

Council Business Meeting

June 15, 2021

Agenda Item	Letter of Support for BASE	
From	Tighe O'Meara	Police Chief
Contact	Tighe.omeara@ashland.or.us ; (541) 552-2142	

SUMMARY

Staff is bringing a proposed letter of support for Council consideration. The letter of support helps demonstrate the City's commitment to building positive relationships with BIPOC (black, indigenous and people of color) community members.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

N/A

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION

N/A

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Several law enforcement agencies, including the Ashland Police Department (APD), have been working with a local community group called BASE (Black Alliance & Social Empowerment) to help foster a better relationship between law enforcement and black community members. One of the initiatives that is being worked on is a liaison program that will help facilitate connections between black community members who feel they have been targeted because of their race, and law enforcement agencies. The Ashland Police Department is fully supportive of this effort and sees it as being consistent with other important work the City is taking on with the Social Equity and Racial Justice Commission. Neither BASE nor City staff are asking the City to dedicate any financial resources to the liaison effort. Staff is bringing forward a possible letter of support from Council that BASE team members can use in their efforts to raise funds for this important work.

FISCAL IMPACTS

N/A

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff requests that Council approve of the attached letter of support.

ACTIONS, OPTIONS & POTENTIAL MOTIONS

I move that Council approves the proposed letter of support for the BASE liaison program fund raising efforts.

REFERENCES & ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Proposed letter of support

This letter is written in support of the Southern Oregon Racial Equity's Community Liaison Initiative, which has been created to improve the relationship between law enforcement and the Black community while furthering the development of law enforcement practices. This project is a joint effort involving Black Alliance and Social Empowerment Southern Oregon (BASE), the Jackson County Sheriff, and the Ashland, Central Point and Medford Police Departments.

The Project calls for a liaison to be hired to facilitate better working relationships between Jackson County law enforcement agencies and members of the black community, many of whom are ill-at-ease to approach law enforcement with complaints or concerns. The liaisons will also work with the law enforcement agencies in becoming more anti-racist, through access to the agencies and direct input on training, policies, and reform.

The Ashland City Council is proud to support this effort and endorses the Ashland Police Department in joining other agencies to bring this important work forward.

The Ashland City Council is committed to looking at our community's racial disparities while seeking innovative solutions. The Ashland City Council is inspired that our law enforcement community, by partnering with BASE, is invested in doing the same.

The Ashland City Council believes that BASE, and its leadership, are well positioned to bring this initiative forward. We believe that BASE's proactive approach of engaging law enforcement in this initiative prior to seeking grant funding shows the group's seriousness of purpose and speaks to their ability to bring the project to fruition.

The Ashland City Council is committed to supporting this project, unfortunately, the City does not currently have the financial resources that can be used to support this very important work. The Council therefore ask that you join us in showing your support by funding this important work.

The Council fully endorses this effort and is excited about the potential to improve law enforcement practices, relationships between black community members and law enforcement agencies, and public safety in general. The Council asks that you help make an innovative, collaborative community project into a reality, and show that there is a different model for police-citizen interactions that can increase public safety and help further the relationship between law enforcement and members of the black community.

