A custom cable was created to go from the perf-board to the back of the LCD.
If you unplug and re-plug the camble on each end, be mindful of rotation. pin
numbering is engraved on the connector on LCD side and GND is marked in black
on board side.

An RC circuit was added to allow the LCD to boot at ~ 3.3V and properly recognize
commands coming from the ESP without a level-shifter or i2c adapter. Voltage
gradually increases to 5V and LCD reaches full brightness.

The contrast potentiometer is located on the perf-board next to the connector.

Resistor located on
machine perf-board

Capacitor located
on LCD PCB