



COMMISSION FOR WOMEN RECOMMENDATION 20200622-03A1

Date: June 22, 2020

Subject: Race and Gender Equity

Motioned By: Amanda Lewis

Seconded By: Flannery Bope

Recommendation to Council

WHEREAS, the Commission for Women (“Commission”) of the City of Austin (“City”) serves as an advisory body to the City Council (“Council”) and City Manager concerning the needs and problems of women in the Austin area and shall recommend programs designed to alleviate any inequities that may confront women in social, economic and vocational pursuits; and

WHEREAS, on March 23, 2017 the Council passed Resolution No. 20170323-054, calling upon the Commission for Women, in collaboration with the City’s Human Rights Commission, to address gender disparities in the City and develop recommendations for modifying City policies or practices to eliminate disparate impacts; and

WHEREAS, on November 8, 2017 the Commission passed [Recommendation 20171108-004b](#): Women’s Equity in Austin (“Equity Recommendation”) to address these gender disparities; and

WHEREAS, the Equity Recommendation resolved that Council immediately act to integrate gender equity principles into all of its operations, including policy, program and decision-making, which would, at a minimum, require that the Equity Office (or similar office) be empowered and supported to employ an equity tool and equity lens to investigate and addresses City laws, policies and practices that create an unintended disparate impact on women, and implement changes to the existing Equity Assessment Tool to provide information on gender as well as race; and

WHEREAS, the Equity Recommendation resolved that the City educate its employees, managers and executives on sexism, racism and implicit bias; incentivize leaders to complete such training; and provide implicit bias training to private employers through ACC or other education institutions; and

WHEREAS, commissions, community leaders and citizens are calling for public safety reform and changes in the Austin Police Department (“APD”) leadership and budget in response to local and nationwide police violence and killing of Black women and men; and

WHEREAS, crimes of sexual assault, domestic violence and sex trafficking disproportionately impact women and girls, particularly women and girls of color and LGBTQ+ individuals; and

WHEREAS, victims of sexual assault, domestic violence and sex trafficking must be empowered to access support and services whether or not they choose to engage with law enforcement, and providers of those services be reimbursed whether or not forensic evidence is collected when serving these victims; and

WHEREAS, on August 9, 2017 the Commission passed [Request 20170809-003b](#): Regarding Survivors of Sexual Assault, to address the sexual assault kit backlog and deliver a holistic community response for survivors, including notification, healing and justice, and adequate resources for investigators, victim services, prosecutors and other service providers; and

WHEREAS, on February 14, 2018 the Commission passed [Recommendation 20180214-04b](#): Chief of Police Hiring Requirements to resolve that the individual selected to lead APD address issues impacting women, including gender equity in pay and treatment within the department (which is approximately 90% male), the rape kit backlog, and treatment of survivors of sexual assault, and that the community be engaged in the selection of the Chief of Police; and

WHEREAS, on February 14, 2018 the Commission passed [Recommendation 20180214-04c](#): Recommendation for 5 FTE APD Victim Services Counselors, and on July 10, 2019 passed [Recommendation 20190710-03a02](#): Budget for Victim Services, to allocate funding for five incremental employees to support victims of violent crime, which was partially funded in the FY19 budget with the remainder funded in the FY20 budget; and

WHEREAS, on September 11, 2019 the Commission passed [Recommendation 20190911-03f](#): To Adopt a Multi-Disciplinary Approach to Address Human Trafficking, to resolve that the City adopt measures beyond law enforcement to address trafficking, including the appointment of a Human Trafficking liaison outside APD, training for City employees, and measures to prevent trafficking related to City tourism and City-sponsored events; and

WHEREAS, on April 17, 2020 the Commission passed [Recommendation 20200417-03C](#): COVID-19 Responses for Women and Girls, which identified increased health and safety risks and loss of income and benefits for women, particularly women of color, due to COVID-19, and resolved that the City address the disparities experienced by women and children of color, LGBTQ+, disabled, immigrants and refugees, and other disadvantaged or vulnerable populations; and

WHEREAS, on June 11, 2020 Council passed [Resolution 20200611-94](#) to address tenant selection policies and procedures for individuals with prior convictions or evictions, which identified that formerly incarcerated women are more likely to be homeless than formerly incarcerated men, formerly incarcerated Black and Hispanic women experience unsheltered homelessness at higher rates than White women, and Black women experience the highest rate of sheltered homelessness, and that these women and their families face barriers to safe, stable and affordable housing because of their criminal history, inhabiting re-entry into their communities; and

WHEREAS, women of color in the City continue to experience greater economic, health and safety inequities and disparate outcomes than White women;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Commission recommends that the City address the intersection of race, gender and sexual orientation equity in all City departments:

1. Equip the Equity Office to employ an equity lens to investigate and address City laws, policies and practices that create an unintended disparate impact on women, particularly women of color, and LGBTQ+ individuals.
2. Appoint a dedicated City staff position to address gender and sexual orientation equity and advocate for women, girls and LGBTQ+ individuals.
3. Require all City employees, managers and executives to be trained on sexism, racism and implicit bias.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Commission recommends that the City address race, gender and sexual orientation equity in public safety reform:

4. Change APD leadership and the demographics of the department (sworn and civilian) to reflect the race, gender and sexual orientation demographics of the City.
5. Redirect APD FY21 funding from sworn officers and military-grade equipment to civilian, community-based and culturally specific resources.
6. Allocate funding for Victim Services to fully meet community needs, whether Victim Services remains in APD or reports elsewhere; examine best practices in other communities for the reporting and operating structure of Victim Services (within or outside of law enforcement), and include the Commission for Women in the analysis regarding this reporting and operating structure, to ensure Victim Services has sufficient funding, resources, skills and authority to optimally serve victims.
7. Implement criteria and procedures for situations which merit Victim Services being dispatched with sworn officers, and criteria where Victim Services or other community resources can respond without the presence of sworn officers.
8. Allocate equitable funding and resources for forensic labs, investigators, prosecutors, victim advocates and other City and community resources to bring healing and justice to survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and trafficking, regardless of race, gender and sexual orientation.
9. Fully reimburse organizations which perform exams for victims of sexual assault, domestic violence and sex trafficking, whether or not forensic evidence is collected for law enforcement.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Commission recommends that the City address race, gender and sexual orientation equity in housing, health and safety:

10. Address the disproportional impacts on women of color with criminal backgrounds and their families, by providing equitable access to safe and affordable housing.
11. Address disparate economic, health and safety impacts on women of color resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Date of Approval: June 22, 2020

Record of the vote: Unanimous on a 6-0-1 vote, with one commissioner off the dais, two commissioners absent, and two districts vacant.

Attest: *April E. Shaw*
April Shaw, Staff Liaison