

Salida Civility Project

At the February 5, 2019 council meeting, Sheree Beddingfield spoke of the mission of the Salida Civility Project of promoting civility in civil conversations:

“My name is Sheree Beddingfield and I’m part of a local group called the Salida Civility Project.

“We meet to explore ways we can support better civic conversations. We’ve discussed the connection between how we talk to each other and community well-being.

“On this theme, the Civility Project would like to offer these reflections as guidelines for conversing with fellow community members and government officials - particularly those who do not share our point of view.

“These are offered in hopes of creating conversations that build connection and understanding versus division and distance, and help us to move forward.

“We ask that everyone here be open to the possibility that working with these guidelines can help us all feel safe from attack, feel heard and respected as we work together to create an effective, caring community.

“1. I approach this conversation with gratitude for the chance to be engaged in discussion and decision-making with all of you for the benefit of our community.

“2. I acknowledge that I bring my understanding, experience, hopes and fears to this conversation – and that they are probably different from yours.

“3. I acknowledge that my understanding, experience, hopes and fears are no more important or true than yours are – they are just different.

“4. I understand that if we listen to and consider each other’s points of view, we probably have more in common than we realize.

“5. I acknowledge that while you may hear me, you may also disagree with me, and vice versa.

“6. Because I am a valued human being with viewpoints worthy of being heard, I will speak my viewpoints honestly, respectfully, avoiding rumor, harsh criticism or personal attacks.

“7. Because you are a valued human being with viewpoints worthy of being heard, I will listen with the same attention and respect that I request of you.

“8. Although there will be times when I am convinced of the rightness of my viewpoint and agreement with you is not possible— I know courtesy and kindness are always possible.

“9. My intention is to speak in a way that my viewpoint can be heard and received. I understand that speaking and acting from anger, blame or shame creates conflict. In the interest of cultivating a safe space in which we can effectively speak and be heard, I commit to respectful language, even though I may feel emotionally charged during our discussions.

“10. I believe in our ability to find common ground and reach solutions, even though these may be different than what we had envisioned.

“11. I believe there may be even better solutions and outcomes than either of us have thought of that we may be able to reach together through civil conversations.”