As our CoC seeks to solve problems together, productive discussions are fundamental. Using ground rules is step we can use to create meetings with clear expectations for involvement. Our ground rules will help us start and maintain productive discussions.

Establishing ground rules, we believe help:

- Encourage respectful listening;
- Increase participation and the sharing of ideas and perspectives;
- Promote openness to points of view and increase learning;
- Prevent conflict and misunderstanding;
- Manage problems before and as they occur; and
- Build trust and a sense of safety among group participants.

NC 507 Meeting Ground Rules:
- **This is a public discussion, not a debate**. The purpose is *not* to win an argument, but to hear many points of view and explore many options and solutions.
- **Everyone is encouraged to participate.** You may be asked to share what you think, or we may ask for comments from those who haven't spoken. It is always OK to "pass" when you are asked to share a comment.
- **No one or two individuals should dominate a discussion**. If you have already voiced your ideas, let others have an opportunity. When you speak, be brief and to the point.
- **When you speak, state your name and your org if appropriate.** In a public meeting, it is helpful to know who is speaking as well as where they live in the community.
- **One person speaks at a time.** Refrain from side conversations. Pay attention to the person speaking. If you think you will forget an idea that comes to mind, write it down.
- **Listen to and respect other points of view.**
- **Do your best to understand the pros and cons of every option**, not just those you prefer. Be as objective and fair-minded as you can be.
- **Seek first to understand, not to be understood**. Ask questions to seek clarification when you don't understand the meaning of someone's comments.
- **Respect facilitator / Stick to agenda:** Most of our meetings are time sensitive. We do recognize that at times a topic or issue may arise that requires further discussion. Allow for that topic to be added at the end of the agenda or allow staff to schedule a meeting to address the issue specifically.