

## **Opening Comment on Public Discourse, Civility and Communication**

Anonymous expressions, such as the placement of disparaging signage along the public way, does nothing to support or further productive dialog. It's counterproductive, it creates confusion, fear and division.

In all the matters that are before us, the Select Board has been urging civility and constructive engagement. We will continue to work toward that end. For example, we are working on putting Hate and Bias Incident reporting and response systems in place. We have engaged with this issue at every meeting since I became chair in June. We are committed to constructive change.

I am in a dialog with the chairs of the School Committees to create more opportunities to highlight strengths as well as engage with concerns that members of our community have. Personally, I will continue to model civility, respect, and engagement, refrain from personal attacks or demonizing those who hold opinions that may differ from my own. I have witnessed this same commitment from the other board members as well. I urge everyone to do the same.

Efforts to promote constructive dialog do take time to put together. In the moment, that may seem insufficient, but these are the tools we have. Let's use them to move ahead together.

Mark Howell, Chair, Select Board  
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