

April 2, 2021

Dear Council,

This a message regarding the Race and Social Justice Coordinator position. As you know, during the biennial budgeting process, I realigned the position of Intergovernmental Liaison into a position which would focus on implementing equitable principles and practices into the work of our City Government. This position was funded through Council's adoption of the 2021-2022 budget. At the time of the budget adoption, Council requested that the hiring of this position be delayed for further research. So we delayed.

Members from Team REAL, representatives from the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Commission, and other Leadership staff presented to Council the City of Lynnwood's journey to move racial equity forward and create a more equitable and welcoming city. We provided our recommendation and reiterated the need for this position. And once again, Council has passed a motion to delay the hiring of this position.

Council, I have given you the grace and the opportunity to learn more about the need for this important position. I am very concerned at the barriers and obstacles that Council is (maybe inadvertently) placing on this position. No other job description has outcomes and metrics attached to it. I am concerned that the line between Council and the Executive is becoming blurred. Job performance is the role of the Executive.

I truly believe that what I have heard from individual Council Members regarding this work, is not in conflict with moving forward with hiring this position. I have heard from Council that 'the City should be doing more', 'that we need to focus on outreach', that you 'want this position to be successful', and that we 'don't want this position to be the only one working towards these outcomes. I wholeheartedly agree with all those sentiments.

I have responded to Councils' request to better articulate the outcomes of this program. The following has been formally added to our Budget Book.

Mayor's Message: Budget Book 2021-2022 [Final Adopted 2021-2022 Budget](#)

Starting on line 95

Remain steadfast in our commitment to being a safe, welcoming and equitable community for all people. Build on the knowledge of our GARE Team (Government Alliance for Racial Equity) and begin to implement policies and tools to remove barriers of systematic racism and create equitable access to city services and programs. As a commitment to this work, this Preliminary Budget includes my proposal to convert the vacant Intergovernmental Relations Coordinator position to a new Race and Social Justice Advisor role. This update is critical for the City. It is high time for the City to dedicate resources to help us address historical inequities and improve outcomes for all residents. By focusing on race and improving outcomes considering race, others in marginalized and intersectional groups will benefit.

RSJ PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Coordinate with consultant to conduct a Community Equity Survey to assist with meeting Strategic Priority #3 to be a Safe, Welcoming and Livable City, and City Resolution 2017-03 to be a Safe, Welcoming, and Equitable City.
- Increase training opportunities for city employees related to race, equity and undoing structural racism to one or more offering annually in addition to the “Role of Government” Training.
- Formalize the City’s Racial Equity Action Plan over the next 3 years.
- Participate/consult on every major project or initiative of the city to ensure a racial equity lens is applied.
- Connect weekly with community leaders from underserved and underrepresented communities to build up a network of trusted messengers.

Filling this position is not the beginning nor the end of this journey towards creating a more equitable city. For many years Lynnwood has made positive efforts to create a welcoming city, to celebrate our diversity, and to increase engagement. I have heard from community members and partners that barriers do exist. That some people do not always feel welcome, nor safe, nor that their opinions matter. And that troubles me. I have heard enough from the community and from our City Staff, and now is the time to hire an employee who will be dedicated to taking what has been accomplished already, collaborate with our community and staff members, and help move us forward – together – to work towards becoming the community that we say we are - a welcoming and safe community where all are welcome.

I fear that what has been transpiring over the past several months debating about this position, is unfortunately a very clear example of institutional racism. We are creating and perpetuating unnecessary barriers which are stopping progress and sending a very negative message to our BIPOC employees and our community members. I have heard from several people that they are tired. They are tired of not being believed that they face barriers and bias, they are tired of the finish line always moving, they are tired of words that don’t match actions.

As the Administrator and CEO of the City of Lynnwood, I am directing my staff to begin the recruitment process to fill the Race and Social Justice Coordinator position. Council, I do not need your approval per se, but I am asking for your support of this position and this important work. This work should not divide us, it is intended to make us better, to improve outcomes for everyone.

I believe that this position should be filled as soon as possible, and this position was (and still is) intended to be the lead on conducting the Community Equity Survey along with our consultants. The process of conducting the survey will naturally create connections and begin to build relationships with our BIPOC and other underserved and underrepresented communities. I want those connections to be made by the RSJ Coordinator, not just a consultant. If we are truly building relationships, we need to be sure that they are meaningful and sustainable. The outcomes of the survey will help inform the continued work of the RSJ Coordinator in addition to the tasks we have already identified.

Our new Social Worker, Pamela Smith has joined the Police Department’s Community Health and Safety Section and she has already hit the ground running. Our Human Services Commission along with our Parks & Recreation Team are working towards a vision for how Human Services should be and could be

addressed in our City. They are working on collaborations with community partners such as the Volunteers of America and Verdant Health Commission.

Team REAL continues to learn and implement tangible practices to increase equity and they are working to build capacity to bring on board additional staff to the team. Our Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Commission is now full and working towards community action including participating in the Step Up Moving Racial Equity Forward Conference. Many of our neighboring cities and governmental agencies such as Community Transit, Sound Transit, Washington State Department of Health and many more, are hiring their own Equity Staff members, understanding that this work is critically important.

I stand in solidarity with our BIPOC City Employees and Community Members and their allies, and I want Lynnwood to truly be a place where all are welcome, all are valued, and all belong.

Sincerely,

Mayor Nicola Smith