

Harvard Square Advisory Committee **Communication Agreement Based on Civility**

Civility is the way we show respect for each other. The first step to being respectful is being aware of the ways we bring ourselves and our personal biases into groups where we must engage with others. Differing opinions are natural and are encouraged if they do not lead to disrespect.

Please review the *Civility Agreement* and *Guidelines* below. They can help us create a safe and open space for inclusive and effective public engagement. These guidelines reflect the mission and beliefs of the Community Development Department, which works to uplift all community members equitably.

Civility Agreement: *We as members of this community hold the Harvard Square Advisory Committee as important to progress and change in the city. The beauty of our group lies in the diversity of opinion, beliefs, and backgrounds that contribute to the democratic process. Therefore, just as important as being in the group as concerned citizens is the respect and humanity that we show our fellow members. We agree that the Harvard Square Advisory Committee will be dedicated to respect and civility and will not allow hatred and division to separate us from making our city a better place for all.*

Civility Guidelines

- **Show Respect to All That Participate:** Be aware of the way you speak to and engage with others. It is important that meetings are a safe space for all to engage in and share their thoughts. Contribute to creating a space where everyone can feel comfortable to contribute.
- **Embrace Diverse Points of View:** Welcome and champion diversity of thoughts. Having a diversity of opinion will strengthen the ability to address the issues present in the city. We all must make sure that all experiences and opinions are included and respected.
- **Everyone Gets a Chance to Share Their Views:** Ensure that everyone has space to share their thoughts and opinions. If you notice that some members haven't shared, focus on creating space for them to feel comfortable sharing (don't call people out). If you notice yourself speaking a lot or sharing most of the opinions, try to

take a step back and allow others to contribute. Being respectful of everyone's time and agenda time limits creates time for everyone to share their expertise.

- **Avoid Debates and Interruptions:** Interruptions cut off an individual's thoughts and opinions, telling them that their thoughts and opinions are not important enough to finish. Allow for everyone to share uninterrupted and avoid debating once they are shared. Listen to their thoughts and work to try to understand what is being said versus what you are hearing. Much of the time, they can be two different things.
- **Listen to Understand, not to Respond:** Listen thoughtfully to the words of others. Do not make assumptions about a person's intentions. All of the participants are here to share their beliefs and deserve to be understood. Waiting to respond shows that the main focus is gaining understanding as opposed to being right or winning.
- **Strong Forms of Reaction are Limited/Not Allowed:** Whether it be booing or applause, strong forms of reaction are highly discouraged. Verbal and non-verbal forms of heckling create a situation where group members feel disrespected and may be unlikely to share in the future. Applause may make the person being applauded feel good, it could also make others that didn't get an applause or share different views feel bad and discourage participation.
- **Do Not Engage in Personal Attacks:** Do not engage in personal attacks or questioning of people's intentions or character. Other members are not the problem. The issue that needs to be addressed is the problem. Name calling and other forms of verbal aggression are not allowed. We are not enemies.
- **Take a Break when Necessary:** If you notice the conversation is getting intense or you need to calm down, consider removing yourself and taking a break. If you personally felt disrespected after the meeting, speak with the facilitator, not the person who disrespected you. This doesn't interrupt the meeting and allows for the facilitator to give you their full attention.
- **All stereotyping and hateful comments are not tolerated:** If a member shares a belief or opinion based on stereotyping or hate, they will be asked to leave the meeting. Disrespect of that kind is completely unacceptable.

I (name here), as a member of the Harvard Square Advisory Committee, commit to showing respect to people in this group as outlined in the above agreement and guidelines.

Signature:

Date: