



TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

Colleagues Memo

TO: Mayor and Members of the Town Council

FROM: Mayor Maryann Derwin and Councilmember John Richards

DATE: April 28, 2021

RE: Proposed Race and Equity Committee

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend that the Town Council:

1. Create a new standing town committee to identify and address systemic barriers to inclusion that may exist within the Town's policies, regulations, and practices, and
2. Appoint two members to a subcommittee to interview applicants for the Race and Equity Committee

BACKGROUND: Inclusion is a core community value in Portola Valley, and we aspire to be a community characterized by the value of equity. What steps must we take and what changes must we make to be such a community?

To answer these questions, we must acknowledge the role of local government in helping create systems of racial and economic exclusion, commit to dismantling those same systems in pursuit of justice, and create new systems that are fair to all.

Many larger cities in San Mateo County including Redwood City, San Mateo and South San Francisco have established or are in the process of establishing diversity and equity tasks forces/commissions/committees. While these are bigger cities with diverse racial populations who have a range of incomes including folks living at or below the poverty line, I'm sure there is much we can learn from these cities' efforts.

DISCUSSION: The proposal is to create a committee of up to seven members. Anyone who lives in the Town of Portola Valley or its sphere of influence will be eligible to apply for membership. Those with an existing relationship with the Town's Spanish-speaking workforce are highly sought.

Once the committee is approved, the Town will ask interested members of the public to apply. The Council Equity Subcommittee will interview applicants and recommend a list of members to the Council. The Council will discuss and approve the appointment of members to the committee. It is recommended that for the first year, the Council provide two Liaisons

to the committee. Staff support will be provided by the Town Manager and the Communications and Community Engagement Analyst.

Examples of work the Committee may undertake: It is expected that the committee will offer many opportunities for extensive community engagement such as public listening sessions, surveys, virtual and in-person programs and events and the use of social media. Following are examples of work the committee may undertake upon approval by the Council:

- Draft an equity statement for the town. (*See under Examples below.)
- Examine and evaluate existing policies and procedures currently in place within the Town of Portola Valley related to diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Propose new ordinances, resolutions, policies or take other actions to reduce and/or eliminate racial disparities in the Town's governing laws.
- Support the Housing and Safety Element updates.
- Proactively engage the other Town committees and commissions on race and equity issues and support their work.
- Educate the community about the Ohlone Ramaytush whose land we inhabit. Work with the Ramaytush tribal leaders to take actions that would support the tribe.
- Work with Town Historian Nancy Lund to identify sites where the Ramaytush lived and locate artefacts.
- Work with Nancy Lund to document the early immigrants who lived here.
- Engage with the town workforce who do not live here.
- Educate the community about implicit bias and white privilege.
- Educate the community on the federal, state and other government practices that have caused residential segregation across America, resulting in the white population accumulating wealth through the ownership of property, and the black and brown populations at a severe disadvantage because they were not allowed to purchase homes.

- Writes Richard Rothstein, scholar and author of The Color of Law: "Today's residential segregation in the North, South, Midwest, and West is not the unintended consequence of individual choices and of otherwise well-meaning law or regulations but of unhidden public policy that explicitly segregated every metropolitan area in the United States. We have created a caste system in this country, with African Americans kept exploited and geographically separate by racially explicit government policies.

What I'm saying is that residential segregation underlies almost all the racial inequality we have. It's not just police abuse, it's the achievement gap in schools, it's health disparities between blacks and whites. Blacks live in less healthy neighborhoods, they have more pollution, stress, shorter life

expectancies, greater incidence of cardiovascular disease, and police abuse and of course the wealth gap, which I've written about. The wealth gap itself drives much of our ongoing inequality. Yeah, I think residential segregation underlies all – not exclusively — but it's a major contributor to all the forms of racial inequality we have.”

- Support the weekly BLM demonstration and other civil rights demonstrations in Town or nearby.
- Suggest resolutions of support for groups under attack such as Asian Americans.
- Monitor state legislation and make recommendations to the Council for bills to support or oppose.
- Consider joining other groups championing racial and economic justice.

Measuring Success: Committee will be requested to determine first-year, second year and long-term goals to the Council detailing the findings and recommendations of the committee.

Other Options to Consider: Consider establishing an Advisory Committee: This would be a separate group of people with DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) experience and/or people of color who don't necessarily live in Portola Valley who would advise the committee.

Consider hiring a Technical Advisor/DEI Facilitator: Consider hiring a professional who has experience working with municipal diversity committees composed of community volunteers to help the committee get organized and focused.

***Examples:** Here is an example of an equity statement from Hillsboro, Oregon:

The City of Hillsboro is committed to equity. Equity work aims to remove barriers and eliminate social and economic disparities by centering those who have been excluded from the decision-making process. Equity is the pursuit of equal outcomes.

We acknowledge that equity, particularly racial equity, is essential to providing exceptional public services — and to creating an inclusive and safe work environment for everyone. The City recognizes that people of color and other communities continue to be marginalized and excluded – both intentionally and unintentionally — from constructing the institutions that govern our lives and the services we depend on to protect our health, safety, and well-being. We further acknowledge that structural and cultural barriers impact access to, and representation in, City government.

The City of Hillsboro has a pivotal role in creating a sense of belonging for all people. We must be inclusive in developing and implementing policies to ensure that City services are responsive to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and other individual identities.

We acknowledge that without an intentional focus on equity, we will continue to perpetuate and deepen inequality.

To realize our mission and core values, the City of Hillsboro commits to integrating equity into the fabric of our organization and the delivery of public services in pursuit of equal, fair, and just outcomes for all.

Here is a link to a 2020 comprehensive work plan by the Mill Valley DEI Task Force:
https://cityofmillvalley.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=1580&meta_id=76216