

**Subject:** Re: WCCO this afternoon

**Date:** Tuesday, July 9, 2019 at 2:20:27 PM Central Daylight Time

**From:** Margaret Rog

**To:** Jake Spano

The first sentence in the third paragraph should read:

To reiterate, I think that grounding/focusing the conversation in our community should not be confined to the outcome of pledge/no pledge.

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**From:** Margaret Rog

**Sent:** Tuesday, July 9, 2019 2:14:29 PM

**To:** Jake Spano

**Subject:** Re: WCCO this afternoon

Jake, thanks for asking us for input on this. I absolutely agree we need to reframe this narrative OUR WAY and get out of the pledge/no pledge box we keep getting put into (or climbing into ourselves). We are a community that tries our best, listens, responds, respects, and we will continue to embody those habits and traits as we navigate through these uncharted waters.

I encourage you to leave behind the "we didn't follow normal protocols" take because it makes us all look bad. And also it's not true. I think if you can find a way to own this a little more than you have, you'd make some people happy.

To reiterate, I think that grounding/focusing the conversation in our community should not be defined by the box of pledge/no pledge. It can/should be about finding out, how did we miss this? How can we demonstrate our love of community and country in ways that may be even more meaningful and visible, to people from across the spectrum. Etc.

I also think we need to step as far away from the inclusivity rationale as we can at this point. That was inadvertent on Tim's part (so he reports) and Anne, in a panic, strengthened the narrative with her MPR interview (which she regrets and owns as a mistake). But now it's being provided as the de facto reason for changing how often we say the pledge (NOT banning, nixing, or eliminating, as the media is reporting). You can make that make sense, and there are historical/intellectual reasons for it, but it's not the reason we decided to make this change.

In case it helps, here's my bit from last night:

First, I want to acknowledge and validate the discomfort this situation has caused, for our community, and for our staff.

I know that I, at least, failed to think through the potential unintended consequences of our quickly made decision, and that's hurt people, in a variety of ways across a broad spectrum of the community.

For me, changing how often we say the pledge was not about inclusion. In fact, I think that with this action, we've done more harm than good to moving our inclusivity goals forward. I think there are people in our community who feel the council spoke for them when they didn't ask to be spoken for, and as a result they've become the subject of hostility and blame. In my view, we need to get better at thinking through the unintended consequences of our actions.

I've heard from residents I represent and respect, supporting the decision to recite the pledge less often. Their opinions are based on the pledge's origin story, which is about marketing a magazine to schoolchildren, quelling anti-immigration anxiety, and McCarthyism. I think the intellectual rationale for questioning the pledge of allegiance is solid, but for me anyway, that doesn't erase or supersede the emotional significance of this tradition for people I also respect and represent.

For those people, reciting the pledge of allegiance is a reassuring and necessary tradition, particularly in an unsettling time – something that gets at the core of who they/we are as Americans. I'm the daughter and wife of vets, but I didn't understand until now the deep resonance of the pledge of allegiance – or the idea of the pledge of allegiance – has for other veterans, families of veterans, religious leaders, community leaders, and others.

So within that context, I think a reactive and immediate return to a practice we didn't consciously, publicly value before misses the opportunity to take a deeper dive, so we can repair the damage, build actual understanding, and move forward stronger, together. Whether or not we ultimately return to reciting the pledge before every council meeting, every other meeting, once a month, or never, I think we should be more thoughtful about it this time.

When something gets busted open, it can be an opportunity to put it back together again a little differently, and maybe even better. I hope we can use this moment as a teachable moment, so that the pain we're experiencing as a community isn't for nothing. That we gain from the pain and are better off, in the end, because of it.

We can use this moment to do what we do so well in SLP – engage the public, listen to and learn from each other, and continue to build a community that values and embodies open-mindedness and mutual respect.

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**From:** Jake Spano <mayorjakespano@[REDACTED]>

**Sent:** Tuesday, July 9, 2019 1:57:52 PM  
**To:** Tom Harmening; Nancy Deno; Maria Carrillo-Perez; Jacque Smith  
**Subject:** WCCO this afternoon

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Colleagues-  
I've been asked to go on WCCO at 2:30 this afternoon and recap last night and discuss what we decided.

I'm not going to speculate on the way forward beyond what we decided last night - that's for the future study session. I will also be sure to separate my positions/thoughts as such so there's no confusion. I like the language suggested by Anne and Margaret about grounding/focusing the conversation in our community.

If you have thoughts, suggestions, objections please do not reply all but feel free to reply directly or call me.

Jake Spano  
Mayor  
St. Louis Park, Minnesota