

# Mayor's Youth Council holds first meeting



Special to The Clinton Courier

The inaugural Mayor's Youth Council is pictured with Clinton's Board of Aldermen.

By Randy Bell

Brantley Jones will be a junior at Clinton High School next year, hoping to become more involved in the community; and she believes being part of the newly-formed Mayor's Youth Council will afford her that opportunity.

"I love it when kids are serving the community," Jones says. "It's usually adults who are doing that kind of stuff, and I just love it when kids take the initiative and decide to be part of their community."

Jones is one of forty-three students who've joined the Youth Council. The group met for the first time May 5 in the City Courtroom just prior to the Board of Aldermen meeting and then stayed on to watch City government in action, many of them joined by their parents.

Jones is hoping the Youth Council can give Clinton's leaders a fresh perspective.

"I think this group will definitely bring attention to things in the community that adults don't really think about."

Mayor Will Purdie says he welcomes that kind of input from his Youth Council members as they learn leadership skills.

"These are the folks that will be in these [City government] positions in a few years," he says. "We hope to be training the next generation of Clinton's leaders."

Steven Hernandez, a rising senior at CHS, has considered becoming an aerospace engineer but says the idea of being involved in city government suddenly appeals to him.

"All of the government stuff got a hold of me, and I'm looking at it as future career, maybe," said Hernandez. "As much as I want to do [engineering], government seems like really fun, too."

He heard about the Mayor's Youth Council on Instagram and decided to apply.

"I hope to learn more about what happens behind the scenes," Hernandez says. "I think youth involvement [in government] is really important, because most of us are just going off peer pressure or other people's

decisions because we want to fit in; and we don't have our own choice. So, I feel like if you learn about government, you'll see what's best for you in your future as you're becoming an adult."

Legend Gavin, who's finishing his sophomore year at Clinton High, joined the Youth Council already having some knowledge about the workings of state government. He's the grandson of District 28 Senator Sollie Norwood and, as an eighth-grader, he served as Senate page.

In school, Gavin says he's studied how the federal government operates.

"But I haven't really learned a lot about the local government," he says. "And the reason why I joined [the Youth Council] is I'm really interested in learning about how all forms of government work."

According to Gavin, he and his fellow Council members can provide useful input to the City regarding technology, social media and other topics of interest among young people.

"This will be, broadly speaking, a public service-focused program," says Purdie. "I think it's great to get youth exposed to public service as early as possible. There are a lot of different ways to be of service to our community, and I'm very excited about this group and this program."

The organizer of the Mayor's Youth Council, Clinton's Chief of Staff Breana Norton, says summer meetings will be focused on understanding government in general and especially how city government works.

"Then, we will hear from several department heads as the fall goes on," she says. "And, beginning in the spring, we'll move into more of a state and federal focus. With [2027] being an election year, we'll hear from several statewide elected officials who are currently serving and those who are running, and we'll take a trip to the State Capitol and several other places."

Norton says the goal is for the Council to become a "Mayor-advised, student-run" group.

"I told them at the beginning that this is really a springboard opportunity for them to learn more about government and get their feet wet and see what opportunities are out there," said Norton. "I want them to know that government isn't what you see on TV. There's a lot more to it that hits close to home. Every aspect of their life has something to do with government."

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