

Agenda Report



MEETING DATE: Tuesday, January 14, 2025

TO: City Council

FROM: POLICE CHIEF ZAMORA

SUBJECT: COMMITMENT TO MAINTAIN TRUST AND SAFETY FOR LOCAL IMMIGRANTS

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

1. Adopt a resolution reaffirming the City of Watsonville's commitment to protect and support members of immigrant communities as a Sanctuary City and ensure that the City is actively communicating this message in a manner that effectively reaches impacted communities; and
2. Direct the City Manager, or their designee, to work with community partners to identify opportunities to strengthen resources to help protect and support immigrant communities against policies that may negatively impact the safety and wellbeing of the members of those communities.

BACKGROUND:

In light of the recently announced federal policies to implement restrictive immigrant policies once the incoming President assumes office in January 2025, it is important for the City of Watsonville to reaffirm its commitment to support and protect the safety and wellbeing of immigrants in our community that may be arrested and deported due to these policies. The City's immigrant community is integral to the social and economic fabric of our region. This resolution builds upon a history of leadership, including prior sanctuary resolutions and the recent public reaffirmation of support for immigrant communities on November 7, 2024.

In addition to the resolution, Council is being asked to direct the City Manager, or designee, to continue to work with community partners to strengthen resources and partnerships with organizations that help protect members of these communities that may be the target of such policies. By reaffirming our commitment to protecting and supporting our immigrant community members and making a commitment to provide resources to these individuals, we hope to ensure and maintain the trust of members of our community with the City of Watsonville.

DISCUSSION:

The City of Watsonville has a long-standing history of supporting its immigrant population through policies and partnerships, including sanctuary resolutions adopted by the County and the City of Santa Cruz in 2017. Several City departments along with community organizations like the Community Action Board's Santa Cruz County Immigration Project and the Pajaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD) have played pivotal roles in providing our community with resources and advocacy.

In November 2024, 35 city and county officials, law enforcement leaders, and elected representatives from throughout the Santa Cruz region signed a letter reaffirming their commitment to protecting immigrant communities. This proposed resolution strengthens these commitments, especially in the face of heightened concerns about federal immigration enforcement policies that could undermine trust and create significant challenges for local immigrant families.

The proposed resolution emphasizes the City's role as a welcoming and inclusive community, and outlines key actions to protect and support immigrant community members:

1. **Trust and Safety:** The resolution declares Watsonville a place of trust and safety, prohibiting the use of City resources for federal immigration enforcement, restricting the collection of personal information unless mandated by law, and protecting client data.
2. **Supportive Policies:** It commends the Watsonville Police Department for maintaining policies that separate local law enforcement from federal immigration enforcement, per the California Values Act (SB54).
3. **Community Engagement:** It directs City departments to review confidentiality policies and ensure that immigration status does not hinder access to services.
4. **Victim Support:** It reaffirms the City's commitment to supporting immigrant crime victims and witnesses through timely certification for humanitarian visas, such as the "U Visa."
5. **Integration Efforts:** The resolution encourages initiatives to foster inclusion and collaboration between immigrant communities and the broader population.
6. **Collaboration:** The City will work with stakeholders, community groups, and local organizations to respond to federal immigration enforcement policies and protect vulnerable residents, and to support agencies serving impacted communities.

Adopting this resolution reaffirms the City of Watsonville's dedication to its immigrant community during a time of uncertainty. It sends a strong message of solidarity and support, ensuring all residents feel valued and protected regardless of immigration status.

It aligns with the City's longstanding commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion and upholds state policies like the California Values Act.

Additionally, directing staff to work with community partners on a framework to address the urgent and multifaceted needs of immigrant populations will support coordination of resources, respond to emerging challenges, advocate for equitable policies, and foster trust between the immigrant community and local government, ultimately promoting inclusivity and resilience in the City of Watsonville.

Together, these actions support Santa Cruz County's dedication to its immigrant community during a time of uncertainty.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

This action meets the following Council's goals:

5-Public Safety

6-Community Engagement & Well-being

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

None.

ALTERNATIVE ACTION:

No reasonable alternatives are known at this time.

ATTACHMENTS AND/OR REFERENCES (If any):

- 1) City of Watsonville's 2017 resolution reaffirming its declaration as a sanctuary city.