Manager's Report

July 28, 2020

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE



Presentation Overview

- Over the next several months, as part of my Manager's report, I will update Council and the community on our 30/60/90 Day Work Plan.

- The 30/60/90 Day Work Plan was developed in response to numerous requests from the Black Asheville Demands coalition to address specific racial and economic justice issues.

- The Work Plan allows staff to prioritize and track the work.

- Tonight will specifically focus the update on the request to Defund the Police by 50% or to "*Divest resources from the APDs' budget and Invest in long-term safety strategies.*"

Defund/Divest/Invest Strategy

- Hear concerns that current service delivery models especially related to law enforcement and policing do more harm than good especially in Black, Indigenous and Latinx communities.

- Current approaches of “over policing” seem to criminalize and victimize Black, Indigenous and Latinx communities.

- Goal is to make communities feel safer not with additional law enforcement but with holistic health, economic, educational and other human services that nourish and stabilize people in their communities.

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Defund/Divest/Invest Strategy

- City staff supports the Divest and Invest Strategy
- Racism is a systemic problem, bigger than police and the City cannot solve alone and within 90 days.
- The response needs to be strategic, attainable and collaborative.

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Defund/Divest/Invest Strategy

- Next steps will be to determine how we Reimagine Public Safety in Asheville.

- Work with the community to define roles and responsibilities of Police and other City Departments and community partners.

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Reimagining Public Safety in Asheville

Goal: *Determine how the City of Asheville structures department responsibilities and community partnerships in a way that promotes racial equity and economic inclusion.*

Public Engagement Process

- Step 1 (complete): Get feedback on an approach from key focus groups
  - Three meetings-
    - Facilitators
    - Internal staff
    - Community representatives

Focus Group Participants

- Thank each of the people that participated in the focus groups
- Input was invaluable and revealing

Dee Williams
Jackie Latek
Carmen Ramos
Kennedy
Rob Thomas
Amy Cantrell
Darlene Azarmi
Libby Kyles
Tara Irby
Brandon Mays

Dionne Greenlee
Cheri Torres
Michelle Smith
Tim Splain
Cortina Caldwell
Daniel Suber
Michael Hayes

Sgt. Joshua Veridal
Jessica Johnston
Tameka Crudup
Jakob Klodt
Sgt. Diana Loveland
Dana Frankel
Rosanna Mulcahy
Treva Williams
Brandon Buckner
Matthew Pride

Focus Group Responses

What did we learn?

- Community trust in City government has been eroded and may be difficult to regain
- City is good at stretching processes out indefinitely with little or no tangible results
- Meet people where they are which may mean people will want to share their encounters with APD before they are ready to talk about how to improve relations
- Need to have authentic conversations about types of change that's really possible; figure out what's broken and commit to making changes
- Use paid community facilitators for these discussions

Focus Group Responses

What did we learn?

- Make a special effort to hear from most impacted populations, Blacks, Indigenous, and Latinx
- Communicate information about services APD and City currently provide
- Do more than just divest in APD's budget, invest in a way that reflects community priorities
- Balance need for people to have input and using what they have already told us (information that has already been shared with us)
- Convene smaller groups so people have optimum opportunities for genuine input
- Use lots of mediums for input, questionnaires, blogs, face to face meetings, etc.

Public Engagement Process

- Step 2: Host Community Meetings
  - Community facilitators to lead the process
  - Meetings from mid-August to mid-September to:
    - Make sure we understand the problem we are trying to solve
    - Provide context so we can make smart decisions regarding divesting and investing public safety resources
    - Begin to make strategic organizational and budgetary changes

Public Engagement Process

Themes for Community Discussions:

1. Share services provided now by the City, especially APD.

   Community Feedback:
2. Do you feel safe in your community, if so why and if not why not?
3. What do you think is needed to help you feel safer in your community?
4. Of these things, which do you think should be done by APD?
5. What things should be done by other agencies or organizations?
6. What other types of investments are needed in your community to improve your and others quality of life?

Public Engagement Process

- Step 3: Report, Recommendations and Implementation

  - Regular Updates on Community Engagement
  - Develop Preliminary Recommendations for Divesting/Investing (Aug. - Sept. 22)
  - Implementation of Divesting/Investing Strategies (Sept. 22 and on-going)

Questions

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