

METROPOLITAN PARK DISTRICT OF TACOMA

RESOLUTION NO. R32-20

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS OF METRO PARKS TACOMA, PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON, ACKNOWLEDGING RACISM WITHIN PUBLIC PARKS AND RECREATION AND DIRECTING THE AGENCY TO TAKE SPECIFIC ACTIONS

WHEREAS, American Public Health Association (APHA) defines racism as a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities and unfairly advantages other individuals and communities; and

WHEREAS, structures of racism built into our parks and recreation, education, employment, real estate, healthcare, and criminal justice systems have resulted in persistent negative and disproportional effects on Black/African American and other people of color; and

WHEREAS, Dorceta E. Taylor acknowledges in *The Rise of the American Conservation Movement: Power, Privilege, and Environmental Protection*, that the history of parks, recreation and outdoor engagement has a long history of white urban elite power and privilege; and

WHEREAS, a 2015 US Census Report states “around the time the 2020 Census is conducted, more than half of the nation’s children are expected to be part of a minority race or ethnic group” and the U.S. population as a whole is expected to follow a similar trend by 2044; and

WHEREAS, parks and recreation services offer opportunity to advance racial equity and undue racist policies that shape access, neighborhood development, and health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the National Recreation and Park Association, as a part of the National Academies Committee on Community-Based Solutions to Promote Health Equity, reports that health inequities are in large part a result of structural racism along with other social determinants of health; and

WHEREAS, the Community-Based Solutions committee also states that “health equity is crucial for the well-being and vibrancy of communities”; and

WHEREAS, Black/African Americans in Pierce County average 3.5 years less of life expectancy than Whites; and

WHEREAS, According to the Department of Health Community Health Survey and American Census Survey, Black/African Americans in Pierce County have significantly higher rates of death from chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer and diabetes compared to Whites; and

WHEREAS, the National Recreation and Park Association states “parks and recreation can reduce the impacts of chronic diseases, especially in such vulnerable populations as children, seniors, and those traditionally underserved”; and

WHEREAS, the deaths of Black/African American people across the United States, including the recent deaths of Manuel Ellis, Said Joquin, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and countless others both within Pierce County and across the nation have contributed to an environment that is persistently unsafe for our Black/African American communities; and

WHEREAS, unfair and race-based inequities will continue unless we undertake the uncomfortable but necessary work to reform the institutions and systems that perpetuate racism, violence, poverty, and injustice; and

WHEREAS, the Tacoma-Pierce County Board of Health approved Resolution 2020-4648 declaring racism a public health crisis and directing the Health Department to take specific actions; and

WHEREAS, Pierce County Council approved Resolution No. R2020-43 requesting thoughtful and thorough review of the policies, procedures and best practices employed through the law and justice systems of Pierce County in the discharge of their duties in the service of the citizens of Pierce County, respecting the diversity of our citizenry; and

WHEREAS, City of Tacoma City Council approved resolution No. 40622 affirming the City Council's dedication and commitment to comprehensive and sustained transformation of all of the institutions, systems, policies, practices, and contracts impacted by systemic racism, with initial priority being given to policing in the City of Tacoma; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

The Metro Parks Tacoma Board of Park Commissioners declares racism is a public parks and recreation crisis and charges the Agency to:

1. Assess internal policies and procedures through a Health in All Policies lens to address and reform structures and processes that contribute to race based decisions and actions.
2. Reshape our discourse and agenda so we all actively engage in anti-racist work, particularly anti-black and minority racism.
3. Review our budget and make recommendations for funding changes, allocations or re-allocations that fund the work of transforming systemic racism as a means of resolving disparities by changing the systems that cause them.
4. Partner with community to co-create solutions.
5. Promote policy and system level changes within the District to move beyond equity only and undo racist structures.
6. Reimagine community safety and how it could be enhanced; convene conversations on how the agency has a role and can support behavioral health; preventive emergency, crisis, and social service programs.

7. Provide the Board and related councils the information they need to create policy to eliminate racism and illuminate any barriers and concerns in order to reconstitute power and social capital so all voices are heard in policy development.
8. Hire people throughout our organization, including those sitting next to us at the executive table, who reflect our community to interpret and implement policy to bring equitable culture shifts leading to inclusivity.
9. Redevelop our community-driven, equity-based budget process that redeploys resources to areas impacted by decades of underinvestment; and identifying programs and services needed to better serve marginalized and oppressed communities.

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Board of Park Commissioners of the Metropolitan Park District of Tacoma at a meeting held on July 13, 2020.

ATTEST:

President

Secretary

Clerk