

# **BLUE FOLDER ITEM**

*Blue folder items are additional back up material to administrative reports and/or public comments received after the printing and distribution of the agenda packet for receive and file.*

## **CITY COUNCIL MEETING May 5, 2020**

### **J.1 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

#### **PUBLIC COMMUNICATION**

CITY COUNCIL MEETING, MAY 5, 2020

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS.

TO MAYOR BRAND AND CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS,

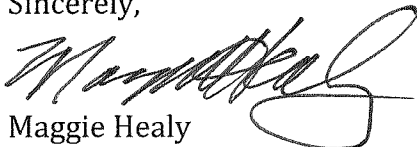
Please bring civility back to the Redondo Beach community. It has never been more important than now, when we are facing a long road of recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. Your leadership is needed to create an atmosphere of collaboration and respect, so that we can use all the strengths available to our community to heal and grow.

Please do all you can, individually and as a group, to discourage politically based personal attacks on private citizens, city staff, businesses and organizations that provide critical support to our community. Help us to help you: you cannot afford to have the voices of community members and professional advisors bullied or intimidated into silence. We cannot afford the divisiveness that has plagued our city for the past several years.

Your leadership and strength is needed right now to help each other and your constituents to listen more deeply to each other and to learn to think more creatively. This is your responsibility! You must achieve the consensus that will be required to support the tough decisions that will put our City on a healthy path to sustainability.

The attached blog post from International City Manager's website is worthy of your review, and there are many other examples and tools available to you in this regard. I urge you to make civility and respect a priority in every meeting, and to encourage your constituents to do the same.

Sincerely,



Maggie Healy  
Redondo Beach Resident

Cc: Joe Hoefgen, City Manager  
Eleanor Manzano, City Clerk  
Michael Webb, City Attorney  
Steve Diels, City Treasurer

Enclosure: <https://icma.org/blog-posts/cultivating-civility-local-government>

# Cultivating Civility in Local Government

Feb 16, 2016 | BLOG POST

 hierarchy-73338

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In a world where we constantly see people interrupting one another on TV (Presidential Debates, News Shows, etc.) or demeaning the character of people with differing opinions it is understandable why some people are willing to accept this as yet another “new normal.” Local government officials are easy targets – sitting ducks – if you will for people who believe the way to demonstrate power is to criticize and demean individuals. Incivility takes on many different forms – from seemingly benign criticisms about “poor staff work” to out-right public rants, tantrums and yes, even physical displays of violence towards public officials who are just doing their job. The behavior is outrageous. What is equally outrageous, however, is leaders who allow this to continue.

In a public setting incivility may improve viewership of public meetings or provide the local press with some salacious headlines. In many ways public meetings are the ultimate Reality TV shows and we have learned from “successful” directors that the louder the better when it comes to Reality TV.

If the public forum or workplace is the adult “playground” it’s time for leaders to take a stand against the playground bully. Cultivating civility is a cornerstone of leadership.

In 2011, *Public Management* published an article I wrote on Civility shortly after returning from a “Civil Society” project in Baghdad, Iraq. That article identified a number of tools that, in retrospect, are proactive and reflective ways of creating a foundation for Civility. I stand by each of those as appropriate ways to “cultivate” Civility. More recently, however, I see a need for tools, techniques and language for people to use when the foundation of mutual respect is breached in a public setting. The discomfort of bad behavior creates a fascinating dynamic where we see people visibly shrink from the conflict and sit silently or do nothing to take a stand for more positive norms. Before I go into these techniques and tools I want to make a case for “why.” Why should we care if public meetings become uncivil?

# 1. It's Your Brand!

A City Manager I admire very much, Darin Atteberry who serves in Fort Collins, Colorado, talks about the importance of "brand." Every community has a brand and if we want to use the "government should be run like a business" metaphor then it is reasonable to demand that the Board of Directors exercise their fiduciary responsibility to protect the brand! The tone and tenor of public discourse can tip the scales in important economic development discussions.

# 2. Talent is Mobile!

Talent will leave, or be difficult to attract, if they are expected to submit themselves to regular negative public discourse. In informal surveys as part of Civility Workshops 25% of respondents have indicated that they have left a position in local government because of the lack of civility. In addition, with public meetings being "webcast" with increasing frequency it is easier for potential candidates to do their homework and know the "brand" before they decide to apply for or accept a position. If you want the best talent the environment should be deserving of that talent. I can think of no profession more worthy of the best talent than public service.

# 3. Leaders are Role Models!

If it is okay for the governing body to berate staff members they are essentially giving permission to the public to do the same. Leaders are role models and must remember they are setting an example for others.

# 4. Incivility Breeds Apathy!

According to a 2010 study on civility by the Center for Political Participation at Allegheny College in Pennsylvania, Incivility, the study concluded, is bad for democracy. "It pushes people away from politics and from paying attention to politics, and lessens their willingness to be engaged." At a time when we are craving community engagement and employee engagement we push the public away when we allow incivility to reign. Many people have said it, including Plato, but David Kilgour said it this way "The greatest threat to democracy does not always come from the barrel of a gun, but from the collected effects of poverty, **apathy**, and economic insecurity." Incivility breeds apathy and apathy is a threat to democracy.

Democracy is worth standing up for. So are the importance of positive role models and the brands of our communities AND the individuals who work on behalf of the public good. It is critical for Managers and Governing Bodies to accept the leadership challenge of ensuring the public "narrative" is that civility matters and anything less than that will not be tolerated.

But how do you stand up to a “bully” when it’s one of your bosses? And how do you help the governing body accept responsibility for peer accountability? Certainly this is not easy, and not every counter measure works in every context, but here are some tools to help “in the moment.”

## **Civility – LIVE!**

Staff reports are a critical component of public meetings. Sometimes question and answer sessions can devolve into uncomfortable, rhetorical tongue lashings rather than honest sessions of inquiry. While I am not naïve enough to believe that staff work is always as good as it can be, it is never okay to allow someone to take a public tongue lashing. In customer service training you give people tools for dealing with unreasonable, upset customers. The same is necessary in these contexts.

### **1. Stand alongside the person.**

Don’t underestimate the value, importance and impact of physically standing next to someone who is being treated poorly in public. If it is a Planner or Budget Manager, a Department Head or Assistant Manager should come and physically stand next to them at the dais, deflect questions and if possible, have the “target” sit down.

### **2. Interject and Deflect.**

The Manager can also interrupt the line of questioning, note that there are clearly questions that cannot be satisfactorily answered this evening and request the item be delayed until the administration is able to address the questions in writing. It is also appropriate to “acknowledge” the tenor of the comments and state the expectation that providing a response will hopefully allow everyone to be at their best in a subsequent discussion.

### **3. Enlist the Support of the Governing Body.**

Elected officials need tools too for dealing with this discomfort. The trick here is not to “admonish” the individual and thus escalate the situation, but to publicly state that group norms are not being followed. It is powerful for people to feel they have been “stood up for” and hopefully sends a message to everyone watching, and reporting on the meeting, that the community expects better. Some language may include things like:

- “I just want to acknowledge that the manner in which the message was just conveyed by my colleague was inconsistent with our agreement on how to interact with (one another, appointed staff), and I apologize on behalf of the body to you for their behavior.”

- “As a body we have a considerable amount of passion around this particular issue. Unfortunately that passion has bubbled over and crossed a behavior line and I want to acknowledge that the indecorous language used by my colleague is not how the body wishes to express itself and I apologize to you for their demeanor.”

## 4. Take a Break.

When public discourse breaks down – and this can happen with members of the governing body or because of the behavior of the public, remind the Mayor to use the gavel and move to recess for ten or fifteen minutes to regain control of the setting. Sometimes even adults need a good “time out.”

## 5. Name it!

If an elected official or member of the public does something egregious to a City/County staff member it is critical that someone (others on the Council or the Manager) acknowledge it happened! Silence can be misinterpreted as consent. Do not give consent to verbal or physical abuse.

Incivility doesn't just happen in public – sometimes it happens in private offices – or in expletive laden electronic communication. Local government managers have a crucial role to play here in setting the standard, defining the values and ensuring the organization doesn't reward behavior that is inconsistent with those expectations. A staff member who is brilliant, a big producer or creative spark on the management team negates their impact if they behave in a way that is contrary to organizational values and standards. “Brilliance” is no excuse for allowing intemperate behavior. If we don't want uncivil behavior in public we cannot allow it in private.

One last time, cultivating civility is a cornerstone of leadership.

 julia-  
bio2013

*About the author: Julia Novak, President, The Novak Consulting Group, [www.thenovakconsultinggroup.com](http://www.thenovakconsultinggroup.com)*

**Gain a deeper appreciation and fresh perspective on civility, change, continuity, values, and leadership at the Williamsburg Leadership Institute. Click to learn more!**

## Khatirah Nazif

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**From:** Matthew Hinsley [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 5, 2020 9:36 AM  
**To:** CityClerk  
**Subject:** May 5, 2020 - Item J Public Participation on Non Agenda items

[City Logo] ATTN: Email is from an external source; Stop, Look, and Think before opening attachments or links.

Can you please add this comment to the Item J "Public Participation on Non Agenda Items" for today's city council meeting?

"Good evening Mayor Brand, city council members and staff,

First, during this challenging time of Coronavirus pandemic the focus of the city and the residents is on that as it should be.

But during this time marijuana dispensaries are deemed an essential business and still open in the city where they have been operating in a legal grey area for the last few years.

I would like to comment on the businesses in the city that are marijuana dispensary under the guise of being a church. I know the city is aware and has worked on closing down these businesses over the last few years when they operated illegally. The problem with these businesses operating in the city is the locations they choose to operate don't have adequate parking or security which leads to illegal parking and unsafe driving by some of the customers in local residential neighborhoods.

I have recently spoken to Councilmember Gran, Councilmember Horvath as well as City Attorney Webb about these businesses to understand the city's response.

The collective response I have received is that the city is working on going through the legal process to shut down to illegal marijuana dispensaries in the city.

This process the city is undertaking appears to be a legal whack-a-mole that is not solving the root of the problem. The illegal dispensary business get shut down at one location, which takes several months to over a year, only to open again later at another location and start the process again to close it.

What is the city's long term plan to address these marijuana dispensaries operating in the city? The believe city established a cannabis task force one or two years ago but the output of that task force is unseen and unknown. Could the city address these illegal business that are obviously not churches from calling themselves churches through some ordinance defining what constitutes a church in the city? Could the city allow for a specific zoning to allow these business to operate in the city only in an appropriate location legally and safely?

Any comprehensive update on what the city can do to address this in a more long-term and effective processes would be appreciated.

Stay safe and thank you for everything the city has been doing at the local level in response to the current Coronavirus pandemic.

Respectfully,

Matthew Hinsley

District 3"