

Memo

TO: Gina DuQuenne, City Council Member
FROM: Joseph Lessard, City Manager
DATE: April 29, 2022
RE: **Social Equity and Racial Justice (SERJ) Commission Recommendations**

I am writing in response to your request for an update on any actions taken by the City related to requests from Social Equity and Racial Justice (SERJ) Commission. I apologize for being tardy responding to your request, but budget issues and labor agreement negotiations have intervened to delay my response.

The requests I am aware of from the SERJ Commission include the following items:

1. Fund and hire a full-time Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Manager for the City of Ashland organization
2. Engage a conciliatory service to interface with the DEI Manager
3. Provide future funding for a Juneteenth street banner
4. Add calendar dates for religious holidays to the City of Ashland master calendar

Updates

Each of items 1-3 are requests for currently unbudgeted items. I am holding each of these items for future consideration following the upcoming special called City Council business meetings scheduled for May 23rd and 24th to discuss the current budget deficit. I am in the process of reviewing the current budget and financial forecasts to determine a course of action to address the deficit. As you are aware, on April 1st I issued direction to all General Fund departments that included the following:

- All current and future vacant positions will remain vacant unless otherwise approved by the City Manager
- All personnel savings to-date in the current 2021-2022 budget year are not available for department expenditures unless otherwise approved by the City Manager
- Organizational travel and training, other than that required to maintain professional certifications or operational readiness, is restricted unless otherwise approved by the City Manager
- Each department director is directed to prepare budget reduction plans for the 2022-2023 fiscal year as follows:
 - Public Safety Departments 5% budget reduction plans
 - Other General Fund Departments 5% and 10% budget reduction plans

Memo

My review of the budget will include looking at the submitted departmental budget reduction plans and at departmental operational deficiencies for potential service delivery risks. Additionally, I will be looking at the potential impact of budget reductions on future labor agreement negotiations.

Item 3 may be somewhat addressed with the possible flying of Juneteenth flags at the City Hall/Plaza and The Grove. I understand these two locations previously flew Juneteenth flags and I have requested that Public Works facilities staff make the flags available again for this year's commemoration.

Item 4 has been addressed by adding holiday notice on the master calendar for Christian, Jewish, and Islamic religious days of commemoration/celebration.

Please know that I have not forgotten your and the SERJ Commission's interest in advancing Ashland as an open, welcoming community for all individuals. I understand the importance of this vision for our community and will assist as best I can as City Manager.