

So You Want to Be a Politician

LCCC Career Exploration Podcast

- Music: [00:06](#) [inaudible].
- C. Ritenhauer: [00:06](#) I ran for mayor to make a difference, to attempt to remedy the issues and the challenges within the city. For me, I always said when I step away, I want to feel good about stepping away that the baton is going to get handed off and whoever takes over is going to have a stronger city than I found it. A lot of students who come to me want to get involved in politics. Some want to be the candidate, but others want to work for the candidate or want to work in the administration. The program here on campus I believe gives students a taste of a variety of different aspects that they would come into contact with.
- Music: [00:50](#) [Inaudible]
- Janet Maltbie: [00:50](#) From the campus of Lorain County Community College. This is the Career Exploration Podcast on LCCC radio.com the Boom. I'm Janet Maltbie. We explore careers, college majors and more so you can be a success here on the LCCC campus and beyond. I'm a career counselor and I believe completing a degree pursuing passionate work and debt free living is key to your future. I'm here to help you on your journey. And so are my guests.
- Music: [01:14](#) [inaudible]
- Janet Maltbie: [01:15](#) Today my special guest is Mayor Chase Ritenhauer and our topic of conversation is so you want to be in politics. Chase served as mayor for the city of Lorain for seven years, but recently stepped down from the position in June to join Republic Services in Chicago as director of mergers, acquisitions and business development. Welcome to the program, Chase Ritenhauer.
- C. Ritenhauer: [01:36](#) Thank you. Thank you for having me.
- Janet Maltbie: [01:38](#) Leaving Lorain must have been a hard decision for you.
- C. Ritenhauer: [01:42](#) A real tough decision. It was one that, you know, my family and I thought long and hard about and it was more of one for, you know, this opportunity. Something that I'd always wanted to do.

You know, I, I preached to my students, always be willing to learn, always be willing to grow and it was an opportunity for me to take on a new challenge and to pursue my own personal growth. So I took my own advice.

Janet Maltbie: [02:05](#) Right. And you said it was something that you've always wanted to do. Tell me about that.

C. Ritenhauer: [02:09](#) Since I was a kid, I want to be garbage man. I loved the garbage trucks. I thought they were the coolest thing. Uh, I followed them around. I made friends with them. I, uh, as a kid I would gather up all the recycling bags so they didn't have to make several stops. And in turn they'd give me the Pepsi points they acquired through the various, uh, other routes during the week. And I got my dad the leather jacket out of the Pepsi points catalog back in the day. I got the bicycle. I got everything. As I got older and into public service, I, I still love trash. I love recycling. It was just phenomenal to me that people put something on the curb and it just disappears. But it's not that simple. The processing of it, how it goes into a landfill, the science behind that, the business of it. It just really always intrigued me. And as a mayor, as a safety service director, I got to work on it from, from the public standpoint, negotiating contracts, learning, you know, seeing the business that way. But I always knew at some point, you know, I wanted to try my hand in the private sector, particularly in the trash industry.

Janet Maltbie: [03:13](#) Have you ever ridden on a truck?

C. Ritenhauer: [03:14](#) I've ridden on a truck. I've thrown garbage on the back of a truck numerous times. Actually. I made them let me do that as a mayor. It always been a dream of mine. I was wanting to do it and I'd do it again. I mean, I, I, my, my boss now is like, don't go near the truck. I know you're gonna want to get on it and you gonna have a problem.

Janet Maltbie: [03:31](#) What made you run for mayor?

C. Ritenhauer: [03:34](#) You know, I saw my hometown was struggling. I thought that it needed a fresh look. It needed a new direction. And you know, I felt that it was really a decision point for the city. Do we make a change now? Do we start doing things differently or is the same old same old going to prevail and we're gonna continue to fall further and further behind. And that's really what prompted me to run. Now I'm obviously not the mayor anymore. You know, I didn't run for mayor to be a career mayor. I ran for mayor to make a difference, to attempt to remedy the issues and the

challenges within the city and then turn it over to somebody else.

- Janet Maltbie: [04:18](#) So you just had a daughter? Yes, she, her name is Quinn and she's nine months old.
- C. Ritenhauer: [04:25](#) Unbelievable. And it goes so fast.
- Janet Maltbie: [04:28](#) If she came to you later on in life and said, dad, I'm, I'm thinking about going into politics. What, would you say to her?
- C. Ritenhauer: [04:34](#) I would encourage her. I really would. I think that politics often gets a negative connotation, especially in today's day and age with, you know, what we hear and see going out on the news and in Washington. But my belief was always that there are good people in politics. There are bad people too, but that's in any industry, in my opinion. I liked being in office, in working on behalf of the people that tried to make their lives better. So if Quinn came to me and wanted to do that, I'd want to know she was in it for the right reasons that you know, she had a, a vision and a desire to do the right things for the people that she was going to serve. But I would encourage her, I think it is an honorable vocation. I think it gets tainted by some people who are dishonorable, but by and large, as I look locally here in Lorain County, I think the super majority of people involved or are there because they want to truly make it a better place.
- Janet Maltbie: [05:34](#) So if a student is listening to this podcast right now and they're seriously thinking about wanting to get into politics in they're here on the Lorain County Community College campus, what, what major would you encourage them to pursue?
- C. Ritenhauer: [05:46](#) I think the public administration two year degree is a great path for a number of reasons. For one, you know, a lot of students who come to me want to get involved in politics. Some want to be the candidate but others want to work for the candidate or want to work in the administration. Public administration can cut so many different ways. The program here on campus I believe gives students a taste of a variety of different aspects that they would come into contact with; legal concepts, human resources, budgeting and finance, fundraising, grantsmanship. It runs the gamut of a variety of different areas and then through that two year degree we have partnership with Cleveland state. Students can then figure out what they liked the most. And in the partnership with Cleveland state, you know there are programs where they can build, you know, the rest of the, the degree to a bachelor's degree to areas that they're interested in. Some students might be interested in accounting and you

know, as you look in public administration today, there's a gap in terms of accounting talent because governmental accounting is so different than than traditional business accounting. Our business division here just added a governmental accounting class. I think there's a connection and I'm working to make one with the public administration program and that course simply because that is going to be a need into the future. So what I encourage students to do is get into the public administration program, get your associates degree in that. You can pivot any number of ways. Maybe you want to maybe pursue a CPA or get into finance someday. All of those things you can get prepared to do and learn more about doing, in the public administration.

Janet Maltbie: [07:29](#)

I believe part of the public administration degree, there's an internship opportunity as well.

C. Ritenhauer: [07:36](#)

There is and students of mine who have interned have seen great experience, beyond that. You know, the internship is, number one to try to get job experience to show what you have. Maybe you stay where you intern. May be you, you get some good references out of it and a good work product out of it and can, can go work elsewhere. But I've had students who, you know, one who helped me write the proposal for Amazon to come to Lorain. She's working for the United way now. Another student intern for the United way and has been offered a part time position that will hopefully turn into a full time position at the United way. I have students who are in the workforce now who have completed the practicum and been promoted, some who are in the workforce now who are doing it because they want to get the four year degree and position themselves for managerial world. So I mean the practicum, whether you're in the workforce or your, you know, a full time student is an invaluable experience if done correctly.

Janet Maltbie: [08:35](#)

And that's kind of a good time to kind of assess whether or not this is something for you. Right. I mean, um, cause sometimes people get into these things and they realize, woah this is not what I thought it was.

C. Ritenhauer: [08:46](#)

Yeah. Well, and sometimes people want to be involved in, in government or public administration, but they don't want to be the front person. And that's fine too. Some don't want their name in the paper, their name in the chat rooms of the blogs or,

Janet Maltbie: [09:00](#)

or they want to be behind the scenes.

C. Ritenhauer: [09:01](#)

Right. Yeah. And so my, my point being is to what you're saying, I agree, get in there, get experience and you might see, wow, I

really do want to be an elected official or Hey, you know what, I, I'd rather be the person coming up with the revenue estimates and providing the research. I don't need to be the one given the big speech. Right. That's fine too. I think there's opportunity across, you know, it runs the gamut.

Janet Maltbie: [09:25](#)

It's a big time commitment as, when you're running for public office and being mayor I bet you that was a lot on your family as well.

C. Ritenhauer: [09:35](#)

It was, and it was part of the calculus for, you know, stepping away. You know, it was something where, you know, I'd, I'd thought in 2018 before Quinn was born about running for state auditor. I, it was widely reported. I gave it a hard look. But you know, for me, traveling the state, being on the road, you know, 200 nights a year, throughout all different parts of Ohio, while it would have been a great time and fun. You know, I looked at it and said, you know, how, how do I, how do I do that and you know, be the father at the same time. If, if that's where life is going to take my wife and I. How do I do that and raise \$4 million to, to campaign statewide? Just something I never could get comfortable with. So I made my own decision as we're talking about students. I looked at it and said, you know, I would work for somebody potentially at the state level, but I was not interested in running for state office at a, at that time because of the time commitment. And it's a time commitment even if you get elected as mayor. I often got interviewed by LCCC students taking Henry Patterson's American government class about, you know, variety of things. And they always asked three disadvantages, advantages and disadvantages to being mayor. And I always say that the advantages are you get to help people. You get to work on projects and meet people you never would be able to meet otherwise, which was really exciting. I loved the work, loved the people of the challenge. The flip side though is your life is not private. You know, people knew where I ate breakfast, they knew where I pumped my gas, they knew where I was. You're always under a microscope, but the other thing is your, your life is not your own. Some Saturday nights you have four events. A Thursday night you might have a fundraiser to go to. You've got, you know, Monday evening commitments. So you start looking at your schedule and like wow. But I always as I did it said to myself, look, there may come a time where I just don't want to do this anymore. And that in and of itself was not the only factor that you know, pushed me to look at Republic services. But it played a role. I like being around on weekends. I like being home during evenings.

Janet Maltbie: [11:44](#) Well and and you changed, you are not the same man that you were in your twenties.

C. Ritenhauer: [11:50](#) Right.

Janet Maltbie: [11:51](#) And so when I like about what you've done is you know, you've let things evolved. You've let things come to you and be open to possibilities. But then you're also evaluating, constantly evaluating, is this important to me right now in my life?

C. Ritenhauer: [12:05](#) Right. I had a, a great uncle of mine who ``said you live your life in decades and you know, you're 10 years old. Okay, you're, you know, you're 18 you graduate, you know from high school. All right, but your 20s then into your thirties. Those two decades are really important. And then your thirties and your forties as you're getting mid career and then 50, 60. So you know, I've, I've thought about that. I didn't, you know, as a kid you don't really understand these things, but you know, it's recently come to me and I'm like, you know, there's a point to that. Now I'll be 35 at the end of this month. And you know, I was elected, I was 26. And you know, I look at at how life has changed and it went by so fast and that, that makes me think all right of all the other adventures I want to do in my life. You know, you always have to have your eyes open and your ears open because you never know when that opportunity is going to come. And again, I try to live by what I preach to, to my students about opportunities, about taking calculated risks and chances in terms of career and in bettering yourself. And now I'm, I'm real happy.

Music: [13:27](#) [inaudible]

Janet Maltbie: [13:28](#) Chase, thank you so much for joining us to enjoy. Yeah, I enjoy getting to know you and I'm sorry I didn't take your public administration class. I wish you the best in your new endeavor and most, especially in being a dad. Thank you very much. And thank you for serving Lorain County.

C. Ritenhauer: [13:46](#) Absolutely. It was my honor.

Janet Maltbie: [13:51](#) This program has been brought to you by the generous support of Enrollment, Financial, and Career services. Who reminds you that it's not too late or too early to begin your career journey at Lorain County Community College. If you are interested in pursuing a career in politics or completing a degree in public administration, please call (440) 366-4033 and make an appointment to see an academic advisor today. That number again is (440) 366-4033.

Music: [14:20](#) [inaudible].

Janet Maltbie: [14:20](#) You have been listening to the Career Exploration Podcast on college radio, heard round the world LCCC, radio.com the Boom. I'm Janet Maltbie. Thanks for listening.

Music: [14:40](#) [inaudible].