

City of Piedmont
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: August 3, 2020

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Sara Lillevand, City Administrator

SUBJECT: Consideration of a Resolution Stating the City of Piedmont's Unequivocal Rejection of Racism and Directing that the Black Lives Matter Flag be Flown during the Month of August 2020

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the attached resolution stating the City of Piedmont's rejection of racism and directing the Black Lives Matter flag to be flown during the month of August 2020.

BACKGROUND

In this time of social justice awakening across our nation in response to historic and current racism as manifested in excessive force by police against Black people, the City of Piedmont stands resolute in our commitment to examine our own institutional policies and procedures and to participate in public discourse about how and where we can make changes aimed at addressing systemic racism that may reside in our current practices.

The first step in this journey toward a more inclusive and equitable community is the City's commitment to anti-racism. The resolution under consideration is intended to acknowledge the existence of and unequivocally reject racism in Piedmont, as well as, to make a public commitment to engage in ongoing work to identify and eliminate systemic causes of racial disparity.

This work will involve examining and owning our City's history; engaging in community conversations about policing in Piedmont; and careful review of City policies, procedures, ordinances, values, goals, and missions through an anti-racism lens. The City is currently seeking an outside consultant to assist in the development of goals and pathways to support a more equitable and less biased community.

In addition to making clear statements of anti-racist intent, the attached resolution directs staff to fly the Black Lives Matter flag during the month of August. Should the Council approve the resolution, the Black Lives Matter flag will fly in place of the City of Piedmont flag during August 2020.

RESOLUTION _____

A RESOLUTION UNEQUIVOCALLY REJECTING RACISM

WHEREAS, recent and historical incidents of violence against Black people highlight the overt and institutional racism that affect the lives of our community members of color; and

WHEREAS, these incidents have led many in our community to reflect again on our values, who we are as City leaders, and who we are as Americans, noting that while we may have differing backgrounds, lived experiences, and beliefs, we each at our core, value diversity, respect, and inclusivity; and

WHEREAS, systemic and institutional racism, spread and perpetuated through overt actions and unconscious bias, has taken a large toll on Black people in our community and across the nation; and

WHEREAS, many in Piedmont have recently come to understand that in order to do our part to unravel systemic racism we must take a proactive anti-racism stance; and

WHEREAS, we must listen to those who have endured centuries of discrimination and exclusion as they share the truth of their lived experiences; and we must seek solutions to remedy racial harm; and

WHEREAS, we are committed to fostering a safe, inclusive and civil community through our policies, our programming, and our leadership; we stand firm in our collective belief that a safe and civil environment for all across Piedmont is paramount; and

WHEREAS, we stand in support of all in our community, honoring and protecting every person regardless of race, creed, color, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, ability, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity; and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge Piedmont is a predominantly White community, with a high socio-economic status; and

WHEREAS, we affirm that Black Lives Matter and recognize the need to place focus and intent on racial equity as we work to change the culture within Piedmont to ensure that all persons are welcome and valued; and

WHEREAS, by focusing on our shared values of respect and inclusivity, as well as to acknowledge historical racism in Piedmont and to examine existing systems through an anti-racist lens, we have an opportunity to come together to strengthen our community in support of equity and justice for all;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council does hereby resolve, declare, determine and order as follows:

1. The City of Piedmont acknowledges, apologizes for, and condemns all racially motivated, discriminatory or exclusionary aspects of the City's history, and deeply regrets the pain or suffering such policies have caused to any person.
2. The City of Piedmont unequivocally rejects racism in all its forms.
3. The City of Piedmont City Council and staff will engage in individual and collective work to understand bias and the historical role racism has played in Piedmont and the community at large in order to better lead a city which is a safe, welcoming, and equitable place for all people.
4. The City of Piedmont will promote inclusion and equity, and will stand up to bigotry, hatred, intolerance, racism, and violence.
5. The City of Piedmont will strongly enforce all laws and policies prohibiting discrimination, hate-motivated incidents and hate crimes, hazing, harassment, intimidation, and other disruptive or violent behaviors in our city.
6. The City of Piedmont will review and revise its policies, procedures, ordinances, values, goals, and missions through an anti-racism lens to foster an unbiased and inclusive environment that is free of discrimination, harassment, and negative stereotyping toward any person or group.
7. Staff is hereby directed to fly the Black Lives Matter flag throughout the month of August 2020 in the manner as described in the agenda report.

[END OF RESOLUTION]

**Item #5 – Resolution Stating the City of Piedmont’s Unequivocal Rejection of Racism
Correspondence Received before 4:30 p.m. on Monday, August 3, 2020**

Dear Council Members,

I am writing today to voice my support for the resolution before you tonight stating Piedmont's rejection of racism and in support of flying the Black Lives Matter flag during the month of August. As the events of the past several months have shown, all of us have a role to play in forcefully denouncing racism and racial violence. Piedmont, given its role as a wealthy white community within a more racially and economically diverse city, has a critical role to play in standing with our broader community in opposition to racism. As a member of the Piedmont Racial Equity Campaign (PREC), a group dedicated to creating long-term anti-racism, I applaud you and staff for taking up this important issue and encourage you to pass this resolution. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
Sarah Karlinsky

Hello City Council Members and School Board Members, We are writing to express our support for a complete Rejection of Racism in Piedmont...FINALLY!! We have seen the frankly surprising opposition spring up on Nextdoor (Michael Heller’s for one) and it just reaffirms to us how much we need to go forward with these measures, including flying the BLM flag for as long as possible to normalize this “new” way of framing our attitude in Piedmont. More than a month to change attitudes is likely needed.

To us and others, these are NOT political issues although many will try to frame them as such. These are HUMAN issues (Which will strike a political chord to those who are fearful and threatened by the concept of inclusivity) that Piedmont has failed to address for decades, leaving us so behind the times that our children are hopelessly lost once outside our mostly white borders and in a real world full of diverse POC, cultures, opinions, income levels, etc. Both of our children who attended Piedmont Schools from kinder through 12th report adamantly how ill-prepared their education in PUSD made them for these real-world issues.

The recent “Reporting Racism Piedmont” Instagram account is just one tiny sample of our failing as a school district but evidence enough to me that we need to address racism head on as a community, starting in Elementary School and not High School when biases and opinions are already set and entrenched. (I highly recommend The Mosaic Project program for 4th graders)

Although we can’t attend tonight’s meeting since we have poor service where we are staying, please count us as two concerned citizens who truly believe in the path toward a more anti-racist Piedmont.

Sincerely,
Suzie Skugstad
Lars Skugstad

Good afternoon,

I am writing to request that you please pass the resolution calling for the City's unequivocal rejection of racism, item 5 in today's agenda. It is a good first step to acknowledge the role of racism in shaping the City's history. It is also a necessary statement of policy to start considering future actions to create a more diverse, equitable and inclusive community, from revising our exclusionary zoning laws, to building more housing (particularly affordable housing), to creating safe schools where all children can thrive.

I particularly appreciate the fact that the City is, with this resolution, apologizing for all the harm that its actions have caused. Let's keep it going.

Thank you,

Andrea Ruiz-Esquide

Dear City Council Members:

I'd like to note my strong support for this resolution.

Thank you,
Heather Haggarty

Dear Mayor and City Council members,

I strongly support adoption of the attached resolution. I hope you will pass this resolution and provide leadership in addressing and eliminating racism, systemic and otherwise, both in Piedmont and more widely in our community and country.

My best,
Elizabeth Epstein

Dear City Council Members:

I wanted to lend my voice in support of the racism resolution being considered tonight. It is time for such a resolution to pass and to signal where we, as a city, stand with regard to diversity, equality and inclusion in our society.

Thank you for your consideration,
Barbara Giuffre
