

Information Item

Date: August 11, 2020

To: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, and Members of the City Council

From: Meridith J. Martin, Strategic Initiatives Administrator

Subject:

Information on Social Justice and Equity Processes from Other Communities

Strategic Focus Area: Livable Neighborhoods

Strategic Objective: Support Inclusion of Community Populations

Strategic Plan Action Item: No

Key Work Item: Yes



At the request of Mayor Pro Tempore Adams, staff reviewed the process taken by the City of Asheville to pass a resolution related to social justice and equity on July 14, 2020. The item was presented during the meeting as new business by a Council Member. The resolution noted the priorities of the program which include increasing minority homeownership and access to affordable housing; increasing minority business ownership and career opportunities; strategies to grow equity and generational wealth; closing the gaps in health care, education, employment and pay; neighborhood safety; and fairness within criminal justice.

The resolution originated from a community organization and was read during the meeting by a Council Member. The elected body discussed the resolution, allowed public comment, and voted to unanimously approve the item. Asheville noted the completion of this item took place over a one week period with limited community input. The item also missed the committee structure of the elected body and was delivered directly to the full Council.

Providence, Rhode Island and Evanston, Illinois have also taken steps in evaluating social justice and equity. The Mayor of Providence has taken the first step by signing an executive order to begin examining the feasibility of establishing a program for residents of African heritage and Indigenous people. The executive order consists of three phases that include the collection of truth, reconciliations, and finally, addressing the wealth and opportunity gaps experienced by residents due to historical racism and discrimination.

Evanston served as a model for Providence. Evanston began the process in June 2019 adopting a resolution affirming the City's commitment to end structural racism and achieve racial equity. Utilizing an existing citizen commission, community and public input was gathered to address why repair was needed, who should be involved, what actions should be taken, and what revenue source(s) should be considered. By November, the Evanston City Council accepted recommendations from the commission and created a fund for programming from a new revenue

source. Initiatives to address social justice and equity will include workforce development, entrepreneurship, homeownership, education, and infrastructure. A plan for the program was scheduled to be presented in 2020.

The City of Winston-Salem has several existing advisory boards and commissions that could serve to gain public input on social justice and equity including Human Relations Commission, the Partnership for Prosperity, and/or the Community Investments Review Committee.

Attached to this item are resolution examples from jurisdictions mention earlier in this item.