

NEL Internship Blog #2 Live NFK: An Interns View: Complexity and Flexibility. (6/21/18)

The phrase “government office” might conjure an image of a stern office building, cold fluorescent lights, and the shuffling of mountains of paper work. Have you ever been to the Ernie Morgan Center? It doesn’t fit that picture, except for maybe lots of paperwork! The atmosphere is busy, but still a bit more casual than many government offices. There is schedule



Morgan (second from right) at the Push Comedy Theatre with other summer interns from around the city.

and order, but also room for creativity and flexibility. I love learning and the meetings I have attended are wonderful to that end. Some meetings have exemplified the complexity and collaborative effort that goes into a program or project. Some meetings provide a wealth of background information that help me understand an issue or concern better. So much of what we do here at Keep Norfolk Beautiful is a collaborative effort, usually with multiple departments. As with any collaboration, there is

a degree of complexity and the balancing of needs vs. wants. It is that complexity of local government that has drawn me to public service.

College, however, doesn’t necessarily prepare us for complexity. At the beginning of the semester a syllabus outlines our assignments, project requirements, and deadlines. Jobs, or in this case internships, are not always so neatly lined out and ordered for us from day one. Some deadlines are flexible. Sometimes the look or function of a project isn’t fully realized at the start, or it changes as things progress. Though organization and time management have proven to be important, so is flexibility. Three weeks in and I have discovered that sometimes the simplest answer is, in fact, not usually the solution. The frustrating and beautiful difference between college and this internship is the lack of clarity. The solutions take time and collaboration to find. That solution also has to meet the needs and desires of many people while also being inclusive. How government departments collaborate, the barriers they face, and how they work together to overcome them has become increasingly interesting to me.

Generally speaking, what I want to do is promote environmental stewardship. But, I also just really want to be in local government. Even within Keep Norfolk Beautiful, the programs, while lead by one person, usually include the collaboration of everyone within the organization. I am thrilled to be helping with the brainstorming aspect of creating, changing, and implementing programs. This part of my internship experience will help me understand if creating and running programs is in my future. Only time will tell! Other tasks I am working on include creating social media content, summer camps, volunteer recognition, and learning more about running the ongoing programs.

Intern Tips:

Take a lot of notes. Good notes mean good questions. Write down ideas and share them, at least when you feel it's appropriate. But don't be afraid to speak up and ask questions. As interns, what makes us desirable is our new ideas and fresh perspectives. Not all ideas will be winners, but it may lead to a great idea. Networking is also important. Find, and take advantage of, all opportunities to meet new people and get to know them. Something they do might interest you or provide a contact to collaborate with later.