

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE TOWN OF PLYMOUTH

ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

APRIL 2, 2013

The following “Guiding Principles” serve as our government’s base values for civil discourse and debate, collaborative efforts on decision making, and for the sharing of ideas, opinions, and research. These Guiding Principles outline what is expected from employees, members of all boards and committees, Town Meeting members, as well as any others involved in the Town’s governance, in terms of interaction on different subjects.

1. Be patient, kind and tolerant.

It sounds simple, but it is important to understand that other people’s contributions or comments have merit, even if you do not agree with them. Keep in mind that human affairs are complicated, and they cannot always be addressed with mathematical precision. A minor inconsistency does not in and of itself invalidate someone's argument. While no one expects everyone to agree, try to always keep your comments kind and polite in words and tone, as you would want others to be kind and polite to you.

2. Show respect in attitude, tone, and approach.

We must all embrace differences and treat each other with dignity. Remaining respectful of each other includes being on time and prepared for the meeting, even if that means doing outreach ahead of the meeting to understand the issue at hand; serve as a role model in your actions and speech to others, remembering that others will watch, observe, or read about the interaction; and set an example of the proper way to treat each other. Honor other people and their opinions, especially in the midst of a disagreement. The other person is just that, a person, and you are similar no matter how much you may differ in your views. Treat others with respect while expecting the same for yourself. When others appear to behave badly, you do not have license to do the same. Show respect for differing opinions. These opinions mean as much to them as yours do to you. You do not have to agree with these opinions to show the simple courtesy of respecting his or her right to have them. In doing so, you treat people with differing views the way you wish to be treated. There is no place in civil discourse for disparaging talk.

3. Be inclusive, collaborate, and promote diversity.

Plymouth embraces diversity and encourages full community participation in the decision making process. By focusing on Plymouth’s long term well-being,

controversy will be resolved through civil debate and compromise. When you commit to the collaborative process and encouraging everyone's opinion, the outcome will have more acceptance and buy-in. Be cooperative with others, and recognize and appreciate the contributions of all; appreciate that the individual wants to contribute to the issue; recognize that we are different and that is healthy and productive. Make sure that you welcome all groups of people to work for the greater good of our community.

4. Show in your actions, attitude, and tone that excellent customer service is important to you.

Achieve a high level of service to the citizens and your customers by being nice, courteous, polite, and approachable. Act in a friendly, helpful, and interested manner. The people you are working with, or waiting on, or that are appearing before you, all need something or want to get across a message. Help them do that effectively and appreciate the time they took to provide that information or make that request. Even if something cannot be approved or accommodated, you can say no or not do something in a manner that is above reproach. In doing so, you will be a role model for other town officials.

5. Retain the highest levels of integrity in your performance, actions, and decisions.

Always remember that first and foremost, we are honest in our actions and words; we encourage being held accountable; and we honor our commitments. Each one of us is in our role with Town Governance for a reason and we must be honorable and make every comment and decision based on a high level of truthfulness and reliability.

6. Strive to have a positive attitude about the governance of the Town.

We are fortunate to be involved in a wonderful community where many of the people that we interact with want the best for the Town. All of our involvement with the community's decisions or daily activities should be done in a manner that is positive. Negativity has no place in our governance. We want to always remember that we are part of the solution, not part of the problem. We are members of one team. Remaining positive is a key component to that success.

7. Listen.

Focus on others in order to better understand their point of view. Pay attention to what is being said and do not simply give "ear time" to another person. Try to understand their point of view, even if you do not agree with it. Listening well is the fair and courteous thing to do. Listen to what is being said, rather than just wait for the opportunity to speak.

8. Take Responsibility.

Don't shift responsibility and blame onto others and when you are wrong; offer a sincere apology. Repairing damaged relationships is an important responsibility and one that we should all take to heart. If you have hurt someone through your actions or your words, recognize it and talk to the person about it.

9. Be part of a great team.

If you are kind, patient, tolerant, respectful, inclusive and positive, you will truly be a member of the team that is needed to keep this Town wonderful. Make your daily goal to be a member of the Team and look for opportunities to agree. Support the final decision even if you did not agree with it or vote for it. Remember, you are a member of a group and should promote unity once a decision has been made.

Overall, these Guiding Principles are here to remind all of us that our opinions matter, however, they need to be shared in a suitable manner. Opinions that attack the intelligence, integrity or commitment of those who espouse different views violate the spirit of the Guiding Principles. Civil discourse's purpose is as simple as its name.

These Guiding Principles, once adopted by the Board of Selectmen, shall apply to all Board and Committee members and Employees of the Town.