25 years, she has served on the Northwest Connecticut Community College Advisory Board and Foundation; she was instrumental in the creation of the Housatonic Youth Service Bureau; and is a long-time member of the Executive Committee for the Women's and Girls' Fund of the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation. She also is a member of the board of directors for 21st Century Fund at Housatonic Valley Regional High School and has served on the Northwest Arts Council and the Advisory Board at Sharon Hospital.

Roberta began her career as a congressional legislative aide, as a teacher in the Region #1 School District and as a community activist. She also co-founded with Meryl Streep the national organization, Mothers and Others for a Livable Planet, to protect children's health and the environment. Roberta graduated from Northwestern Connecticut Community College and received a BA in political science from Vassar College. She is the mother of four and a grandmother of four. She and her husband Bill reside in Lakeville.

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Ellen Carter

Director of Community Leadership, *Connecticut Community Foundation*

Ellen coordinates the Foundation's leadership activities including strategic planning, diversity and inclusion, grassroots funding and support for The Leever Foundation. She also oversees grantmaking in the areas of early education, youth, health and Southbury. Ellen is a member of the Waterbury School Readiness Council, Bridge to Success Community Partnership and Greater Waterbury Health Improvement Partnership.

Ellen first worked to build up economies and residents in post-industrial cities while earning a bachelor's degree in psychology and urban studies from the College of the Holy Cross. Returning to Connecticut, she began her nonprofit career at the Connecticut Association for Human Services where she bridged the divide between direct service and public policy to support low-income families. Ellen holds a master's degree in public administration with a certificate in nonprofit management from the University of Connecticut.

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Manny Santos

Republican Candidate

Manny Santos is the former Mayor of the city that worked as a Product Engineer for over 15 years in manufacturing before running for office. During his time as Mayor, Manny opened-up the City's boards and commissions to average citizens, and made it possible for the general public to address the City Council directly on issues. In addition, Santos' took a fiscally conservative approach, which resulted in more line-item budget vetoes than ever before in the City.

Manny also understands the importance of service. He spent four years in active duty as an enlisted member of the United States Marine Corps. During that time he served during Operation Desert Storm in the Middle East as a primary Military Occupation Specialty as a fighter jet mechanic, rifleman, and pistol sharpshooter.

Manny's campaign has focused on over regulation and building the economy. He approaches this work keeping in mind his background as an immigrant from Portugal in 1974 with his

parents and siblings. During his childhood, Manny's parents instilled in him the value of hard work and spending every dollar wisely.

Manny lives Meriden with his wife and two children, who were educated in the Meriden Public School system. He is a founding member of the Latino National Republican Coalition of Connecticut.

Jahana Hayes

Democratic Candidate

Jahana Hayes, recipient of the 2016 National Teacher of the Year Award, announced her candidacy for the 5th Congressional District of the U.S. House of Representatives in May. She won the Democratic Party's nomination on August 14, 2018.

Hayes is a lifelong CT resident. A former social studies teacher at John F. Kennedy High School, she currently serves as the Talent and Professional Development Supervisor for Waterbury Public Schools. Hayes is known for her passion, energy, commitment to community and unifying presence. She has dedicated herself to being of service in the city of Waterbury and traveled the country and the world engaging stakeholders on topics related to education and equity. These experiences have shown her that all people are facing similar challenges, and she welcomes the opportunity to become a more well-rounded advocate for the entire 5th district.

Hayes grew up in the Berkeley Heights housing project in Waterbury and her life was illustrated by the predictable cycle of poverty. Her family struggled with addiction, relied on public assistance, and at one point lost their apartment. Hayes got pregnant as a teenager and all hopes for any upward mobility seemed beyond her grasp. The people in her community and her strong desire for an education propelled her forward. She enrolled in Naugatuck Valley Community College, went on to get her four year degree at Southern Connecticut State University and her masters and advanced degrees from the University of Saint Joseph and University of Bridgeport, all while working to support her young family.

Jahana lives in Wolcott with her husband, Detective Milford Hayes. They have four children.

Larry Rifkin, WCL '17

Larry Rifkin presently hosts and produces the podcast, 'America Trends', examining emerging social and political issues. In over a year's time, the podcast has attracted over 100,000 visitors and nearly 250,000 visits.

He is best known as the chief programming executive for Connecticut Public Television for over a quarter of century. He oversaw local and national productions, which amassed nearly 50 regional EMMY Awards. He also brought the BARNEY & FRIENDS phenomenon to PBS and U Conn Women's Basketball to the small screen. Over its 18 year run on CPTV, U Conn Women's basketball became the most successful local franchise in public television history. In 2006, he was inducted into the Boston-New England Emmy Silver Circle for lifetime achievement.

Larry also brought a new dimension to talk radio for western and central Connecticut as host of 'Talk of the Town' on 1320 WATR for seven years, leaving that position in 2017. He is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Connecticut and has a Master's degree in Corporate and Political Communication from Fairfield University.

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Opportunities for exploration and further engagement

Connecticut Council of Small Towns

A member-driven organization committed to giving Connecticut's smaller communities a strong voice in the legislative process. <http://www.ctcost.org>

Connecticut Conference of Municipalities

The state's largest, nonpartisan organization of municipal leaders, representing towns and cities of our state with the goal of improving everyday life for all residents of Connecticut.

<http://www.ccm-ct.org>

CT Data Collaborative

Striving for informed decision-making across Connecticut, the organization empowers an ecosystem of data users by democratizing access to public data and building data literacy.

<http://ctdata.org>

Individual Town Websites

All town websites contain valuable information including governing documents, charters, plans of conservation and development, agendas/minutes of boards and commissions.