

TIPS FOR PROMOTING CIVILITY IN PUBLIC MEETINGS

- Embrace Diverse Points of View (create a culture of tolerance for differing points of view)
- Give everyone a Chance to Share Their Views (Voltaire said “I may not agree with what you say, but I will fight to the death for your right to say it.”)
- Respect reasonable time limits to speak
- Avoid debates and Interruptions (make notes of questions or different points of view for when it is your turn to speak)
- Reduce Uncertainty (be clear about process that will be followed)
- Emphasize the Importance of Listening (repeat back points, do not be impolite, disrespectful or dismissive since this gives an impressions that a matter has already been decided)
- Do not allow Heckling or Applause (this discourages people with differing views from speaking)
- Separate People from the Problem (do not allow personal attacks or questioning someone’s motives or character)
- Consider using titles (sign of respect)
- Take a break if conversations get too heated
- Eject disruptors (a last resort)

Institute for Local Government (Dec 2011). Tips for Promoting Civility in Meetings. www.ca-ilg.org (accessed 3/20/24)