

Council Business Meeting

January 5, 2021

Agenda Item	Creation of A Race and Social Equity Commission	
From	Adam Hanks	City Manager (Pro Tem)
Contact	adam@ashland.or.us ; 541-552-2046	

SUMMARY

Mayor Akins has proposed the creation of a new Racial Justice Commission and has provided a document that contains the intended mission, vision, structure, reporting and a summary of the purpose of the Commission. The creation of a commission is done through the development and passage by Council of an ordinance. Additionally, all advisory commissions are regulated through Ashland Municipal Code (AMC) 2.10 – Uniform Policies and Operating Procedures for Advisory Commissions and Board.

Should Council concur with the concept of the creation of this new Commission, staff requests formal direction from Council to place this item into the current workflow of the Legal and Administration Departments to develop draft ordinance language for review at future Council meetings for first and second readings.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

Resolution 2020-15 – Declaration of the City of Ashland’s Commitment to Social Equity and Racial Justice

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION

No previous Council action has been taken on this specific proposal.

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Mayor Akins’ document attached to this staff report provides a very clear explanation of the concept.

FISCAL IMPACTS

As with all City Advisory Commissions, baseline costs include staff time for the staff liaison and staff administrative support for agenda and packet development, ongoing coordination and communication between the Commission and Council, as well as between Commission and the City Manager and City management team.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff has no specific recommendation on this item.

ACTIONS, OPTIONS & POTENTIAL MOTIONS

- 1) I move to direct the City Manager and City Attorney to initiate development of an ordinance for the creation of a Race and Social Equity Commission based on the proposal provided by Mayor Akins
- 2) I move to continue Council discussion of this item to a future Council meeting (*insert date desired*).

REFERENCES & ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Mayor Akins Race and Social Equity Commission Proposal Document

City of Ashland Commission on Race and Social Equity

Mission and Vision:

The Commission endeavors to adopt anti racist measures and draft a concrete plan to accomplish equity in the City of Ashland.

Its goal will be to explore the way race and equity impact community, how to dismantle systems which support bias and to support systems of accountability as it pertains to race and issues of social equity through the following methodology:

- Identify both the systemic and systematic practices of racism, homophobia, sexism and classism which have fostered structural inequalities, challenges, and deficiencies in Ashland.
- Assess the historic marginalization of African Americans, Indigenous People and People of Color in this community
- Recommend and advocate the systemic changes that will protect and promote racial and social opportunity, diversity, equity, and unity.

Structure:

The Commission is a seven member panel of community leaders with backgrounds in race and social equity work by appointment of the Mayor through the usual processes of application and appointment.

Commissioners would need to represent a cross section of Black, Indigenous, People of Color, trans, gay, and economically marginalized. Commissioners would have additional qualifications by education and/or demonstrated work practice as equity leaders.

There would be one primary staff liaison from the Ashland Police Department. Police Chief Tighe O'Meara has agreed to attend and or to rotate police staffing through commission meetings. However, there may be occasions where HR, Admin. and others may be tasked with providing expertise to specific areas of focus.

The commission would meet on a monthly basis according to the schedule established by the Chair as determined by appointed members. The meetings would contain an agenda as established by the commission in consultation with the mayor and staff and would be noticed to the public. The Commission would additionally appoint a Secretary who would be tasked with the taking of minutes for publication by the City Recorder's Office.

The ongoing areas of interest as a guidepost would be:

- Racial Equity
- Education & Economic Opportunity
- Health Disparities
- Law Enforcement, Justice and Accountability
- Housing and Gentrification
- City Hiring Practices

Reporting:

The Commission would meet monthly and report directly to City Council in a regular business meeting once per quarter with options to report to council more frequently should the need arise.

The Commission's reports would be a public record and the Commission may consider claims of inequity brought by the community.

All meetings will be legally noticed and minutes taken for publication on the City of Ashland archive and website.

Annual Report:

Each year the Commission will release an annual report with the status of its work in terms of effective strategies enacted, future work plans, establishment of benchmarks and timelines for achievement. The annual report will also carry recommendations for not only the Commission but also for the community at large in terms of achieving the mission of total equity and dismantling systems of oppression within the City of Ashland.

Summary of Commission Purpose:

While it may be unclear how long the stated goal of supporting total equity in Ashland may take or if the goal can indeed be achieved, we find the work worthy of its mission and progress likely as a result of undertaking it.

Commissioners will be people from within the BIPOC community and professionals with needed backgrounds in order to best achieve the goals.

The Commission will work with the City of Ashland but will also have a separate role of reporting directly to Council and Mayor on their findings so as to have an objective role not influenced by internal controls or structures within the City of Ashland.

Commissioners in reporting their findings will offer recommendations toward solutions and the overall goal of ending inequity and the systems which support oppression.

Recommended Motion:

I move to accept the formation of the Racial and Social Equity Commission as drafted and to begin the Commission no later than May of 2021.