How to Model Decorum in Public Meetings

Clarify expectations over and over

- Mis-matched expectations causes conflict.
- Before the meeting and at the meeting.

Convey ceremony and reverence

- The public meeting is sacred space.
- The value of formality and titles.

Demonstrate respect to all people at all times

- Remain calm and polite at all times.
- Treat people as equals, not as less-than.
- Do not assume motive or question identity.

Constant reminders about our common goals

- The immediate focus of this discussion.
- Larger long term goals like: (1) We want the same things: safety and peace in our communities for our children and families. (2) We are working on _____ for the good of our community.

Help people be heard

- Enforce the rules not to shut people down but to make room for others.
- Encourage those typically-not-heard.

Steadfast allegiance to established rules

- Do not waiver on following duly established governance rules and procedures.
- Don't treat something as a crisis and therefore as a justification for breaking the norms. Actually, the norms are most useful when there's a crisis. That's what they're there for.
- Apply rules even-handedly.

Correct locally-grounded mis-information

- When people state wrong facts or imply bad things about your government or community, stand up to them with correct facts, if not immediately then later.
- If people say questionable things about national trends or issues, there may be no need to counter that.

Be curious

- Don't get furious, get curious.
- Keep in mind: I can be curious about your beliefs without having to change my beliefs.
- You are on solid ground if you ask questions and agree to nothing and accuse no one.
- When you demonstrate humility it builds credibility.

Model the behavior you want to see in others

- Be on your best behavior at all times.
- Call out model behaviors.
- Invest in yourself and your group.

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