



# *Getting Along with Elected Officials*

*Mayor Steve Hiatt  
Kaysville City  
Mayor.*

Government Employees are often  
unfairly categorized with  
the likes of DMV Employees.





Start off our discussion with a joke.





**I don't approve of  
political jokes...I've  
seen too many of  
them get elected.**





*Garry Shandling*  
The International Strip  
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YOU'RE NOT SUFFERING  
FROM PARANOIA, PEOPLE  
REALLY DON'T TRUST YOU

7% TRUST  
CONGRESS



# POLITICAL CARTOONS





"It's a copy of the desk in the Oval Office, only bigger."

# PUBLIC HEARINGS





# 4 Areas of Discussion

1. Communication – How to better communicate with others
2. Being involved – Creating a Cohesive Group.
3. Recognizing diverse identities, relating.
4. When we leave here today, what are we going to do different?



Let's talk common sense.

One of the greatest, most insightful speakers I've ever known....



**DAVID CHURCH**



One disturbing theme of local government is the internal conflict among elected and appointed local government officials. There always seems to be one or two cities with ongoing spats. These conflicts very often appear to an outsider to involve little substance. They often become fodder for the press, and always result in embarrassment to those involved and, by association, to everyone else involved in local government. Very often these disputes are about who's in charge and the proper roles of officials and their duties.—David Church

If you are a mayor or council member you have a duty to understand the system of government you are operating in and live with the limitations. Disputes are created when elected officials begin to assume authority that they do not have. There are many examples of this including mayors who refuse to carry out policies with which they disagree; council members who try to direct employees in their day to day duties; mayors trying to be the city managers; and council members who try to act like they are mayors.



The solution to these types of conflicts is simple-- learn your position and duties and accept them. If you want to be a mayor, run for mayor. If you think that your form of government is inefficient, take the appropriate steps to change it. These steps will be either taking your proposal to the people or, where appropriate, taking your proposal to the city or town council and see if yours is a majority view.

Another source of conflict is council members who don't work and play well with others.





It is my opinion and experience that there are two broad classes of people who run for local office—those that want to be involved and those that want to be in charge. If you get too many of the latter and not enough of the former trouble can occur.

A council member is a member of a committee. He or she has a vote as an individual, but only has power when part of a majority of the group. There will be times when a council member's view prevails and times when the view does not prevail. It is frustrating to believe you are right and not be able to get your way. Personality conflicts can and will arise as council members work together over time. These do not need to become petty public fights. Council members must learn to win without gloating and lose with dignity.



There is no excuse for being rude to each other in public meetings. There is no excuse to being rude to the public. One solution to these types of conflicts is to insist that the chair of the meetings be a strong chair. This requires that council members allow the chair to keep order and that the chair be willing to assume the role of referee and not participant when it appears that the meeting is getting out of control.

Another cause of disagreement, related to the above, involves getting things on council meeting agendas. There have been many fights start over refusals to put things on the agenda or over having things reappear on agendas that the council does not want to discuss. The solution to this is for the council to adopt rules prior to any dispute arising, and live by the rules.<sup>10</sup> In the absence of rules the chair is going to control the agenda. If you don't take the time to adopt rules of procedure, you have no right to complain about how the chair runs the agenda.



Misuse of the Municipal Officers and Employees Ethics Act<sup>11</sup> also results in some ugly scenes. Using a public charge of conflict of interest to try to persuade a fellow council member either to vote your way, or to keep the council member from voting is inappropriate. If you care about an issue so much that you are willing to publicly accuse a fellow council member of misconduct to win, then perhaps you have a conflict of interest as well. Real ethics violations and conflicts of interest should be taken care of in the manner provided for in the act.<sup>12</sup> A complaint should be made to the mayor or city manager and an investigation should be undertaken. In this way the person accused has the opportunity to be heard before being pilloried in the public and press.

These are only a few of the sources of conflicts that I have observed and my recommended solutions. There are many others. The following are some general aphorisms that may help avoid and solve these conflicts that I have discussed and other that may arise.

1. All elected officials are worthy of respect, even the ones dumb enough to disagree with you.
2. It is unfair to expect members of the public to know what you know or understand what you tell them.
3. Your job description does not include the phrase “take full credit, no blame.”



4. Win graciously.
5. Accept your losses, and move on.
6. Enjoy correcting your own mistakes as much as you do others'.
7. Praise in public and reprimand in private.
8. Do your own job first.
9. Always assume others are acting in good faith.

“I guarantee that if you follow the above rules your life as a city or town official will be less stressful. “

-David Church

# Link to the entire document:

<http://tinyurl.com/UMCA2017>

## WHY CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

By David L. Church

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This is about my experience with some of the causes of these disputes and potential ways to avoid them in the future. Neither the causes of the disputes nor the means of avoidance are intended to be the last word on the issue. The examples that I cite are not intended to refer to anyone or any city particularly. If you recognize yourself, your city, or one of your fellow local officials in any of my descriptions, you are mistaken. The facts and names have been changed to protect the guilty.

The most common cause of conflict is misunderstanding the form government that the city or town is operating under. Too many people run for an office without understanding the office they seek. The form and structure of local government are set first by state law and second by local ordinance and policy. The state law establishes the basic form of government for all cities and towns.<sup>1</sup> There are three basic forms of government. They are known as the council-mayor form of government, the six-member council form of government and the five-

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<sup>1</sup> See Utah Code section 10-3b-101 et seq.



Seems Like Good Advice

Let's watch the following video.

Break into Groups.

Write down / identify everything you see  
that went wrong.

Then we will discuss what YOU could  
have done, if anything to diffuse the  
situation





# Group Breakout Session / Discussion

## Observations?

How did that go?  
What went wrong?  
Where did it Start?  
Who was at Fault?

What could YOU have done?

What are some ways  
we can make a difference?



# Discussion

What can we do in our own communities to reach encourage better dialogue and understanding?

Most important Rules:

Engage with others respectfully.

Be sincere.

Be the voice of calm & of reason.



“Make friends when you don’t need them so that you will have them when you do need them.”

-Lyndon Johnson

So... What Now?





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