



Agenda Report

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, March 9, 2021

TO: City Council

FROM: ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER VIDES

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

STATEMENT OF ISSUES:

As our entire nation wrestles with its history of racism, communities across the nation are asking their leaders to proactively address the issues of racism in every community. Council woman Garcia requested that the Council consider this item.

Additionally, as we confront the COVID-19 pandemic, we can clearly see the disproportionate effects on communities of color in our county. This declaration directs City government to consciously address issues of racism in our community as a way to acknowledge that racism affects the health of our community on an individual and community-wide basis.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

It is recommended that the City Council approve a Resolution declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis

DISCUSSION:

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "Public health is defined as 'the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts of society.' Activities to strengthen public health capacities and service aim to provide conditions under which people can maintain to be healthy, improve their health and well-being, or prevent the deterioration of their health."

While our City leaders and employees worked hard to provide equitable services and facilitate inclusive community problem solving and dialogue, we recognize a history of racist actions against the Chinese, the Latinx community, Native American and the Black community. Even today, as we look at the demographics of those infected with the COVID-19 virus, we see communities of color, specially the Latinx community, disproportionately affected.

Dr. George Benjamin, Executive Director of the American Public Health Association said, "We see discrimination every day in all aspects of life, including housing, education, the criminal justice system and employment. Moreover, this discrimination is amplified during

this pandemic as communities of color face inequities in everything from a greater burden of COVID-19 cases to less access to testing, treatment and care. Americans cannot be silent about this.”

The City can do more to reduce the negative impact that racism has in the lives and health of all our residents. Some systemic and historical impacts that should be considered are:

- Racism structures opportunity and assigns value based on how a person looks. The result: conditions that unfairly advantage some and unfairly disadvantage others.
- Racism hurts the health of our nation by preventing some people the opportunity to attain their highest level of health.
- Racism may be intentional or unintentional. It operates at various levels in society.
- Racism is a driving force of the social determinants of health and is a barrier to health equity.

A declaration of racism as a public health crisis elevates the issue to be at the forefront of our programming and budgeting decisions. It also commits future efforts to ensure our hiring, vendor selection, and funding decisions are free of implicit bias which is critical to assuring the community that the City is meeting the needs of all of its residents.

In addition to adopting this resolution declaring Racism as a public health crisis, the Council may also choose to direct staff to develop plans to incorporate educational efforts in our community and for its employees; promote racially equitable economic development and workforce development practices; encourage all policies that prioritize the health of people of color; commit to conduct all human resources, vendor selection and grant management activities with a racial equity lens; and to work with community partners and stakeholders in the education, employment, housing, criminal justice and safety arenas to recognize racism as a public health crisis.

Other communities across the Country have declared racism a public health crisis including the County of Santa Cruz, County of Santa Clara, City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Madison County, Cook County, the City of Pittsburgh, the City of Boston, Kansas City and the State of Arizona.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

Adopting this resolution to declare Racism as a public health crisis supports Council Strategic Goal #5 of supporting Community Well-Being.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Adopting this resolution has no financial impact to the City.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION:

The Council may consider not adopting this resolution at this time.

ATTACHMENTS: None.