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City Council

Approval to Utilize a Participatory Leadership Process for Forming a Commission to Address Social Justice and Equity Issues

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Title

Approval to Utilize a Participatory Leadership Process for Forming a Commission to Address Social Justice and Equity Issues

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

The General Government Committee recommends the City Council approve the use of a Participatory Leadership approach to form a new advisory commission to address social justice and equity issues. The Committee also approved using a temporary name of the Social Justice & Equity Commission, until a permanent name more representative of the commission's scope and role is identified through the process.

City Manager Recommendation:

Move to use a Participatory Leadership process to form a new advisory commission to address social justice and equity issues and allocate \$60,000 of Council goal money to enter into a consulting contract with The Athena Group for additional support, and to fund process logistics, supplies, and possible contingencies.

Report

Issue:

Whether to approve a Participatory Leadership process for forming a new advisory commission to address social justice and equity issues and allocate \$60,000 of Council goal money to enter into a consulting contract with The Athena Group to provide additional support in meeting design and facilitation, community input analysis and organization.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Olivia Salazar de Breaux, Equity and Inclusion Coordinator, Human Resources

Stacey Ray, Strategic Planning and Performance Manager, Office of Performance and Innovation

Background and Analysis:

City Council forwarded to the General Government Committee (Committee) a referral to request the development of a Human Rights Commission. The referral requested the Committee develop the best process to scope and recruit members for a new advisory commission. The referral also stated community members most impacted by social and institutional racism must be integral to the development of the commission and its resulting work plan.

As highlighted in the referral, Olympia will not be the first community to create an advisory commission to address social and institutional racism. There are other established models, all with differing names, charges, roles, authority, and positions. To support developing a commission that will meet our community's unique needs, staff shared several approach options with the Committee, who then unanimously approved recommending a **Participatory Leadership** approach.

Participatory Leadership Approach

A **Participatory Leadership** approach includes hosting community conversations and focus groups to collaborate with a broad diversity of community members, particularly those who are marginalized and most impacted by social and institutional injustice, to contribute to forming the commission's make-up, mission, and responsibilities.

Outlined in Attachment B is a more detailed overview of how this approach would be carried out, including anticipated outcomes, a process timeline with phases, and key roles and responsibilities. Staff recommended and the Committee supported this approach because it emphasizes seeking out and elevating the voices of typically underrepresented and marginalized groups, as well as fostering the trust, relationships, and partnerships needed for collective investment in systemic and long-lasting change.

Staff recommended, and the Committee also expressed support, to temporarily call the new commission the **Social Justice & Equity Commission**, until which time a permanent name that more accurately reflects the commission's scope and role is identified from the process.

To support this discussion with City Council, staff will share what is being learned from conversations with community members and community groups on issues of social equity and justice and how this approach responds to those desires and concerns. The discussion will include an overview of the proposed phases and timeline and key roles and responsibilities, communications and outreach, and how the overall process will lead to identifying the commission's mission, scope, and make-up.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

There is significant interest to address systemic racism and inequality. Input that staff and City Councilmembers are receiving from citizens strongly supports a process that is highly inclusive, pays specific attention to the concerns and experiences of marginalized community members, and fosters and repairs trust amongst the City and citizens.

Options:

1. Direct staff to establish a new Advisory Commission using a **Participatory Leadership**

approach.

2. Direct staff to develop a new Advisory Commission using an approach other than Participatory Leadership.
3. Direct staff to return to the General Government Committee for additional discussion on an approach.

Financial Impact:

Staff is requesting \$60,000 in Council goal funds to support a Participatory Leadership approach. \$47,905 of the funds will be used to enter into a consulting contract with The Athena Group to provide additional support in meeting design and facilitation, and community input analysis and organization. \$12,095 of the funds will be used for logistics, supplies, and a contingency fund. If this request is approved, Council will have approximately \$105,000 left in goal funds.

Attachments:

Referral
Project Overview
Funding Request