



MEMORANDUM

To: Town Council

From: Theo Holtwijk, Director of Long-Range Planning

Date: September 30, 2010

Re: **Facilities Process – Suggested Ground Rules**

Many examples of ground rules exist. Below is just one example and may not be perfect for the situation the Council is dealing with. Please feel free to revise and update as needed.

1. The members of the Falmouth Town Council agree to keep interactions respectful, even when a councilor feels frustrated or hurt.
2. The members of the Falmouth Town Council agree to maintain emotional control, even when a councilor feels angry.
3. The members of the Falmouth Town Council agree to keep interactions within the agreed-upon, structured process.
4. The members of the Falmouth Town Council agree to show a willingness to understand their fellow councilors.
5. The members of the Falmouth Town Council agree to be as objective as possible.
6. The members of the Falmouth Town Council agree to express concerns in a constructive manner.
7. The members of the Falmouth Town Council agree to focus their interactions on future solutions rather than past blame.
8. The members of the Falmouth Town Council agree to look for solutions that meet everyone's needs.

The full text of the source of this draft set of rules is below:

“GROUND RULES FOR EFFECTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Though conflict is unavoidable and full of opportunities, resolving conflicts can be a very stressful and frustrating experience. Committing to and following the ground rules below can help ensure that the conflict resolution process is as positive, fair, and equitable as possible.

1. Keep interactions respectful, even when feeling frustrated or hurt. Avoiding put-downs, name calling, interruptions, etc. helps prevent conflict escalation.

2. Maintain emotional control, even when feeling angry. Vent or redirect emotions to avoid yelling or other intimidating behavior. This helps provide a safe environment for resolving differences.
3. Keep interactions on "hot topics" within a structured process. Avoiding or minimizing spontaneous discussions on such issues helps prevent unintended "blowups." Using a planned negotiation, mediation, or other formalized process helps focus and balance communication about especially delicate issues.
4. Show a willingness to understand. If others feel understood and acknowledged, they are more likely to collaborate when problem solving. This requires focusing on and empathizing with what is being communicated by others rather just waiting for a turn to respond.
5. Communicate honestly and openly. Holding back on what the real concerns are will only delay or complicate the resolution of differences.
6. Be as objective as possible. Avoid speculation, rumors, and assumptions. Rely on personal observations and experiences or what can be independently verified through a credible witness or available documentation.
7. Express concerns in a constructive manner. Each party describing which of his/her needs are not being met is typically better received by others than accusations or demands for change.
8. Focus on future solutions rather than past blame. Emphasizing what needs to be changed rather than who is at fault takes less time and energy and increases the chances of successful change.
9. Look for solutions that meet everyone's needs. Using an approach that tries to find common ground or shared interests is the most effective way for each person to get his/her own needs met. An approach that disregards a person's needs is likely to cause resentment in that individual, which can lead to future resistance or retaliation.”

Source: http://hr2.hr.arizona.edu/06_jcl/jobdesc/groundrules.htm