

Interview Assessment #7

Name of Professional: Christopher Lee

Profession: Director of Government Affairs

Company: City of Frisco Chamber of Commerce

Date of Interview: 1/15/2021

Assessment:

This week I had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Christopher Lee. Mr. Lee is currently the director of Government Affairs for the City of Frisco. He graduated from The University of North Texas in 2017 and has since worked in various government-related positions. He started out in politics by working local campaigns doing “grunt work” and then worked up the ranks and was appointed by the Governor of Texas, Greg Abbot, as the University of North Texas’s Student Regent. Following college, he worked in the Texas House of Representatives in Austin for two years then came to Frisco and began work for the Chamber of Commerce. Here he helps design and organize legislation to help the city of Frisco and to give a voice to local businesses when it comes to the realm of politics.

During our interview, Mr. Lee told me a lot about how his position and the Chamber helps run and benefit Frisco and it's many businesses. One of the main examples he referred to was the old Exide battery recycling plant. He explained to me how a large stretch of land along Parkwood Boulevard between Downtown Frisco and Frisco High's current address used to be a lake that neighbored an old battery recycling plant run by the company Exide. During Exide's use of the plant, dangerous chemicals and components were spilled and buried around the land. This led to the water and land being contaminated by lead, cadmium, arsenic among other harmful substances. The clean-up process was originally left to the Texas State Government but it was lost in the minutiae of the legislative process and the clean-up plan was never fully implemented. He told me about how he is currently working on transferring control of that land from the State government over to the City of Frisco itself so it can finally complete the cleanup of the area. Once the clean-up process is completed the City plans on putting plans into motion to break ground on the Grand Park Project, which to my understanding will be a large commons/ park area spanning about 600 acres of the Exide land and will run throughout the core of the City. Mr. Lee's job in this situation is to facilitate the discussion between the city and the State Government to make sure the whole situation goes smoothly.

One other thing we discussed was the difference between working with a non-partisan legislature versus a partisan based legislature. When he worked in Austin he said how he would usually work based on whoever his representative was. An example he used was how when he worked for the UNT Governor's Association that group was very pro-high speed rail system in Texas, so he helped write up documents to help that project progress, but when he started working with another elected official

they were very anti-high speed rail so he helped produce documents to curb production for that project and now with being in Frisco he's back to helping the project continue. He also listed out a series of issues and topics that the city deals with such as roads, first responders, funding/ budgeting, and business incentives, and asked which of those issues were partisan based. The answer was none which really helped put into perspective how a partisan-based platform really impedes progress in some situations.

Overall I was very grateful to have gotten in contact with Mr. Lee. Hearing about his career journey and just a few of the big projects he's currently working on got me even more excited and interested in my topic of study this year. Before the end of our meeting, I had asked Mr. Lee to be my mentor because I think he'd be a perfect example of what I'd like my future career to look like and he agreed. I'm very excited to begin working with him, learning all I can from him, and making other connections in the world of politics.