

MINUTES OF THE CONTINUED JULY 14 AND 21, 2020
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY- - JULY 28, 2020- -5:00 P.M.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft convened the meeting at 5:06 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL - Present: Councilmembers Daysog, Knox White, Oddie, Vella, and Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft – 5. [Note: The meeting was conducted via Zoom and Councilmember Daysog arrived at 5:36 p.m.]

Absent: None.

AGENDA ITEM

(20-549) Resolution No. 15684, “Declaring Racism a Public Health Emergency, including Identifying and Approving Direction to Staff Regarding Initial and Ongoing Actions to Address the Crisis.” Adopted.

Councilmember Oddie stated the discussion time for Council should be suspended.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft inquired whether the previous vote to suspend Council speaking time would apply to the current meeting discussion or whether a new motion would be required, to which the City Attorney responded another motion is not needed to suspend Council speaking time.

Councilmember Vella provided proposed resolution language; stated the Wisconsin Public Health Association’s resolution includes citations for WHEREAS, clauses; 44 municipalities have signed onto the resolution; the resolution has been structured to keep the WHEREAS, statements as well as provide citations originally included in the Wisconsin resolution; it is important to provide citations and credit the work being done; there is a thought of California leading the way in progressive issues; however, much work is being done in Wisconsin and the Midwest; the resolution includes information related to Alameda County and provides referenced statistics; the matter is a crisis locally and nationally; Council may now focus on the local jurisdiction and make a change; to allow for the community-led process to inform Council of the outcome rather than Council dictating the desired outcome, it is important to take out the underlying principals and goals under NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,” which were driving the original resolution; the language relates to promoting justice through Citywide practices and policies and allows focus on diversity, inclusion and the core services provided; looking at alternative service delivery, in relation to calls for vulnerable members of the community, will be guided by the community-led process; it is important to credit the process and work to be done; focus on anti-racism principals should be given to all aspects of the City; partnerships and alliances need to be built with other organizations; the language provided is based on original principals and attempts to

create a work plan with input from the community, which will lead to needed outcomes, rather than dictating outcomes from the beginning.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft expressed support for the revised resolution; stated it is important to include source material; the topics are vital and crucial; the matter must be respectful to the community-led process agreed upon by Council; the over-arching framework and recommendations, which come from community-led workgroups will inform Council's work.

Vice Mayor Knox White stated the City Manager has started the community-led committee on enforcement and public safety, but not on racism in general; noted that he is struggling to understand how the proposed resolution directs the City to take action outside of the area.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft responded the five subject matter areas to be looked at by the subcommittee are the areas previously presented by Councilmember Vella and Vice Mayor Knox White in June; stated many areas address policing and services; the areas also include systematic and community racism and anti-racism.

In response to Vice Mayor Knox White's inquiry, Councilmember Vella stated the matter is not precluded under the direction; she is asking for a community-led process; assessing policing will be one aspect; part of the directive is for Council to look at the issue with regard to all aspects of the City and calls for Council to look at racial equity and injustice issues as well as principals of anti-discrimination relative to Council, Boards and Commissions, and policies and practices; the process welcomes community input; there will be a specific process relative to policing; should Council desire to outline the process, a Council Referral may be submitted or the matter could return to Council for review at a future date.

Vice Mayor Knox White stated the process is unclear; he would like clarification of the intention.

Councilmember Vella inquired whether there is specific language proposed which can be included.

Vice Mayor Knox White responded in the negative; stated it is important for the language to commit Council to actions; expressed support for the idea of a racial justice impact statement; stated current reports include a climate impact analysis section; a racial justice impact statement should be included as well to help visualize the commitment on all future policies.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft stated that she and Councilmember Vella have attempted to create the framework; all aspects are important; the next step in the process is to have community groups addressing and examining the various subject matters; Council will begin work after the August break.

Councilmember Vella proposed adding a statement to Item 2 which reads: "Council commits to developing a comprehensive action plan on racial equity and justice;" stated the addition will allow Council to have a community input process and staff feedback; the process must start with Council directing the development of a comprehensive action plan specific to racial equity and justice; inquired whether the addition is acceptable to Vice Mayor Knox White.

Vice Mayor Knox White stated that he would like to see a date specific provided.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft stated that she is not certain a date specific belongs; noted there might be another way to incorporate specific directives; questioned whether the proposal may be accompanied by giving staff direction.

Councilmember Oddie stated there is always room for improvement; noted other organizations have committed to Black Lives Matter; stated that he understands the concern about waiting; expressed support for adding actions to be taken by Council following the community-led workshop under Item 2; stated Council has decided to delegate the analysis and the recommendation out to community-led workgroups; however, there is no commitment from the Council; there are high-level value statements and broad concepts; questioned whether Item 4 will come from Council or staff and whether Item 5 will determine the policies; stated that he would like to hear from the voices within communities of Color; expressed support for an understanding of what Council will be producing once the committee process is over and for an expedited timeline with solid results.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft expressed support for adding another Item between Items 5 and 6, incorporating proposed language.

Councilmember Oddie expressed support for adding: "The City commits to the timely review of the recommendations of the community-led workgroups;" questioned whether Council should commit to implementation without knowledge of the proposed policies or whether Council should wait until policies are provided; expressed concern about committing to unknown policies.

Councilmember Vella proposed adding: "The City Council hears the urgent cry for change and is dedicated to developing a comprehensive action plan on racial equity and justice that requires a comprehensive approach of reflection, engagement and action beginning with our community-led subcommittees;" expressed support for the first steps including community input starting in late summer to early fall 2020; stated that she would like to recognize the subcommittee dealing with racial equity and justice specific to policing reform; the proposed language may not cover all of what is desired to be accomplished, but is a starting point for a comprehensive Citywide action plan that can be built upon.

Vice Mayor Knox White stated Council cannot provide direction to expand the committees; noted that he does not want to wait until the committees are done before

Council begins work on other issues; stated there is no language committing Council to action; expressed support for taking quick and immediate action regarding the public health crisis; stated coming back in September or early October with a plan is important; expressed concern about the matter being bumped over time; stated staff may propose a different timeframe; however, knowledge of specific work beginning in the near future will be needed in order for him to support the resolution.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft expressed support for Council input; proposed language: "The City Council acknowledges and is dedicated to the swift review or incorporation of Council consideration...;" stated the concept is Council will receive input from various subcommittees and will then meet to consider incorporating the input into action; Council may add September or October 2020 to provide a timeline; noted Council should give space and respect the work of the committees in order to incorporate provisions into decisions; stated Council will have the final say on the matter; it is respectful to ask and not assume what Black, Indigenous, and People Of Color (BIPOC) provide as input.

Councilmember Oddie proposed: "... pledges to develop and implement a strategic work plan to address the recommendations of the community-led workgroups;" stated that he is open to a timeline being placed on the workgroup; noted the timeline may be placed on how soon Council can respond to the workgroup recommendations.

Vice Mayor Knox White noted the focus is primarily being placed on the enforcement aspect; inquired whether anything additional will be addressed; inquired which workgroup is being referenced.

Councilmember Oddie responded there is a non-police workgroup, which relates to systemic racism; stated much of the meat will come from the workgroup discussions.

Vice Mayor Knox White stated the topic is subcommittee enforcement work and is broader than what is currently in place; expressed support for providing clear direction.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft stated there are a number of areas that are more appropriate for Council to discuss, such as land use policies; expressed support for the subcommittees to bring subject matter expertise.

Councilmember Vella stated developing a comprehensive strategic plan can start with the committees; noted the City Manager has explained the subcommittees will remain relative to public safety; expressed concern about listing items which infer only specific things are to be discussed; stated that she would like a plan developed around enhancing diversity, equity and inclusion efforts in Citywide practices and procedures, which includes budgeting, land use, recruitment, promotions, training and any other programs, policies or ordinances passed; Council could list items and direct: "including but not limited to;" expressed support for the strategic plan being Citywide, looking at all aspects and not being limited to the subcommittee; stated Council has to start somewhere; community work can help inform; some of the work has already begun.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft stated that she does not think it is possible or reasonable to expect subcommittees to solely look at policing without looking at racism in the community and institutions; expressed concern about Council tying the hands of the subcommittee by not allowing a discussion on racism; stated racism is a real part of discussions; there is a lot for Council to look at and the discussion has begun; there is a good framework; expressed support for the language proposed by Councilmember Oddie.

Councilmember Daysog stated that he is glad to see the 42% reduction in the Police budget is not included; there is room for Council to change the culture of the Police force; noted reductions in the Police budget would be similar to putting the cart before the horse; stated budget decisions should be made when a plan is created; it is important for the City to have a discussion about racism and its presence in history to allow a better future for all; the resolution is a good step forward for the City.

Councilmember Oddie stated there is concern about things Council can work on in parallel, which will not interfere with the workgroups; questioned whether Council is able to commit to working on items; outlined a City of Asheville incident; expressed support for Council working on items, while not interfering with workgroups.

Councilmember Vella expressed concern about leading with outcomes; stated Council may discuss strategic plan language; proposed: "primary areas of focus will include: reviewing current operations and data, striving to enhance diversity and equity and including efforts in Citywide practices and procedures, including, but not limited to, budgeting, land use, employee recruitment, training, and other programs and practices;" expressed support for adding language to have staff return in the beginning of fall 2020 and continuing to develop a comprehensive strategic plan.

Vice Mayor Knox White stated that he would like to be clear that the subcommittee will work on one aspect of many aspects; expressed support for the plan to come back to Council before late October; stated declaring a public health emergency suggests action and needing three to six months to start the plan for action is antithetical to declaring a crisis; stated this is a huge operation and staff may need to identify funding as part of the budget revisions; the matter will involve resources outside of City staff.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft noted Council agreed to revisit the budget in October; stated October 20th is a possible date to include the matter.

Councilmember Vella inquired whether Council is looking for staff direction and an outline of how to develop the comprehensive plan, to which Vice Mayor Knox White responded in the affirmative.

Vice Mayor Knox White stated two months is a workable timeframe to allow Council to be ready for the budget discussion in October.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft expressed support for the proposed language; stated that she would like to complete the resolution by adding the language provided by Councilmember Oddie, as well as provide direction to staff as articulated by Councilmember Vella and Vice Mayor Knox White.

Councilmember Daysog inquired the language provided by Councilmember Oddie.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft inquired the location of the language to be inserted.

Councilmember Oddie responded there is a commitment on Council's part to respond to the task force: "Council pledges to develop, adopt and implement a comprehensive strategic work plan to address the recommendations of the community-led workgroups in October 2020."

Councilmember Daysog stated that he does not mind making the pledge; expressed support for substantive community input from a broad range of sources as the process moves along.

Councilmember Vella expressed support for adding "informed by" to the language; stated the plan being requested goes beyond public safety.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft inquired the placement of "informed by" in the language.

Councilmember Vella stated there are two items to accomplish; noted a recommendation for public safety may not be implemented Citywide; stated there is not much time to implement a Citywide strategy; Council should strive to be informed by the public and also conduct a broader plan.

Councilmember Oddie expressed support for replacing "to address the recommendations of" with "informed by;" noted the location for the proposed language should be Item 2 if the sentiment relates only to public safety; a broader sentiment would be better placed at the end of the resolution; the input received may be more than solely community input.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft proposed the addition of "informed in part by;" stated the addition would leave the resolution open to any additional information provided; the proposed language is comprehensive and belongs toward the end of the resolution; expressed support for the proposed language becoming Item 6.

Vice Mayor Knox White stated that he does not understand why Council would provide direction within the resolution or pull out concrete action; the resolution does not add anything other than work which has already been committed to; expressed support for not pulling out direction.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft inquired whether Vice Mayor Knox White would propose additional language.

Vice Mayor Knox White responded in the affirmative; proposed adding: “commits to returning by the end of September with a work plan for discussion on how to develop a comprehensive strategic work plan informed by the community-led workgroup.”

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft stated Council should not be providing staff direction in a declaration.

Councilmember Vella stated Council is looking for action by the fall; the goal is to move along with a plan; Council may direct staff to return; however, it does not pledge action.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft proposed: “City Council pledges to return in October 2020 to begin to develop, adopt and implement a strategic plan informed in part by recommendations of the community-led workgroups and information provided by staff;” noted everything may not be completed by that time; however, the process will be started.

Vice Mayor Knox White stated the proposed language does not meet his threshold; expressed support for a plan coming back before September and incorporated into the budget discussion; noted the budget window will be missed should discussions begin in October.

Councilmember Oddie inquired the language to be added.

Vice Mayor Knox White responded Council must return to finalize a plan by the end of September in time for budget discussions in October.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft expressed concern about the timing of hearing from the community.

Councilmember Vella inquired which October meeting the budget discussion falls on; questioned whether the first meeting in October could have a placeholder to hear an action plan outline.

Vice Mayor Knox White responded a discussion at the first meeting in October only allows for two days to include budget items related to the discussion; the discussion may not be easy or clear, may require questions, clarifications or changes and may not be timely for the budget item.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft noted the City Manager will likely be hearing from subcommittees.

Councilmember Vella stated budget allocations are often made outside the budget process; the upcoming budget is an update process due to COVID-19 among other items; expressed support for hearing from the City Manager about how to incorporate the matter and any necessary budget allocations and for possibly hiring a consultant in order to fully understand the overall intention; stated Council shares the intent on getting a plan together with a report; however, a process is needed.

The City Manager stated the October budget was first shown as a first quarter update and review due to COVID; there has not been as high a revenue loss as originally anticipated; however, COVID is still present; discussed budget revisions; stated Council may also provide an off-budget revision at a later date; the October budget meeting is to address resources, policing and revisions, if needed.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft inquired the timing of an off-budget request.

The City Manager responded a budget amendment could arise at any time; noted the October budget presentation will look at possible adjustments.

Councilmember Oddie proposed "Council pledges to return by October 2020 prior to the next quarterly budget discussion"

Vice Mayor Knox White stated that he would like to see Council move faster.

Councilmember Oddie noted there are only two months until October; stated the matter should be done right and quickly; expressed concern about there not being enough time; stated that he is unsure the expectation is reasonable.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft stated Council is working with all deliberate speed on the matter.

Councilmember Vella stated that she would like to move with deliberate speed in a way which will allow the matter to be completed correctly; expressed support for providing a date when staff may return with recommendations for a process to create the plan; off-budget items have been made previously and the matter could require an off-budget process; the matter is a priority; Council has the opportunity to do this right; expressed concern about receiving input from staff on a process that will not succeed due to timing; stated the matter should move forward timely; expressed support for hearing proposed language.

Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft stated there is an intention to direct staff to move forward expeditiously, yet allowing the subcommittees meeting to discuss a broad range of topics; there are short, medium and long-term goals; a better understanding of the budget will be presented in October; Council is close to a decision; noted both perspectives should be respected; requested clarification on the final proposed language.

The City Clerk read the language: "The City Council pledges to return in October 2020 prior to the next quarterly budget review to begin the process to develop, adopt and implement a comprehensive strategic plan informed in part by the community-led workgroups."

Councilmember Oddie expressed support for the proposed language.

The City Clerk noted the proposed language would be added as a new Item 6.

Councilmember Daysog moved approval of adoption of the resolution as amended.

Councilmember Oddie seconded the motion.

Under discussion, Vice Mayor Knox White stated that he will not support the motion; noted the original resolution had been created with members of the BIPOC community; the proposal committed Council not only to a declaration of emergency, but also to a number of actions which could have been discussed or changed; BIPOC speakers spoke in favor not only of the declaration, but of the committed action as well; the intent and values of the declaration are important and nice, but the immediate action has been stripped of the public health emergency claimed; expressed support for the idea and the resulting work.

On the call for the question, the motion carried by the following roll call vote: Councilmembers Daysog: Aye; Knox White: No; Oddie: Aye; Vella: Aye; and Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft: Aye. Ayes: 4. Noes: 1.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Ezzy Ashcraft adjourned the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lara Weisiger
City Clerk

The agenda for this meeting was posted in accordance with the Sunshine Ordinance.