CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: MAGALI TELLES, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DIRECTOR
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            COORDINATOR, COMMUNITY PROGRAMS & ENGAGEMENT
SUBJECT: COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PLAN LISTENING SESSION
            FINAL REPORT

AGENDA ACTION: STUDY SESSION

RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Community Engagement will present the Community Empowerment Plan Listening Sessions Report. No action is required, but Council may give direction to staff.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Community Empowerment Plan Listening Session Final Report (Attachment 1) provides an analysis of the data collected through listening sessions and a discussion of each of the most prevalent themes found during the analysis. In addition, the final report also outlines the community's recommendations for the City of Santa Rosa in addressing police use of force policies and guidelines, issues of systemic racism within the City of Santa Rosa, and projects and programs that raise the visibility of Santa Rosa people of color (POC) throughout the community.

BACKGROUND

The deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, along with so many other People of Color (POC) are a reminder that racial inequity continues in our communities and amongst the structures meant to serve them. In the summer of 2020, a groundswell of protests erupted across the nation, including here in Santa Rosa, calling in part for changes in use of force policies, as well as other governmental policies and funding decisions that historically impact and continue to effect communities of color. These protests also called for systemic racism to be labeled as a public health crisis and demanded for communities to start examining and addressing how they continue to perpetuate systemic and structural racism.

Prompted by local protests, the City of Santa Rosa developed the Community Empowerment Plan (Attachment 2) to address Santa Rosa Police Department (SRPD)

policies and practices through listening sessions, one-on-one conversations, and informal group meetings. The vision of the Plan is to build a trusting and open relationship of mutual respect between the SRPD and the community, and a space where ongoing, inclusive, constructive dialogue is available. This engagement has led to important and at times uncomfortable conversations centered around policies and practices to improve the City's relationship with, trust amongst, and service to the community. While the Plan initially focused on SRPD engagement, the SRPD does not stand alone in responding to the need for change. In addition to addressing SRPD specific issues, the Plan is meant to be inclusive of broader safety net solutions through other City departments and programs, such as economic opportunities, land-use planning, budgeting, hiring practices, etc.

The Plan has three goals with related objectives:

1. Increase constructive and inclusive dialogue between leaders from POC communities in Santa Rosa and Sonoma County, and the City of Santa Rosa.
2. Community is provided with opportunities to review and provide input on Santa Rosa Police Department's use of force and community policing policies.
3. Establish a feedback loop to gauge effectiveness of efforts with and in the community, and among City staff.

From June through December 2020, the Office of Community Engagement (OCE) held one-on-one conversations, small informal group meetings, and formal listening sessions with POC to hear stories, concerns, feedback and suggestions for change on their relationship with SRPD and the City of Santa Rosa. In attendance at most of these listening sessions were former Mayor Tom Schwedhelm and Chief of Police Rainer Navarro.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On June 30, 2020, the Council conducted a study session to review, receive feedback and input from the community, and provide direction to staff on the Community Empowerment Plan.

ANALYSIS

In total, staff met with 280 Santa Rosa residents, of which 265 were POC. Eighteen (18) listening sessions were held with 13 POC community groups (Attachment 3), 18 one-on-one conversations were held, and 15 informal group meetings were held. Staff held listening sessions with four Black community groups, five Latinx community groups, one Indigenous community group, and three mixed-race/ethnicity community groups.

OCE staff reviewed all listening session summaries and coded each summary for reoccurring themes. The final report contains the most prevalent reoccurring themes

from all listening sessions with an in-depth analysis of each theme. These themes include:

- Build relationships between Santa Rosa Police Department and community, including youth;
- Invest in community programming and services, particularly for POC communities;
- Create police accountability and oversight mechanisms;
- Address institutional racism, systemic racism and the culture of white supremacy in Santa Rosa; and
- Uplift and celebrate Santa Rosa's POC communities.

Based on input received from listening session participants, the City of Santa Rosa must address its role in the systemic racism that impacts our communities of color and address its own policies and practices that enable historical institutional racism. This includes making changes that will impact the structure and culture of the organization, adopting a variety of practices, policies and procedures that will change how the City serves all of its residents. Recommendations emerging from the listening sessions include:

Engage Through an Anti-Racist Lens: Creating an Organizational Culture that Values Public Engagement with All Community Members and Increasing Access to Public Engagement Opportunities
The development of the Community Empowerment Plan was a first step towards engaging through an anti-racist lens. The City will continue to make purposeful efforts to involve and engage our POC communities, as well as other community members who have been historically "left out of the conversation." OCE is currently working on tools and resources for City staff to utilize around best practice for community engagement. OCE is also working with the Community Advisory Board to develop a Citizens Guidebook and a citizens' academy, both aimed at educating community members how their local government functions, how decisions are made, and how to get involved.

The City is also taking steps to ensure that members of our non-English speaking communities are able to participate in their local government. This includes translation of City Council agendas and City materials, as well as interpretation services available at City Council meetings and many City-hosted community meetings.

Commitment to Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Transparency and Access
The community recommends that the City of Santa Rosa make a public statement on the importance of diversity, inclusion, and racial equity. Furthermore, the City Council should include diversity, inclusion, racial equity, and transparency as part of their mission statement. The City took initial steps towards this recommendation during the summer of 2020. On June 28, former Mayor Tom Schwedhelm and City Manager Sean

McGlynn released a letter to the community titled *Actions for Change: A Commitment from the Santa Rosa City Council and City Manager.*

In addition to this letter, the City has taken further steps to increase inclusion, diversity, equity, transparency and access over the last ten months: adopting the Open Government Ordinance that increases transparency of and access to City government processes and decision-making; working with Seed Collaborative to create plans to increase inclusion, diversity and equity in hiring, staff retention, staff trainings, and engagement with the community; hiring an Equity and Public Health Planner who is responsible for ensuring all City plans are inclusive, address community health disparities and incorporate public health best practices; and hiring of a Diversity, Inclusion and EEO Officer whose employment began on March 30, 2021.

The OCE has also created the *Multicultural Roots Project: Stories of Santa Rosa's Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC).* The goal of the project is to create visibility of Santa Rosa's POC community by highlighting the contributions of past and current local leaders that have helped to shape Santa Rosa and Sonoma County into what they are today.

Declare Racism as a Public Health Crisis in Santa Rosa
The community recommends the City Council declare racism a public health crisis for the City of Santa Rosa. The City would join the County of Sonoma, along with 145 other cities and counties across 27 states, as well as the American Public Health Association, the American Medical Association, the California Endowment, numerous California universities, the County Behavioral Health Directors Association of California, the County Welfare Directors Association of California, the County Health Executives Association of California, and the California Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems in declaring racism a public health crisis. Additionally, in December 2020, the California State Legislature introduced SB 17, *Office of Racial Equity,* that would allow California to acknowledge the long-standing impacts of systemic racism and to declare racism as a public health crisis.

Mandatory Trainings and Educational Sessions for all City Staff, Appointed and Elected Officials, and Members of City Boards and Commissions
Educational sessions, such as development of the self, ethnic studies and the impacts of policing on communities of color, are an important step that the City needs to take towards healing its relationship with the community, particularly with POC. Not only will this assist in building trust with Santa Rosa's communities of color, but these educational sessions will also broaden officers' and staff's understanding of what POC communities face in their daily lives and will provide important information on how the criminal justice system in the U.S. has deeply impacted communities of color and how it continues to play a role in law enforcement relationships with the community today. Additional training sessions are outlined in the full report.

The City currently offers training for all City staff that addresses issues of diversity, inclusion and harassment based on sex and gender. These trainings, part of the *Skills for Success* training series, required for all new employees, include Building an Inclusive Workplace and Emotional Intelligence. In addition, all City staff are required to take harassment in the workplace trainings. SRPD also requires the following annual trainings for their officers: crisis intervention training and implicit bias training. The Police Department is currently working with a local community-based organization, Community Matters, to create a curriculum specific to Community Policing, Cultural Awareness, and Implicit Bias.

Civilian Oversight of SRPD
The community recommends the City develop a model of civilian oversight of law enforcement. The Police Department has recently issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for an Independent Police Auditor, a position that will be overseen by the City Manager. The RFP scope of work includes feedback received from listening session participants, as outlined in the Community Empowerment Plan Goal 2.3. The Police Department will continue to explore additional components to law enforcement oversight, including the IOLERO model created by the County of Sonoma.

Restorative Community Justice Circles with the Community
The community strongly recommended that SRPD work with the Santa Rosa Violence Prevention Partnership, along with local restorative justice organizations, to hold a series of ongoing restorative justice circles with members of the POC and protest communities. While just one step in a larger multipronged approach, this step is vital in healing together with the community.

Continue to Explore Best Practice Responses to Protests and Demonstrations
The community recommends the City continue to explore alternative responses to protests and demonstrations, so that all participants feel safe when speaking out about issues that impact them. Through the listening sessions, the City has taken initial steps in collecting information on what the community needs to feel safe in Santa Rosa, as well as learning about different community groups and the issues that are important to them. While the City is working on improving response to protests and demonstrations through its own investigations through third party consultants and conversations with the community, listening session participants mentioned the City is not solely responsible for making residents feel safe, protesting or otherwise.

Participants mentioned not feeling safe from other members of the community, particularly members from communities of privilege. The community also urges both City staff and elected officials, along with privileged community members to get to know our POC community and refrain from passing judgement on them based on the neighborhood or part of town in which they live.

In addition to the recommendations listed above, City staff have developed and began implementing the following programs, projects and services:

- City Council's Public Safety Subcommittee
- Model of Response to Mental Illness and Homelessness
- Chief's Community Ambassador Team (C-CAT)
- The Marylou Lowrider

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this action does not have a fiscal impact on the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The presentation is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3) and 15378 in that no activity is proposed for approval.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Community Empowerment Plan Final Report
- Attachment 2 – Community Empowerment Plan
- Attachment 3 – Listening Session Groups List

CONTACT

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