

YOUNG VOICES

Kids tackle Bisbee pool snacks in mock council meeting

Library summer program gets children involved in how their community works

By Steve Stockmar

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Brendan Johnston, left, sat in Mayor David Smith's seat, while Skyler Sampson filled in for Bill Higgins, council member for Ward I, when the Copper Queen Library's reading program brought kids to city hall on Wednesday to learn how a city council meeting works.



Bisbee City Council Member Douglas Dunn walks through a mock city council meeting at city hall with kids on Wednesday. Steven Parker, left, and Brissania Rabey took their seats on the council.

BISBEE — Opinions got pretty serious from members of the public in Bisbee City Hall council chambers on Wednesday afternoon.

Plenty of voices spoke up. Council members sat riveted.

The topic? What kind of snacks should be available at the Bisbee city pool.

The voices? Those came from kids.

“They should bring their own snacks, that’s my opinion,” said Anna.

“I’m Scout, and I live in Warren,” another resident offered. “And I think that they should have those little salad bowl thingys so that the people who are swimming can eat healthy and not get sick.”

“I am Ember, and I live in Warren. Pickles.”

“I’m Mary, and I live in Old Bisbee. And I think the pool should have healthy snacks and also some unhealthy snacks,” she said, drawing laughter from the crowd.

More opinions chimed in. “I believe that the pool should have allergen-free foods and gluten-free foods.”

Finally, the “mayor” weighed in. It was actually Brendan Johnston, with long bangs covering his eyes.

“I think that they should have junk food but that it should be organic,” Johnston said from the mayor’s chair. “Organic junk food.”

The whole exercise was part of the Copper Queen Library’s summer reading program, which is two weeks into its eight-week run. Wednesday’s gathering brought almost 30 kids, between the ages of 5 and 18, to City Hall to learn about city government and then run a mock council meeting.

Mayor Pro Tempore Douglas Dunn, also a council member serving Ward II, which covers Warren where most of these kids live, acted as host and moderator, while walking the children through the workings of municipal government. The kids learned how various city programs impact their lives, including police and fire, the library, the hospital, garbage collection, recycling, road maintenance and construction — and how taxes pay for all those services.

Wednesday’s “proceeding” was actually recorded per the usual city council meeting rules (the kids particularly liked the part where they all got to stand and wave at the camera), and Dunn let them know that the actual city council will soon discuss the issue of city pool snacks, and would use the kids’ input.

While the “public” stepped up to the microphone to air their opinions, the “council” listened in the form of two girls and four boys to replicate the actual council. Kids also took their places as city manager, the city attorney and at the press table.

Dunn explained each role of municipal government.

“The city council hires the city manager,” he said. “We also set overall goals and direction for priorities for the city.”

The reading program is a free program, and is sponsored by Freeport MacMoRan, the Bisbee Foundation and the City of Bisbee Youth Council. Parents interested in registering their kids should contact Assistant Library Program Coordinator Alison Williams at the Copper Queen Library at 520-432-4232. Available camp spots fill up fast, she noted.

“Our goal is to provide a book a week per child for all eight weeks,” Williams added.