



Top 10 Keys to Making an Awesome Government

(Okay, maybe it's the Top 11)

1. *Honor the form of government and understand your role within*
 - a. Legislative vs. Executive duties
 - b. Mayors can assist the Council in understanding the form of government
 - c. Follow the supervisor chain or chain of command
2. *Do your homework*
 - a. Read packets and memos
 - b. Ask questions – engage with the right staff,
 - c. Look at facts for decision factors
3. *Embrace making the tough decisions, that's what you're here for*
 - a. Don't be afraid to say "No"
 - b. Don't be afraid to say "Yes"
 - c. "What I hear when I'm being yelled at is people caring really loudly at me." – Leslie Knope
4. *Find the common denominator on all issues*
 - a. Vision, mission, strategic goals
 - b. Look for the positive in all situations
5. *Don't play favorites*
 - a. Employees, developers, special interest groups, volunteers, contractors/vendors, projects
6. *Remember you are all on the same team*
 - a. Play for the win - win. Otherwise, someone is always losing. No one wants losers in their city!
7. *Speak with respect and diplomacy*
 - a. "We are masters of the unsaid words, but slaves of those we let slip out." -Winston Churchill
 - b. You will never regret taking the high road
 - c. Open Letter to Provo and Utah Residents; Mayor John Curtis
8. *Take care of your biggest asset: your employees*
 - a. Employee associations and appreciation
 - b. Think of staff and employees as stakeholders
 - c. Kudos for jobs well done
9. *Celebrate!*
 - a. Your City
 - b. Success stories
 - c. Hold well-run and free public events
10. *Communicate, Communicate, Communicate! Maybe even over-communicate*
 - a. Newsletters, website, social media, flyers, press releases, local media, etc.
 - b. Employees, residents, businesses, schools, etc.
11. *Create flagship projects*
 - a. Have higher standards for high profile projects with parks or community spaces
 - b. Spend a little extra \$\$\$
 - c. Landscape details

OPEN LETTER TO PROVO AND UTAH RESIDENTS

Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me. Did your mother teach you this also? Did you grow up believing in this motto like it was an all-powerful shield against bullies and trolls? All my life I walked around with at least some sense of confidence that words couldn't hurt me.

*I'm rubber, you're glue; Whatever you say
bounces off me; and sticks to you.*

For the seven years I've been mayor I have certainly had my fair share of complaints. I've read some heated emails. I've been called a plethora of names (believe me, I understand that comes with the job) but for most of the time I have been blessed to be the recipient of kindness and goodwill. Even in the face of strong disagreement we have come together with civility to work out our differences.

But recently I have noticed that the tide seems to be turning in public dialogue. Like a sewer leak deep beneath the surface, I feel a coarseness invading so many aspects of our lives. Even in our safe haven of Provo – a place known around the world for its kindness and concern of others.

For example, recently I received an email message from a citizen that ended with this line: "please ... let [this] be the issue that sinks the mayor and his ... awful arrogant deputy. Oh please oh please let them both be stripped of their clothing and carried out of the building ..."

Similar to this email, in the last month I've heard accusations and disparaging comments of a very different nature than previous public dialogue. Engagement on all platforms—from social media to civic meetings are more sarcastic, biting, impatient, rude, aggressive and often all too personal. In the years of being mayor, I can strongly say this surge of negativity is not normal for our community.

So what's going on?

I believe a majority of this comes from top down. Much of it has to do with the trickle-down effect of the conversation happening on the national stage. As we listen to those who have platforms as presidential candidates, we hear them use words that tend to be more cutting, more personal, more filled with spite.

The disparaging remarks in our own community are echoes of what we hear every single time we turn on the news, read the paper, or scroll through our Twitter timelines. It's almost always there when we engage in a presidential discussion. Name-calling, bigotry, hate, attacks. The leaders on our national stage insist on using more and more syllables to pollute the air with words that incite, provoke and demean.

Not only do we need to worry about Supreme Court nominations, the economy and war, we now need to worry about the impact of negativity. From what I'm seeing in the community it's as if the two candidates from the major political parties have issued us all a license to be rude without the thought of consequence.

I'm personally calling on our national leaders to understand how their contaminated actions and words seep into our local constituencies and how much we suffer because of it. I'm calling for a more civil discussion on issues like health care, immigration, national security, and jobs. We need them to take responsibility for changing the public discourse not only nationally but everywhere—in our states, cities, and homes.

I also call upon my fellow local elected leaders and residents to be that voice of civility. As a county, state, and community, we need more unity and less divide.

If we can't expect decency from the top – let's start it from the bottom.

Despite what our well-intentioned mothers taught us, words do hurt. They hurt all of us. Although I've experienced years of decent discourse I worry those days are over. We have a lot to lose in this election, let's not lose our hearts as well.

John Curtis – Provo City Mayor