



SAN RAFAEL CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

Department: City Manager

Prepared by: Cristine Alilovich,
Assistant City Manager

City Manager Approval: _____

TOPIC: CANAL POLICY WORKING GROUP

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION TO PURSUE BOLD, COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS THAT PLACE EQUITY AT THE FOREFRONT OF OUR EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACTS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IS HAVING ON OUR MOST MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, LOCAL BUSINESSES AND PROPERTY OWNERS

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution to pursue bold, collaborative solutions that place equity at the forefront of our efforts to address the disproportionate impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on our most marginalized communities, local businesses, and property owners.

BACKGROUND:

On August 14, 2020, a coalition of organizations led by the Canal Alliance, Community Action Marin, and Legal Aid of Marin and representing community, health, education, and business sectors sent a letter (Attachment 2) to the elected officials of the City of San Rafael and the County of Marin that highlighted the disproportionate impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the low-income Latinx community in San Rafael and across the County, and urged officials to take swift action to address this crisis. The letter emphasized that, from the state to national level, studies have identified the inequitable impacts of COVID-19 and its effect on critical issues such as housing, employment, debt, economic stability and food security.

The coalition stressed that many of those who have been most disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 are essential workers and that the recovery and long-term resilience of these communities are inextricably connected to the recovery and resilience of the local business sector, the non-profit sector and the public sector. Only by also emphasizing local business recovery can we viably stabilize our region. Furthermore, building the capacity of communities across the County to recover from the pandemic is also an opportunity to build capacity for the next community emergency, whether an earthquake, fire, flooding, or a new pandemic. The coalition invited the City and County to work

FOR CITY CLERK ONLY

File No.: _____

Council Meeting: _____

Disposition: _____

collaboratively with staff and leaders to address these urgent challenges and to work swiftly towards a path to recovery that puts equity front and center.

On August 17, City and County elected officials and staff from both jurisdictions met with representatives from the coalition to discuss opportunities for rapid, collaborative action. Following this meeting, members of the coalition developed a set of specific recommendations for elected officials (Attachment 3) in the policy areas of health, housing and supporting the recovery of local businesses. In addition, they also recommended the creation of a Policy Task Force/Working Group.

On September 18, the Canal Policy Working Group (CPWG) convened for the first time. The CPWG includes Vice Mayor Kate Colin, Cristine Alilovich, and Catherine Quffa, City of San Rafael; Supervisor Dennis Rodoni, Lorenzo Cordova, and Angela Nicholson, County of Marin; Omar Carrera and Ricardo Huerta Niño, Canal Alliance; Chandra Alexander, Community Action Marin; and Steffanie Haffner, Legal Aid of Marin. Since then, the CPWG is meeting on a weekly basis to further explore the health, housing and local business policy initiatives. In addition, staff from all the agencies represented on the CPWG, are working together collaboratively toward researching, analyzing and developing specific actionable solutions for consideration by the County Board of Supervisors and the City of San Rafael City Council in the near future.

ANALYSIS:

The CPWG's initial focus is to prioritize the coalition's recommendations and to identify what could be done quickly, while working in parallel on more long-term solutions. The CPWG wants to ensure that our efforts build upon, rather than duplicate, existing initiatives. Additionally, the CWPG is also focusing on policy solutions that would provide broad and long-lasting benefits to those most disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. On October 26 the coalition sent a follow up letter (Attachment 4) that summarizes recent activities and progress to date.

The CPWG members expressed the urgency of having both the City and County leadership swiftly and formally articulate their support and commitment to these efforts. To that end, the CWPG members co-created the attached Resolution (English and Spanish versions found in Attachment 1) for consideration by both the San Rafael City Council and the Marin County Board of Supervisors.

This resolution represents the commitment to address this crisis with urgency, however, recognizes that any policy-level changes would take some time to properly develop, vet, and move through the approval process.

The Resolution recognizes that the history and contemporary manifestations of racial injustice have resulted in deeply unequal access to quality housing, employment, healthcare, education, resources, and opportunities, resulting in pockets of communities woefully susceptible to the deepest impacts of this unprecedented pandemic and economic crisis. As a result, the COVID-19 pandemic is having a disproportionate impact on our historically marginalized and under-resourced communities of color, who are least able to overcome the deep challenges. Further, it recognizes that the recovery and resilience of our most impacted communities is closely linked to the recovery and resilience of our local businesses, non-profits, and the public sector.

The Resolution affirms City Council's commitment to supporting our historically marginalized residents who have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and to working collaboratively to build longer-term solutions for recovery and resilience. It also articulates City Council's commitment to protect housing for our essential workers, preserving the ability for many community members to stay in their homes in San Rafael. An important tool to supporting this work is the allocation of Community Development Block

Grant (CDBG) CARES ACT Coronavirus funds, which is mentioned in the Resolution and is also presented in more detail in another staff report on the November 2nd City Council meeting agenda.

By adopting this Resolution, the City Council is formally demonstrating its commitment to finding bold, collaborative solutions that address the disproportionate impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on our communities, businesses and property owners. Although the immediate focus of this work is to address the emergency crisis brought on by COVID-19, it is not a stand-alone initiative, nor a long-term solution to address systemic racism. It will take continuous bold action by all sectors to truly make lasting change happen and put an end to racial injustices in this country.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no immediate financial impact to this action.

OPTIONS:

The City Council has the following options to consider on this matter:

1. Adopt a resolution in support of bold, collaborative solutions to address the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. Adopt resolution with modifications.
3. Direct staff to return with more information.
4. Take no action.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Adopt a resolution to pursue bold, collaborative solutions that place equity at the forefront of our efforts to address the disproportionate impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on our most marginalized communities, local businesses, and property owners.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution (English & Spanish versions)
2. Latinos and Pandemic Letter, August 14, 2020
3. Marin County Pandemic & Latinos Policy Task Force Letter, September 4, 2020
4. Update on Marin County Pandemic & Latinos Policy Task Force, October 26, 2020

RESOLUTION NO.

RESOLUTION OF THE SAN RAFAEL CITY COUNCIL TO PURSUE BOLD, COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS THAT PLACE EQUITY AT THE FOREFRONT OF OUR EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE DISPROPORTIONATE IMPACTS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IS HAVING ON OUR MOST MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, LOCAL BUSINESSES AND PROPERTY OWNERS

WHEREAS, in Marin County and its jurisdictions, as with the nation, racial injustices and unequal access to housing, employment, healthcare, education, and resources have culminated in an unprecedented economic and public health crisis that disproportionately impacts people of color; and

WHEREAS, the City stands in solidarity with our community to acknowledge and address the structural racism that exists in our nation and in all aspects of society; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted our historically marginalized and under-resourced communities of color in Marin County, and whose contributions are critical to the success of our local and regional economies as they serve as our essential workers and clients to our local businesses; and

WHEREAS, as of October 15, 2020, the Latinx population makes up 16% of the County's total population but 67% of its COVID-19 cases; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 Disaster Relief Program, funded by the County, was designed to provide support to the low income residents in the County that have or are likely to have COVID-19; as of October 15, 2020, that program provided support to 689 residents, 89% of which were also primarily Spanish-speaking; and

WHEREAS, in April 2020, the County administered a rental debt relief program; within the first month the County received 1,500 requests for rental support, and paid \$3,059,359 to Marin residents in the greatest need; and

WHEREAS, the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19, demonstrated by the statistics above, have only reaffirmed the racial inequalities that exists in our County and have highlighted the urgent need to pursue bold, collaborative solutions that place equity at the forefront of our actions; and

WHEREAS, the data shows that the Latinx community in the San Rafael Canal neighborhood has been the epicenter of Marin's COVID-19 outbreak and the resulting economic impacts, yet the issue of equity and disparate impacts affects communities Countywide; and

WHEREAS, the initial efforts will be on addressing the economic and public health crises in the Canal neighborhood in San Rafael; this is a deliberate approach to provide a rapid response in the Census tracts where the COVID-19 outbreak has been the most severe; and

WHEREAS, the City supports the County’s efforts towards ensuring that all Marin communities that are suffering from the disparate impacts of COVID-19, especially communities of color, will benefit from these actions.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAN RAFAEL RESOLVES as follows:

The City Council affirms our commitment to:

1. Stand in solidarity with our community to acknowledge and address the structural racism that exists in our nation in all aspects of society such as health care, education, employment laws, housing, immigration, financial systems, criminal justice, prosecution and sentencing practices, and so much more. We recognize that supportive words are not enough to catalyze the healing, social change and racial equity needed to overcome decades of systemic racism. Work has been done to this end and it will continue; however, we need to do much more – and we need to do it now.
2. Take bold action for social justice and work together across our community to do our part in what is needed to both heal and to co-create solutions to address systemic racial injustice that pervade our society and community; elected officials have the perfect opportunity through their leadership positions to address the racial disparity in the County;¹ and
3. Support our historically marginalized residents in Marin County, who have been most impacted by systemic racism, disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and are also facing an urgent economic crisis of historic proportions; and
4. Protect housing for our essential workers and consider implementing additional programs that would support renters and other policies that will preserve the ability for many community members to stay living in their homes; and
5. Continue working with our community partners in a highly collaborative and expeditious manner to build longer-term solutions for recovery and resilience within our most disproportionately impacted communities and to develop and implement policies that address this crisis over the coming few months; and
6. Develop a methodology that allocates the majority of the new/supplemental Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding, recently received from the State in the amount of \$1.7M, toward providing additional rental assistance and business support to our most historically marginalized communities and local businesses, which have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹ 2017, *Race Counts: Advancing Opportunities for All Californians*, www.racecounts.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Race-Counts-Launch-Report-digital.pdf.