



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Human Rights Commission

Recommendation Number: 20180226-005b: Race and Gender Equity in City Policy of naming streets, public buildings, statues, memorials, public parks, park facilities, and features

WHEREAS, the Human Rights Commission of the City of Austin (“commission”) advocates on behalf of human rights for all people in the City of Austin (“City”); and

WHEREAS, the Commission’s duties include, but are not limited to, advising and consulting with the Austin City Council (“Council”) as well as all City departments. Advisory boards and regulatory agencies on all matters involving discrimination, including providing legislative recommendations and proposing measures to improve the ability of various departments and agencies, as well as initiating and facilitating discussions and negotiations between individuals and groups to lessen tensions and improve understanding in the community and aiding in the formulation of local community groups in neighborhoods as needed to carry out specific programs; and

WHEREAS on October 23, 2017 the Commission approved Recommendation No. 201701023-001b (Women’s Equity in Austin Equity in Naming of Public Symbols) addressing Race and Gender Equity in City Policy of naming streets, public buildings, statues, memorials, public parks, park facilities, and features; in which, the Commission proposed that the Council and the City Manager’s Office take all appropriate steps to immediately insert, in those criteria used by the City to select names for streets, public buildings, statues, memorials, public parks, park facilities, and features, a requirement that going forward, gender and racial equity shall be required, meaning that, for any new streets, public buildings, statues, memorials, public parks, park facilities and features, names after natural persons, the half of them shall be named after women and at least half of these shall be named after women of color; and

WHEREAS on November 27, 2017, the Commission gathered more information regarding the naming criteria used by the City Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) during which time it became clear that the process for naming of PARD spaces can either be decided by Council vote or proposed by a community member through an application process; and, that once a member of the community submits an application with a naming request, the methods the PARD and the Public Information Office use to solicit alternate names requires literacy and access to electronic or print media; and

WHEREAS the methods used to solicit alternate names are inequitable to persons with lower literacy and/or limited print and electronic media access; and

WHEREAS according to 2015 US Census data (Appendix A), the percentage of high school graduates among blacks, Hispanics (of any race) and Asians was lower than non-Hispanic Whites, suggesting that communities of color have lower educational attainment and thus lower literacy;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council and the City Manager's Office take all appropriate steps to recommend that Austin PARD and the Public Information Office develop a more equitable process for soliciting counter-name applicants for naming PARD spaces which includes but is not limited to active telephone outreach to neighborhood leaders and community organizers in the vicinity of the PARD space to be named and that Austin PARD take a step toward rectifying the gender imbalance in naming PARD spaces by modifying the names of existing parks with location-based names to include the names of notable women and that half of these names are notable women of color; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that, after equitable proactive policies have been put in place, Council may again call upon the Human Rights Commission to offer recommendations in connection with studying the extent of naming inequities and remedial measures to address them.

Date of Approval:

Record of the vote:

Attest: _____

Jonathan Babiak

Staff Liaison, Human Rights Commission