



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Ray Baray, Chief of Staff

DATE: December 23, 2015

SUBJECT: Update on the Establishment of the City's Equity Office

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on staff's progress regarding the establishment of the City's Equity Office. As you remember, during the recent budget development process, Council directed the City Manager to create an Equity Office, and allocated \$183,000 in funding from the FY 2016 budget.

Soon after Council's action, the City Manager appointed a project team to research and assess equity practices in other cities. In addition to attending the 2015 Equity Summit in Los Angeles and interacting with leading experts in the field, the team conducted a review of the nine largest U.S. cities with equity offices. These interviews revealed that four cities have well-developed equity offices: Seattle, Portland, Toronto and Washington, D.C. Five other cities have created such offices within the past year: San Antonio, Minneapolis, Boston, Tacoma and Oakland.

Our research also revealed five important findings: (1) the onboarding of a Chief Equity Officer should occur early in the development of the equity office; (2) it is important to have a good understanding of the distinction among concepts and approaches related to diversity, equity and inclusion; (3) securing community buy-in is vital; (4) support from City departments should begin early; and (5) equity office decisions must be data-driven.

A key component undergirding any successful effort will require a robust and thorough community engagement strategy. The community needs to be involved in every major step of the process, from setting the job profile of the Chief Equity Officer to the setting of the priorities of the office itself.

Finally, all of this work will be helpful as staff works to develop an equity assessment tool, in response to Resolution No. 20150507-027. In addition to a study of the health inequities in our

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Jan 27, 2016.

community, the resolution also calls for an equity tool to be used by every City department during the upcoming budget process, taking into account “race and socioeconomic-based inequities throughout the City in terms of economics, working conditions, local health outcomes and participating in public affairs.”

Next Steps

Given the research and work that has been done thus far, the City Manager has directed the team to proceed with engaging the community and executing the following action steps:

- Engage an executive talent search firm in January 2016 to begin the recruitment process for a Chief Equity Officer.
 - The search firm will be contracted to work with the Austin community to develop a profile for the Officer position. Candidates will then be interviewed, with final candidate selection scheduled for April 2016.
- Concurrently, the City Manager will hire the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), an organization with extensive experience in assisting governments with establishing equity offices, to perform an initial equity assessment for the City, including an engagement strategy aimed at receiving input from the community.
 - GARE’s work will include an identification of both “quick wins” and long term equity strategies as well as a prioritization of activities. The initial assessment is projected to last from January to August 2016.

As the team begins to work on these action steps, we will keep you apprised of their progress. Should you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thanks!

cc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
Assistant City Managers
Department Directors

2-9-16
10:30
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