

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JANUARY 21, 2021

TO: MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

CC: CITY MANAGER MARK JINKS

FROM: MAYOR JUSTIN M. WILSON

SUBJECT: RACIAL AND SOCIAL EQUITY RESOLUTION

The past year has been an introspective one for our nation, our Commonwealth and our City, as we have worked to reconcile 400 years of racial subjugation. Whether de jure or de facto, overt or surreptitious, intentional or inadvertent, a culture of white supremacy remains hard-wired in so many of our systems, customs, laws and practices. For our City, during each era of our history, those that have sat in our seats have been called upon to do their part, in an iterative process to achieve justice. We must do ours.

In recent years, the City's efforts have been well-intentioned: the launch of a comprehensive racial equity initiative, educational equity investments, community health assessments, expanded investments in the interpretation of the history of minority communities and removing some of the names and symbols associated with racial violence. With the passage of Resolution 2950 in June of last year, the City Council began a responsive dialogue focused on the criminal justice system. In concert with policy-making in the General Assembly, these efforts should reduce inequities in the administration of justice and save lives.

If we as a community are to uproot a culture of white supremacy that has been woven into our founding, it requires a critical lens, intentional actions and structural accountability. We have acknowledged that in our City we have deep inequities in educational attainment, wealth accumulation, health conditions, and in justice. Acknowledgment of these inequities is an important step. Intentional action to ensure a just community must follow.

The proposed Racial and Social Equity Resolution that has been recommended by our City staff is a venue for Council's statement of our intentions. I have suggested a few organizational edits. This language is a revision to the resolved clauses of the revised resolution on our Saturday Public Hearing docket:

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA THAT:

The City of Alexandria government and its departments, in collaboration with members of the community will:

- 1) *Ensure that equity is incorporated in planning, including:*
 - a. *Center race and equity throughout the forthcoming FY 2022-FY 2027 Strategic Plan and departmental strategic planning processes;*
 - b. *Establish specific, measurable, attainable, relevant time-based (SMART) goals and equity action plans for City departments;*
 - c. *Incorporate race and social equity into all staff and leadership talent management programs;*
 - d. *Establish, strengthen and maintain key partnerships with the Alexandria City Public Schools, other public entities serving our community, community-based, non-profit, and faith-based organizations, and businesses in Alexandria to advance racial equity;*
- 2) *Implement and sustain structures and capabilities to advance equity, including:*
 - a. *Adopt and promote practices and policies centered on creating and ensuring racial and social equity through the use of a racial equity tool;*
 - b. *Conduct race and social equity trainings for City Council, City staff and City boards and commissions;*
 - c. *Create authentic community engagement best practices for use in evaluating City actions from creation to implementation;*
 - d. *Maintain membership and active participation in the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) and Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) Racial Equity Work Group and newly established Chief Equity Officers Committee;*
- 3) *Advance and conclude policy efforts designed to advance equity goals, including:*
 - a. *Incorporate greatly expanded language access into more City of Alexandria communications and platforms;*
 - b. *Reduce and eliminate racial and social inequities in the allocation of City resources through the use of a budget equity tool which may entail the adjustment of budgets and funding reallocation;*
 - c. *Present City Council with a Racial and Social Equity Action Plan, consisting of specific policy initiatives to advance the City's racial equity goals, informed by additional community engagement;*
- 4) *Ensure accountability mechanisms, including:*
 - a. *Develop equity data mechanisms, including equity indicators, equity mapping, and dashboards to transparently monitor, share, view and inform policy decisions that purposefully work toward reducing and eliminating disparities;*
 - b. *Develop quarterly listen and learn sessions, under the direction of the Race and Social Equity Officer, to establish ongoing conversation with the community to understand their most pressing issues and to*

normalize the key concepts of race, social equity and government through collective learning opportunities;

As our staff prepares and presents the Racial & Social Equity Plan, I would request the active consideration of the following initiatives, some currently in-flight, some proposed, as components of the City's proposal:

- 1) Implementation of participatory budgeting practices to incorporate more extensive input in budgeting decisions by residents of color.
- 2) Continue efforts to improve access to early childhood education and out-of-school time programs, with focus on removing access inequities and barriers.
- 3) Incorporate equity requirements in the solicitation for the next round of funding from the Alexandria Fund for Human Services.
- 4) Conclude our participation in the ongoing regional analysis of Alexandria's barriers to fair housing and ensure that remediation efforts are incorporated into the City's Strategic Plan, Interdepartmental Work Plan and other applicable planning documents.
- 5) Explore acceleration of "Zoning for Housing" efforts currently in the Interdepartmental Work Plan.
- 6) Led by the Park and Recreation Commission, conduct a review of permitting and access restrictions for recreation space, with focus on restrictions that may promote inequitable access.
- 7) Council should review existing fines and fees that can escalate when unpaid, thus exacerbating impacts of poverty.
- 8) Led by the Alexandria Commission on Employment, and in partnership with Arlington County, expand workforce development efforts designed to reduce inequities in access to career training.
- 9) Led by the Transportation Commission, develop a racial equity policy to be applied for the prioritization of transportation investments (transit, road and sidewalk infrastructure, complete streets, etc).
- 10) Led by the City Attorney, accelerate efforts to decriminalize "quality of life" municipal infractions, as appropriate.

Cc: Gloria Sitton, City Clerk; Joanna Anderson; City Attorney