

**From Conflict to Conversation**  
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Grateful for your participation and interest, I hope these notes help propel your own *courageous* leadership. **Please call on me whenever I may be of assistance in your community.** - *Matt Lehrman*

## Introduction

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- It's a period of disruption, uncertainty, and division.
- Lean into your resilience, creativity, and courage.
- Civility – also known as: Civic Participation, Public Dialogue, Resident Outreach, Citizen Involvement, and Community Engagement.
- In my community, civic engagement most often leaves people feeling... (In state after state, the most common response is “FRUSTRATED.”)

## 5 Steps Toward Better Public Dialogue

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### 1. Own Your Leadership Imperative

- What issue deserves better public engagement in your community?
- “The purpose of local government is to enable individuals to **join together** in recognizing and solving community problems.” (As an elected, appointed, or hired official, it is your opportunity and responsibility to become expert in helping people to join together.
- How satisfied are you with your “JOIN TOGETHER” SKILLS?

## 2. Champion Community Values

- Rotary's Four Way Test: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned?
- What are the core values of the community that you were elected, appointed, or hired to serve? (And is anyone eager to proudly stand up and recite them?)
- Togetherness, Fairness, Peacefulness, Security, Betterment, Sustainability (These values derive from the preamble to the US Constitution.)
- The ideal looks sort of like this (if only it represented greater diversity): Norman Rockwell's Freedom of Speech (1943)

## 3. Give'em What They Want

- Your public most wants (& deserves) to feel: Respected & Heard.
- Though the right to protest is sacred, expressions of anger & frustration are the result of poor processes of civic engagement.
- *"No one should ever leave City Hall feeling defeated; there is always something that can be done to help."* – former Scottsdale Mayor.

## 4. Convene Courageous Conversations

- Conventional municipal processes are, too often, inward facing (i.e., for the benefit and ease of the Council or Staff):
- Courageous conversations allow people who are interested to meet, to talk & think together, to explore options & possibilities, and to exercise their own leadership.
- Courageous conversations are intended for participants to emerge empowered to take initiative, feel connected, and exercise personal leadership.

## 5. Avoid Binary Choices

- Civic Engagement deserves to be something other than a zero-sum contest. Are Waffles America's Best Breakfast?
  - Green = agree 90% or greater
  - Yellow = agree 80% or greater
  - Red = disagree under 80%
- People who flash "Red" deserve the opportunity to offer alternative suggestions for consideration. Though ultimately, the majority may make a different decision, it's important that everyone have a chance for their ideas to be considered.

### Conclusion – "The Future is Unknowable, but it's Incredibly Malleable."

- As community leaders, we are role models for the future of civil discourse. What example are we setting?
- How might we involve young people (via schools, Scouts, or others?) in decision-making processes today that **they** can improve upon in the future?

We help people **dream  
think  
decide  
plan  
succeed** together.