

*"I would like to take a moment to address an interaction that occurred during Saturday's parade.*

*During the event, I approached individuals who were displaying signs along the parade route and asked that they refrain from encroaching into the parade. My concern in that moment was the nature of the event, the many children who were participating and attending, and my desire to preserve the parade as a safe, positive, and family-centered community celebration.*

*The conversation that followed became heated. For my part in allowing that interaction to escalate, I sincerely apologize. As Mayor, I recognize that I have a responsibility to conduct myself with patience and professionalism, particularly when emotions are high and people have differing perspectives.*

*I also want to be clear about my intent. My actions were not intended to silence anyone or diminish anyone's right to express their views. My concern was protecting the integrity of the parade and preserving an environment where our children and families could participate without being drawn into an adult and deeply sensitive subject.*

*I care deeply about the safety and well-being of children in our community. I also respect the rights of individuals to peacefully express themselves. Those principles do not have to be in conflict.*

*To our community, to those who were present, and particularly to the families and children who came simply to enjoy the parade, I am sorry that this interaction became a distraction from what should have been a positive community event.*

*My hope is that we can move forward together with mutual respect and continue working to make Winston a community where our children and families feel safe, supported, and proud to call home."*