



Agenda Report

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, October 26, 2021

TO: City Council

FROM: ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER VIDES

SUBJECT: POLICE AND SOCIAL EQUITY AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORT

STATEMENT OF ISSUES:

In the wake of national and community-wide calls for racial justice, and condemnation of the murders of George Floyd and Breanna Taylor, the Watsonville City Council, Police Chief and City Manager decided to establish a Police and Social Equity Ad Hoc Committee to work on a model for police services and social equity. This recommendation aimed to assess current practices of the City and law enforcement in regard to bias and social equity, with the goal of serving the community and meeting the needs of our residents.

The ten-month engagement effort of the Ad Hoc Committee concluded with the preparation and submission of a comprehensive report of recommendations to the Watsonville City Council for consideration as the City continues to be responsive to community needs in relation to policing and social equity efforts.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

It is recommended that the City Council accepts and files the Ad Hoc Committee on Police and Social Equity Report.

DISCUSSION:

Establishment of the Committee:

In July 2020, the City Council initiated a community engagement process to invite Watsonville residents to apply and be part of the Police and Social Equity Ad Hoc Committee to help develop recommendations that would inform the future of policing and community services in Watsonville.

Community members were encouraged to apply and were selected and appointed by the City Council based on a number of demonstrated characteristics, including:

- A commitment to racial equity, social and environmental justice, diversity, and inclusion.
- The ability to work collaboratively with people of diverse perspectives and experiences.

- Knowledge of, or experience in any of the following: policy development, evaluation, local government and/or public sector partnerships, public safety, social and human services, human resources, public participation, service design and delivery, research, education, or business.
- Demonstrated understanding of the systemic issues and barriers that should be examined.
- The ability to represent the geographic and demographic diversity of the City.

The Police and Social Equity Ad Hoc Committee was formed in September 2020. The Committee was composed of twelve community members, three City Council members and three Police Officers, and supported by a team of City staff and consultants that helped lead the multiple committee meetings and broad community engagement process. Once selected, the Ad Hoc Members engaged in active learning and community engagement efforts described below.

Ad Hoc Committee Meetings:

The Ad Hoc Committee Members participated in a series of meetings from December 2020 to August 2021. The City retained the services of American Leadership Forum (ALF) to facilitate the Ad Hoc Committee Meetings and guide the process of formulating recommendations regarding policing and social equity in the City of Watsonville. ALF assigned two neutral conveners to the project: Jenny Niklaus, Chief Facilitation Officer and Jason Reynolds, a Faculty Member of ALF.

The facilitation of the work of the Ad Hoc Committee was as follows:

- Five Ad Hoc Meetings with all members of the Committee, in which general discussion and content expert guest speakers presented and explored best practice models for policing and social equity.
- Five “Home Groups” of smaller cohorts of Ad Hoc Members in which more focused discussions and decisions were made to arrive at a final set of recommendations which were approved by consensus by all members of the Committee.

City staff hosted a series of learning sessions that provided committee members the opportunity to learn and review the Watsonville Police Department’s (WPD) policies, procedures, training, and community programs, etc. In addition, committee members were presented with an in-depth review of the City and Police Department budgets. While these sessions were not mandatory, many of the Ad Hoc Committee Members actively participated and asked questions of all guest speakers.

Community Engagement:

Community Engagement was a fundamental part of the process and a priority to all members of the Ad Hoc Committee. The Committee guided the questions and type of input collected from the community, including four priority areas:

1. Programs or services that would benefit Watsonville residents
2. Making Watsonville a safer community

3. Opportunities to make community policing more effective
4. Resident experience with the Watsonville Police Department

Two professional, neutral and bilingual facilitators hosted a series of nine virtual and one in-person community engagement sessions during the months of May and June 2021. These meetings were designed to give Watsonville residents an opportunity to provide feedback and voice their concerns and ideas. The City recognizes that discussing issues of race and social equity are challenging, but especially when traditional forums for public meetings were unavailable. Most of the meetings as part of this effort occurred on Zoom given restrictions related to the pandemic.

In May 2021, the City also engaged Applied Survey Research (ASR) to assist with data collection and to compile the data collected during the community engagement meetings and evaluate it with other relevant secondary data available.

Community-Wide Survey to Collect Public Input

Concurrent with community engagement efforts, City staff worked with Applied Survey Research to develop a bilingual paper survey that was mailed to 13,765 households in city limits. In addition, about 1,034 surveys were mailed to households in neighborhoods that recorded a high volume of 911 service calls. City staff also collected surveys at the Farmers Market to give our hard-to-reach residents an opportunity to provide feedback. This data collection effort proved to be successful as a total of 482 surveys were received. Key takeaways from the survey were:

- Participants felt that community programs and support services should receive more funding
- Participants expressed concerns about safety related to streets and lighting
- Participants expressed that they would like more and ongoing opportunities for meaningful dialogue with both WPD and city officials

Other Community Engagement Efforts

The City also collaborated with two partner agencies in collecting community feedback to help inform the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee. The outreach conducted by partner agencies aligned with the questions asked by the Committee and produced significant results that were very similar to the rest of the feedback collected through the community input process. COPA and United Way of Santa Cruz County presented the results of their independent efforts to the Ad Hoc Committee, and the data compiled during their meetings was included in the Data Report prepared for the Ad Hoc.

Comprehensive Ad Hoc Committee Data Report

All the data collected through the multiple community input efforts were compiled in a report that was prepared in advance of the Ad Hoc Committee finalizing their recommendations. The Ad Hoc Committee used input provided to guide and inform the final recommendations. The Ad Hoc Committee acknowledged the limitations of the public engagement and the challenging times in which this engagement effort occurred.

Ad Hoc members expressed their appreciation of the investment and work that took place to engage diverse voices in our community.

Ad Hoc Report

The 18 members who served on this committee over the past 10 months respectfully submit this report with nine concrete recommendations for the Council to consider.

In order to provide clarity to the overall report and the work to follow these recommendations, each recommendation has been organized into four sections:

- Framing the recommendation: an overall summary of the intent of the recommendation and relevant background information.
- Considerations: Supporting data and range of viewpoints discussed by the Ad Hoc Committee that informed the development of the recommendation.
- Recommendation: Statement of recommendation, developed based on themes that emerged from individual Ad Hoc Committee member recommendations and Home Group discussions and that had majority support from the AHC.
- Action Steps: Supporting actions submitted by members of the Ad Hoc Committee either as individual recommendations or in the course of Home Group discussions.

Recommendations:

The report contains nine specific recommendations. Some of them are recommended for short term implementation and others are flagged as long-term recommendations or required on-going efforts from the City and Police Department.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Mental Health and Police Involvement

RECOMMENDATION 2: Police Oversight and Transparency

RECOMMENDATION 3: Develop and Increase Programs for Youth and Families

RECOMMENDATION 4: Ensure City and Police Budget Aligns with Community Needs

RECOMMENDATION 5: Training and Hiring of Police Officers

RECOMMENDATION 6: Traffic Stops and Traffic Safety

RECOMMENDATION 7: Develop Partnership and Collaboration Opportunities

RECOMMENDATION 8: Community Engagement

RECOMMENDATION 9: Social Equity

STRATEGIC PLAN:

The work completed by the Ad Hoc Committee is consistent with several goals of the Council Strategic Plan:

Goal #5-Community Engagement & Well-Being

Goal #6-Public Safety

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with the action of the Council accepting the Ad Hoc Committee's report. At a later time and as Council explores implementation of the recommendations, there may be costs associated with future work.

ATTACHMENTS AND/OR REFERENCES (If any):

- 1) Compilation of Community Input Data Report
- 2) Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations – Final Report