



COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
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TO: Board of Commissioners

FROM: Felicia Brabec
Chair of Ways & Means Committee

DATE: August 8, 2018

SUBJECT: Equity Ordinance

BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:

It is requested that the Board approve a County Equity Ordinance including an Equity Office.

BACKGROUND:

Washtenaw County is one of the wealthiest counties in Michigan, with high incomes and high rankings as one of the most economically vibrant, educated, healthy, and best places to live in the state. However, there are some stark disparities that lead to high inequity within the County. For example, Washtenaw County ranked 80 out of 83 Michigan counties for income inequality in the 2015 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings. In addition, life expectancy for white residents of Washtenaw County is thirteen years higher than for black residents -- 75 years for whites; 62 years for black residents.

For the past 15 years Washtenaw County Public Health has been tracking health disparities in the County, and has found that such disparities are increasing in many areas, based on geography and the racial background of residents surveyed.

In 2015, the County's Office of Community and Economic Development ("OCED") released a "Housing Affordability and Economic Equity Analysis" that identified racial and economic segregation in Washtenaw County as a key driver of inequities. The Analysis and its recommendations were subsequently adopted by the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners along with the City of Ann Arbor, the City of Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti Township, Pittsfield Township and the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority ("DDA").

To further the conversation on this important issue, the County held an Equity Summit in late 2015 in conjunction with the publication of the Washtenaw County Opportunity Index that conveys the distribution of opportunity across the County through maps and data. The Index utilizes recent data in five categories to break the county into quintiles showing where the average person has more overall opportunity.

Following the Equity Summit, it was determined that the County should pursue an Equity Ordinance as the best-practice, first step for advancing government-wide equity work. Since this time, Phase II of the efforts began in 2018 with the title of “One Community: Advancing Racial Equity in Washtenaw County”. The County, in partnership with the City of Ann Arbor, contracted with the Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE) to deliver 7 trainings in 2018 for around 80 county staff and leadership. Additionally, a temporary Racial Equity Analyst was hired to drive the efforts and to design a racial equity office proposal. As the county is in the ‘normalize’ stage, various working groups such as train-the-trainer and workforce development have begun alongside the suggested internal team structure with the Action Team leading the way.

DISCUSSION:

Work to lessen and ultimately dismantle inequity needs to occur on three distinct levels - individual, institutional and structural. The Equity Ordinance lays out the policy for how to address racial inequity at all levels, with the acknowledgement that in order to do this, an internal Office needs to be supported. The office will need staff, resources, and the authority to hold ourselves accountable as an institution, internally and externally.

DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGY

Based on the 2016 original racial equity ordinance draft, an updated draft was written based in a variety of other jurisdiction’s models of related resolutions and ordinances. Simultaneously during this rewriting process, a recommended Equity Office design was developed through conversation with 20 other offices/communities engaged in advancing racial equity across the country.

The updated ordinance was presented at a Board of Commissioners working session on June 7th, 2018 which included internal feedback from the Action Team (primarily internal department heads).

The draft was then shared with the Community through intentional feedback sessions where residents could voice concerns, questions and affirmations. These sessions were held in Ypsilanti, Chelsea and Ann Arbor with approximately 100 residents in attendance. Additionally, residents emailed feedback or came to other public meetings to express their opinions.

These community residents represented many different community groups, professions, and backgrounds. These, and other interested groups, will be valuable assets as the County moves forward in passing and implementing an Equity Ordinance.

Responsibility for the described efforts will rest on the Board of Commissioners, County Administrator, Department heads, all staff, and indirectly the community at large.

If the attached Resolution is approved, the County Administrator will be charged with directing the Action Team and other related staff to continue and/or initiate the implementation of the directives within the Equity Ordinance.

IMPACT ON HUMAN RESOURCES:

Upon approval of the ordinance, 2.0 FTE will be requested as part of the 2019-2022 Budget Development process. If approved by the Board of Commissioners, these positions will be created effective January 2019.

IMPACT ON THE BUDGET:

Upon approval of the ordinance, \$250K per year for the next 4 years will be requested as part of the 2019-2022 Budget Development process. If approved by the Board of Commissioners, this allocation will be available beginning January 2019.

IMPACT ON OTHER COUNTY DEPARTMENTS OR OUTSIDE AGENCIES:

Approval of the Ordinance will require the County, Administrator, County-wide elected officials, Department Heads and various external stakeholders to invest time and effort into endorsing an Equity Office and implementing the policies that are described in the Ordinance itself.

CONFORMITY TO COUNTY POLICIES:

This action is in conformance with County Policies and Procedures.

ATTACHMENTS/APPENDICES:

- Ordinance
- Resolution

A RESOLUTION DIRECTING THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR TO IMPLEMENT
THE POLICIES AND DIRECTIVES AS DESCRIBED IN THE WASHTENAW
COUNTY EQUITY ORDINANCE

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

SEPTEMBER 5, 2019

WHEREAS, Washtenaw County is one of the wealthiest in Michigan, with high incomes and high rankings as one of the most economically vibrant, educated, healthy, and best places to live in the state; and,

WHEREAS, there are also some stark disparities for Washtenaw County residents; and

WHEREAS, Washtenaw County is ranked 80 out of 83 Michigan counties for income inequality in the 2015 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings; and

WHEREAS, life expectancy for white residents of Washtenaw County is thirteen years higher than for black residents; and

WHEREAS, without intentional intervention, inequitable outcomes linked to race, socio-economic status and other identities will persist; and

WHEREAS, equity is the fair and just distribution of the resources and opportunities needed to achieve equitable outcomes for everyone in a community; and

WHEREAS, equity is reached through the systemic implementation of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that create and reinforce equitable outcomes for all people; and

WHEREAS, work to dismantle racial, economic and health inequity needs to occur on three distinct levels - individual, institutional and structural; and

WHEREAS, staff has also consulted with the Government Alliance on Racial Equity (GARE) for best practices from other local governments who have started changing their policies and practices to support equity in hiring and over-all decision-making; and

WHEREAS, while the County has shown strong efforts in moving forward with the One Community: Advancing Racial Equity in Washtenaw County initiative, there is clear need for an Ordinance to endorse the efforts and operationalize the commitment in all operations, services, budgets, policies and programs.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners approves an Equity Ordinance including an Equity Office.

Washtenaw County Equity Ordinance

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EQUITY ORDINANCE

An ORDINANCE in which the County declares its focus on issues of equity, particularly racial equity when considering the following (but not limited to) aspects of County government: services, policies and procedures, hiring and retention processes (i.e. recruitment, promotion), budgeting, training, and community engagement; to provide for the creation of a Racial Equity Office, who reports directly to the County Administrator; to spearhead the charge of the ordinance; to address inequities that exist within our County; to ultimately make the County an equitable place to live and work for all residents.

The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners hereby ordains.

SECTION 1- DEFINITIONS

- A. "Equity" means fair and just opportunities and outcomes for all people.
- B. "Inequity" means differences in well-being that disadvantage one group in favor of another. These differences are systematic, patterned and unfair, and can be changed. Inequities are not random; they are caused by past and current decisions, systems of power and privilege, policies and the implementation of those policies.
- C. "Race" a social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups (Kellogg Foundation Glossary)
- D. "Racial Equity" means the development of policies, practices, and strategic investments to reverse racial disparity trends, eliminate institutional racism, impact structural racism and ensure that outcome and opportunities for all people are no longer predictable by race.
- E. "Racial Equity Office" means an office whose responsibility is leading efforts throughout county government with regard to issues of equity, particularly racial equity, and fulfillment of the goal of the ordinance, utilizing racial equity frameworks and various tools (e.g., racial equity action plans) when warranted. This office will have adequate staff and resources to be able to advance equity work.

- F. “Racial Equity Action Plan” means a developed, comprehensive plan to incorporate and embed racial equity principles and strategies into operations, programs, service, policies, and community engagement.
- G. “Racial Equity Framework” means a developed, comprehensive approach and understanding of racial equity principles and strategies that not only understands but articulates the differences and impacts between individual, institutional, and structural racism as well as implicit and explicit bias.
- H. “Individual Racism” means pre-judgment, bias, or discrimination by an individual based on race, can be both explicit and implicit.
- I. “Institutional Racism” means policies, practices, and procedures that work better for some members of a community (white residents) than others (communities of color).
- J. “Structural Racism” means the history and current reality of institutional racism across institutions, both public and private, which combine to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color.

SECTION 2- PURPOSE

The purpose of this Ordinance is to declare that Washtenaw County will intentionally and purposely address issues of inequity within our institution and County. Many current inequities are sustained by historical legacies, structures, and systems that repeat patterns of exclusion. Without the intentionality stated in this Ordinance, inequitable outcomes linked to race, socio-economic status, and other identities will persist. The charge of the Ordinance is for all aspects of county government to address and implement strategies that target inequities that exist within the County organization and throughout our County, resulting in equitable outcomes for all residents. The Ordinance requires development of an evaluation process and accountability systems informed by reviewing metrics on an ongoing basis. Further, this Ordinance creates a Racial Equity Office, whose purpose is to address these inequities and to work toward a more equitable County. This Office will utilize proven tools to do this work (e.g., strategic planning, budget analysis tools, results-based accountability). It is through the declaration of purpose and the creation of a Racial Equity Office that the County strives to achieve equity for all people.

SECTION 3- INDIVIDUAL CHANGE

All County staff and officials have a responsibility in implementing this Equity Ordinance. In service of that goal, all current County employees as well as members of the Board of Commissioners and members of County boards, commissions, and committees will participate in related racial equity-focused training. Training will be ongoing for all County staff and will be suggested for all newly elected and appointed commissioners and office holders, and required for board and committee members. In addition to training, individuals will be instructed to incorporate behavioral changes to reach the goal of equity. Finally, that incorporation can happen through, but not limited to, individual contracts and work plans.

SECTION 4- INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Each department shall establish a Racial Equity Action Plan which will serve as the template for said department to reach the ultimate goal of advancing equity both within the department but also through the department's work in the community. Those Racial Equity Action Plans will include short and long term goals and will be shared annually with the Board of Commissioners and the public. Departments will engage in a review of existing policies, procedures, and budget allocations for their impact on equity, particularly racial equity. Additionally, working groups, teams, and affiliation groups will be developed in service of this work. Finally, a community engagement process that is co-created with community will be developed to bridge the equity work of County government and the residents it serves. Accountability systems and transparency processes will be incorporated into county-wide policy and programming.

SECTION 5- STRUCTURAL CHANGE

Board of Commissioner's decisions and resolutions will include a racial equity review. (This is not necessary but may be very applicable for non-binding resolutions.) Additionally, all strategic planning, goal-setting and budgeting decisions must include an equity review and analysis. The County will continue to work on, develop, and implement a county-wide engagement strategy to support recruitment, growth and development of diverse boards and committees.

SECTION 6- EFFECTIVE DATE

This Ordinance shall become effective on the 8th day of August, 2018.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, this ordinance is hereby executed this 8th day of August, 2018

ATTESTED TO:

COUNTY OF WASHTENAW

By: _____
Lawrence Kestenbaum
Washtenaw County Clerk/Register of Deeds

By: _____
Felicia Brabec, Chair of Ways & Means
Washtenaw County Board of
Commissioners