

September 7, 2020

An Open Letter to the Brookings Community

Your Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce understands this is a difficult and emotional time for many in our community. All of our members and their staff have been impacted by COVID-19 in some way, and stress levels are at an all-time high. To get through such times, collaboration, respect, understanding, and patience are needed to navigate these unprecedented situations as best we can. That being said, the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce would like to remind our fellow community members the civility expected of each and every person when testifying before and while in attendance at any public forum or meeting, including Brookings City Council meetings. Civil discourse is key in a democratic government. A government for the people, by the people will not succeed if all voices are not heard and respected.

The first amendment gives all citizens the right to free speech and the right to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. Intimidation and other actions discounting another person's speech is disrespectful and can infringe on the free speech rights of others. Council Members and all elected officials also deserve to be heard uninterrupted. You will have the opportunity to approve or disapprove their actions at the next election.

Government meetings, through parliamentary process, are organized to make sure the business of government is accomplished and done fairly. This process has been in place for generations, and the process must be respected.

To accomplish civil dialogue:

Respect all who attend and speak.

- Booring, cheering, and chanting has a chilling effect on free speech. It can frustrate and/or intimidate those speaking.
- Name calling and comments about attendees and leaders are disrespectful.
- Citizens who attend are not to be approached to debate the issue.

Respect the process.

- Time is allocated for public input. This is time to speak about the issue. When the time for public input has been declared closed on that agenda item, we are to allow the meeting to proceed.
- Please be concise as there are others who deserve to speak.
- All speakers deserve to be heard. Be silent while they are speaking.
- When all testimony is completed it is time for the Council to complete the agenda item.
- Be respectful to the Council Members. Give them the same respect they gave you.

Attending and testifying at a government meeting is a privilege given to us by our forefathers and protected by the men and women of our armed forces. It deserves civility.

We truly appreciate each and every one of you that has participated in our great democracy. Brookings is a special place that continues to thrive even through adversity – you are an important piece of that.

Sincerely,



Kelsey Doom, President & CEO
Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce



Andi Fouberg, Board Chair
Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce