



Council Business Meeting

Date

Agenda Item	Annual Report from the Social Equity and Racial Justice Advisory Committee		
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Item Type	Requested by Council <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Update <input type="checkbox"/> Request for Direction <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input type="checkbox"/>		

SUMMARY

This is the annual report from the Social Equity and Racial Justice Advisory Committee. This report covers the activities of the committee since October of 2022. Co-chairs Emily Simon and Precious Yamaguchi will present the report.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

The SERJAC supports the city council value statement of a community that is open, inclusive, and equitable.

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The Social Equity and Racial Justice commission was created by Ordinance in May 2021. In the fall of 2022, resolutions related to city commissions were passed. In March of this year, the City Council approved Resolution 2023-06 which updated and consolidated prior resolutions related to advisory committees. All advisory committees provide an annual report to the City Council.

FISCAL IMPACTS

None.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions from the City Council are welcomed.

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS

The Social Equity and Racial Justice Advisory Committee respectfully requests the City Council assist in recruiting potential new members to serve on the committee.

REFERENCES & ATTACHMENTS

2023 Annual Report from the Social Equity and Racial Justice Advisory Committee



Social Equity and Racial Justice

Annual Report to City Council

August 15, 2023

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Precious Yamaguchi and Emily Simon, co-chairs of the Social Equity and Racial Justice Advisory Committee

Good evening, Mayor and Council. Our most recent report to you was in October of 2022. We are pleased to be before you again to speak to you about our work.

We continue to focus on racial equity and social justice issues within the City of Ashland, meeting with other City committees and with community partners.

Since October, the following have attended our meetings and informed us of their work through the lens of social equity and racial justice:

- Mayor Tonya Graham
- Police Chief Tighe O'Meara
- City Manager Joe Lessard
- SOU President Rich Bailey
- Planning Commissioner Doug Knauer
- Ashland School District Superintendent Samuel Bogdanove and Andrea Townsend, director of equity and learning.
- Allyson Phelps of Ashland Together

We appreciate their time, efforts, and commitment to social equity and racial justice. We would also like to acknowledge Councilor Gina DuQuenne and our excellent and dedicated staff person, Ann Seltzer, for their unwavering support and ongoing assistance to the committee's work.

In January, SERJ committed to participating in some capacity, to the following events/holidays.

- Dr. Martin Luther King Day and Black History Month
- Asian Heritage Month
- Juneteenth
- Indigenous People's Day
- Pride Parade in early October

MLK and Black History Month

In addition to participating in the events on the Ashland Plaza, and the celebration hosted by BASE in Medford, SERJ wrote statements about the importance of honoring Dr. King and supporting Black History Month which were posted on the City's webpage. The statements encouraged readers to learn

more about Dr. King and Black history by viewing a video posted by BASE (Black Alliance for Social Empowerment) regarding Dr. King, to attend the event on the plaza and/or read other articles regarding black history such as 'The 1619 Project'. SERJ was pleased with the Main Street Banner and the new MLK flags on display in Ashland. We are committed to assisting in organizing and participating in a reinvigorated event for MLK day in Ashland in 2024

Asian Heritage Month

In May, SERJ held a social gathering to honor Asian Heritage Month. Two SERJ members shared their family narratives and Asian American and Pacific Islander history in Ashland, Oregon, and the U.S. The event not only recognized the Asian heritage of SERJ members, but also recalled the contributions of Asians to Ashland and southern Oregon.

Juneteenth

Several SERJ members volunteered at the Juneteenth celebration hosted by BASE in Medford.

SERJ members also attended the of the Raising of the Juneteenth Flag at Southern Oregon University. This event included guest speakers, a live violin performance, and snacks.

Indigenous People's Day

SERJ members participated in the celebration of Indigenous People's day at SOU. This year we look forward to seeing the flags of the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians and the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community flying on the three city flag poles in Ashland.

Pride Parade

Almost all SERJ members proudly marched in the Pride Parade last October. We believe that our presence in the parade underscores the City's intention to be welcoming and tolerant of all people. We will march again this year and carry a banner that will read Social Equity and Racial Justice Committee with the City of Ashland logo.

Proclamations

SERJ believes that official proclamations read by the governing body serve as a signal to citizens that an issue matters. As such SERJ submitted to Mayor Graham proclamations regarding the following:

- Antisemitism
- Black History Month
- Cesar Chavez Day
- Asian Heritage Month
- Juneteenth

We are grateful to the Mayor and Council for the public and outward facing reading and support of these proclamations. We look forward to submitting proclamations for Indigenous People's day, and in recognition of our LBTGQ+ community in conjunction with the pride parade in October.

Flags and Banners

SERJ is pleased the City has embraced the visual support of holidays including MLK day, Juneteenth, Cesar Chavez day, Pride Month and Indigenous People's Day. These serve as visual reminders to citizens of the existence and importance of the contributions represented by these holidays. We request that the City purchase either flags or a banner to recognize Asian Heritage Month.

Ashland Welcoming Voices

The City Council allocated \$20,000 to develop a program to engage the business community to advance Ashland as an open and welcoming community. A component of that program is underway as Ashland Welcoming Voices. The City of Ashland, SERJ, the Southern Oregon University Research Center (SOURCE), and SOU's Digital Media Center are working on a digital media project to highlight the diverse business owners, leaders, and individuals who fill important roles in Ashland.

Employee Training

Approximately 60 employees attended training classes on 'Race in America' with Mike and Emily Green of Common Ground Conversations. We are pleased the City has taken steps to train employees and look forward to the City providing more training opportunities for staff, advisory committees and elected officials.

Donation

The City received a donation of \$2,000 from Travel Southern Oregon to support SERJ. We are grateful not only for the contribution but especially the acknowledgment of the importance of social justice and racial equity in Ashland.

Those funds were deposited into the General Fund under Administration Grants. Staff will use \$65 of that donation to obtain a Social Equity and Racial Justice banner. The banner will be carried in the Pride Parade and will be used at other events during the year.

Labor Acknowledgement

In June, we unanimously approved adopting a Labor Acknowledgement and requested the City Council also adopt it and ask that it be read at all city meetings. We understand that the Labor Acknowledgment is on the council's agenda contemporaneously with this report and look forward to the opportunity to discuss it.

Annual Goals

Last month you reviewed goals that SERJAC is considering for this upcoming year.

- Research what the City of Ashland has done to help and interfere with the civil rights of different groups of people (Black, Indigenous, Chinese etc.). This research will be the starting point for identifying reparations that the City can put in place to address the actions of the past and to celebrate good work that has been done.

Towards that end, SERJ will continue to support and participate in Ashland Together's "Sunrise Project" which is designed to help Ashland move "from Sundown to Sunrise". This project is under the umbrella of Oregon Remembrance whose mission is to support and encourage Oregon communities to rewrite the ending to the story of a sundown town, by creating an ending in which a formally exclusionary community can become a community which is *intentionally* committed to inclusivity and respect for all persons who reside or visit there.

- Review the recommendations of the DEI Assessment Consultant when the final report is completed.
- Continue the work of the 'Ashland for Everyone' project so that Ashland can move forward in its goal to be authentically welcoming to all people.
- Support activities for SERJ related holidays and community events and help the City identify which events to participate in and recommend ways the City can participate.
- Support other Committees in their work as it intersects with the goals of the SERJ Advisory Committee.

We will continue to review all of the goals referenced above and determine our capacity to undertake them as the year progresses.

Challenges

Recruitment and Membership on the Committee continues to be an issue. Since we were here in October 2022, we have lost 4 members. We currently have four members. There is currently an outstanding application, and we are awaiting the appointment of that individual, thereby bringing our number to five. Any and all help regarding recruitment would be very much appreciated as without a robust membership it is difficult to do our work.

Thank you for your work on behalf of our community and thank you for the opportunity to serve. We look forward to answering any questions at the meeting on August 15, 2023.