



Olympia City Council Referral Request

Tracking Number
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Date of
Referral

6/9/2020

Requester Lisa Parshley

Referral To Study Session

Finance Committee

General Government Committee

Land Use & Environment Committee

Problem Statement

A clear concise description of the issue(s) that need(s) to be addressed.

In 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the universal declaration of human rights. In this Declaration the UN recognizes the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world. Further the universal declaration of human rights asserts that all people shall enjoy the freedom of speech and belief, and freedom from fear. While this declaration was aimed in large part to promote friendly relations between nations through common understanding and groundwork of human rights, it has served as model and platform for Human Rights Commissions around the world for countries, states, and small jurisdictions.

Today we are facing a human rights crisis caused by centuries of institutional and structural racism in our community and government. This crisis is not unique to Olympia. It is a national crisis impacting communities of color across the United States. Racism is built into our nation's very fabric including its institutions, policies, and practices. We must work to dismantle racist institutions and fight for racial, LGBTQ, religious, disability, and social justice for all our community, and create lasting change.

While federal and state governments must act to rebuild these systems, local jurisdictions must also undertake this important work. In Olympia we must continue the process of learning and action around how to dismantle all forms of oppression within our city government and its operations, including our entire justice system, civilian oversight, and public safety strategies.

To begin this work, we will need the wisdom of those who are most impacted by these systems, which could be achieved through the formation of a Human Rights Commission.

Request

What is being requested to assist in addressing the issue described in the problem statement?

This referral is requesting the development of a Human Rights Commission achieved through inviting members of the community, especially the most impacted by social and institutional injustice, and engaging local and regional experts on human rights and social justice to help scope a work plan and how best to populate the commission, with a near-term focus on civilian oversight of law enforcement and the development of policing reforms. Once scoping and feasibility work including consultation with the finance committee, a proposal will be brought back to Olympia City Council with a recommendation on a resolution and/or ordinance for a Human Rights Commission.

During this scoping, public, private, and non-profit partnerships should be explored and welcomed.

Relationship to City Business or Proposed City Business/Services

Describe how this will enhance what is already offered and/or what it will provide that is not currently available. Why is this the City's issue to address? How will this create a more adaptive and resilient organization?

A Human Rights Commission would begin the process of dismantling institutional racism and all forms of oppression within our city government while helping build a more equitable, just, and thriving community. A human rights commission would review city policy, plans, and operations to incorporate equity and justice principles throughout all city business, departments, the comprehensive plan, and master plans.

Connection to Comprehensive Plan

Choose all that apply.

Community, Safety and Health

Inclusive, respectful, civic participation; a safe & prepared community; health and wellness; adequate food and shelter; a quality education

Downtown

Vibrant, attractive urban destination; a safe and welcoming downtown for all; a mix of urban housing options; a variety of businesses; connections to our cultural & historic fabric; engaging arts & entertainment experience

Economy

Abundant local products and services; a thriving arts and entertainment industry; sustainable quality infrastructure; a stable thriving economy

Environment

Clean water & air; a daily connection to nature; preserved quality natural areas; a toxin-free community; a waste free culture

Neighborhoods

Distinctive places & gathering spaces; nearby goods & services; neighborhoods that are engaged in community decision making; safe and welcoming places to live

Options

Describe proposed options for moving the idea or issue forward for the meeting body to consider.

This referral will be sent to the General Government Committee to be added into 2020 work plan. This committee would develop the best process to scope and populate a human rights commission. It is envisioned this will require engaging the community, especially those most impacted by institutionalized racism and it is envisioned that they will seek private, public, and nonprofit partnerships to achieve these goals.

Timing

Is this issue time sensitive, are there other timing factors to consider?

Development of an advisory board focused on human rights has long been discussed by members of the Olympia City Council. Our community needs and demands action from their city government, especially dealing with police oversight, accountability, and transparency. A human rights commission could provide a solid foundation upon which these issues could be best addressed at the operations, policy, and culture of the department level. Thus, work on a human rights commission needs to start now so we can give thoughtful attention and engage people who are most impacted.

Supporting Documentation

Are there documents that support your request or that should be considered?

Equity and social justice are accepted core values of Olympia, as evidenced by previous council actions and staff commitment (e.g. resolutions honoring black history month, equal pay for equal work and the formation of the staff Committee on Diversity and Equity, <http://olympiawa.gov/community/diversity-equity.aspx>). Clear demonstration of Olympia's need for a human rights commission is the paucity of any reference to social justice, equity, diversity, and restorative justice in our comprehensive plan. Other cities and counties across Washington that have already established Human Rights Commissions, including Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane, King County, Snohomish County, Kitsap County. Thurston county has a human rights commission in code that they are not

implementing. Olympia as the capital city of the state of Washington should join these jurisdictions and form human rights commission to ensure our business as a city and as the capital city has a lens of equity and racial justice.

Councilmember Signatures

Two Councilmembers must support the request including the Chair of the Committee of referral. (Cannot be a committee quorum unless discussed at an open public meeting of the committee.)

Lisa Parshley
Sponsoring Councilmember

1. _____
Jessica Bateman
Councilmember

2. _____
Jim Cooper
Councilmember

Staff Supplement

Staff will review the request to generate administrative impacts to be considered as part of proposal (staff to initial after their review):

Budget Impacts: Click or tap here to enter text.

Legal Review (to include regulatory authority): Click or tap here to enter text.

Policy implications: Click or tap here to enter text.

Implementation Considerations: Click or tap here to enter text.

Staff Liaison: Click or tap here to enter text.