



# CITY OF CARSON

## Legislation Text

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### Report to Mayor and City Council

Tuesday, September 07, 2021

Discussion

#### **SUBJECT:**

**CONSIDER OPTIONS FOR FORMATION OF A DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE AND PROVIDE DIRECTION TO STAFF AND THE CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE (CITY COUNCIL)**

#### **I. SUMMARY**

The City of Carson is home to an exceptionally diverse community. It is more ethnically diverse than the average U.S. city, and those employed by the City are reflective of the community they serve. However, the presence of diversity does not address issues of equity and inclusion diverse communities often face. In recent years, there has been an increase in public entities exploring the formation of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion ("DEI") Committee in order to create a more inclusive environment with a level playing field for all.

A DEI Committee is a committee of members who have a significant role in developing goals and strategies related to the advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion. There is a common misconception that a DEI committee's sole purpose is to create or increase diversity. However, although diversity is part of what a DEI Committee may focus on, it is also tasked with ensuring that all levels of employees feel they can be their authentic selves and that such employees have access to resources and opportunities necessary for their success.

After learning of the successful formation of a DEI Committee by the City Attorney's Office, Councilmember Jawane Hilton requested the City Attorney's Office provide information on DEI committees at a City Council meeting so that the City Council could consider the formation of a DEI Committee in Carson. The City of Carson has a history of addressing DEI issues. In 2019, the City made an investment in staff through professional development, on-going education and training, which included providing Diversity, Inclusion and Unconscious Bias Training. During October through November 2019, 232 employees attended Diversity & Inclusion Training facilitated by the City. The formation of a DEI committee will continue those efforts on an ongoing basis.

The City Attorney's Office will be presenting information on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Committees to the City Council at tonight's meeting to discuss the City's options regarding how it may form a DEI committee and its potential composition.

## **II. RECOMMENDATION**

TAKE the following actions:

1. Receive and file this report.
2. Provide direction to staff regarding what process to follow for forming a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee.

## **III. ALTERNATIVES**

TAKE another action the City Council deems appropriate.

## **IV. BACKGROUND**

### **City of Carson Demographics**

According to the 2019 statistics provided by the United States Census Bureau, the largest ethnic groups in the City of Carson are Hispanic (37.3%), Asian (26.7%), Black or African American (23.8%), and White (Non-Hispanic) (7.0%). To best serve the needs of the City, the City's workforce should be a reflection of the composition of the City. With greater representation in a city's workforce and leadership, residents will naturally feel more included, comfortable, and confident with their local government, which will likely increase resident participation in government and community activities. Currently, the largest ethnic groups in the City's workforce are Hispanic (40%), Black or African American (30%), and Asian (17%). Although the City of Carson proudly maintains a diverse workforce, DEI committees focus on much more than diversity.

### **Purpose of a DEI Committee**

An important purpose of a DEI Committee is to ensure that the City creates an inclusive environment that promotes equity in the workplace. This leads to a culture that leverages diversity to its fullest potential so that every employee can have a sense of belonging regardless of their background.

A DEI Committee's roles and responsibilities may include the following:

- Relating diversity and inclusion to the city's mission, values, and objectives

- Gathering information and data that may reveal DEI concerns and opportunities
- Outlining key DEI goals and actionable steps to achieve them
- Helping institutionalize policies that support equity for all employees
- Evaluating the effectiveness of ongoing efforts and adapting as needed

Although often referred to together, there are clear distinctions among *diversity*, *equity*, and *inclusion*. Diversity refers to the presence of differences in individuals' race, age, ethnicity, culture, religion, class, gender identity, disability status, sexual orientation, political beliefs, socioeconomic status, and/or other demographics. Equity recognizes that each person has different circumstances and therefore, resources and opportunities are allocated in a way where everyone is provided what they need to succeed. Lastly, inclusion focuses on everyone's unique characteristics being seen and appreciated so that individuals experience the feeling of belonging and can confidently contribute to the success of the organization.

## **Benefits**

A diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment establishes a sense of connectedness among employees. When employees feel more connected at work, productivity and the quality of work increase. As a result, organizations that adopt DEI practices reap benefits in the form of business results, innovation, and decision-making. When diversity is sought and celebrated, employees' psychological safety is increased meaning employees do not fear speaking up with ideas, questions, or concerns. A commitment to DEI has shown to increase job satisfaction, retention, job performance, well-being, creativity, and the likelihood of high-quality relations within the organization.

Municipalities are the level of government closest to people and city leaders have a unique role in setting the tone of their local governments and institutions. Decisions made at all levels have profound impacts on policy, service delivery, civic engagement and community life. Elected officials can create Committee mandates and strategic priorities that are responsive to constituents. Executive Management can establish policies, practices, and procedures in human resources, procurement, and operations that reflect the workforce population. City staff at all levels of the organization can engage regarding emerging issues and opportunities. The DEI Committee may also inform the work of local organizations, community organizers, bargaining unions and academics (CSUDH) who partner, collaborate and advocate with the City to achieve greater inclusion.

## **The City Attorney's DEI Committee**

The City Attorney's Office formed its first DEI Committee early this year through the leadership of Attorneys Elena Gerli and Sunny Soltani. Prior to the formation of the DEI Committee, Attorney Gerli completed the Diversity and Inclusion Certificate Program at Cornell University in November of 2020. With its strong leadership and robust member engagement, Aleshire & Wynder's DEI Committee has enjoyed much progress and success thus far and has identified and tackled challenges and questions newly formed

DEI committees face.

Attorneys Gerli and Soltani have been selected by the League of California Cities to present at the 2021 League of California Cities Annual Conference and Expo on September 24, 2021 where they will be providing a presentation titled “Early Lessons on Setting up a DEI Committee” for all cities in California to consider the formation of DEI committees. The League of California Cities has also created a DEI task force to provide further resources in the hopes of encouragement of cities to form DEI committees.

### **What Other Cities are Doing**

Within the last few years, there has been an increase in cities creating their own DEI committees. The purposes of these DEI committees have ranged from evaluating the city’s own commitment to DEI within its organization to evaluating city-wide DEI issues.

#### City of Irvine

On January 26, 2021, the City of Irvine adopted a resolution to establish a DEI Committee. One of the committee’s goals is to end “racial and other disparities within City government, creating fairness in hiring and promotions, greater opportunities within contracting, and equitable service to all residents.” The committee is made up of five members, each appointed by a member of the City Council, and currently meets monthly. Three of the committee’s top focus areas are (1) city employment, (2) city contracting and (3) hate crimes/incidents.

#### City of El Segundo

On July 21, 2020, the City of El Segundo authorized the establishment of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to (1) enhance customer service, engagement, and communications; (2) support community safety and preparedness; (3) develop the City as a choice employer and workforce; and (4) champion economic stability and fiscal sustainability. The City received 69 applications from community members to participate on the City’s DEI Committee. A consultant was hired to review the applications and select applicants to interview. The consultant ultimately narrowed the list to 20 and the City Council then interviewed and selected nine to serve on the committee. The committee currently meets monthly.

#### City of San Luis Obispo

On July 7, 2020, the City of San Luis Obispo authorized the creation of a DEI Task Force by directing staff to provide notice and solicit applications and resumes for individuals interested in serving on the Task Force. The goal of the committee is to “integrate structural change and opportunities for growth to support the well-being and empowerment of [its] marginalized communities in San Luis Obispo and of [the] community as a whole.” The Task Force of eleven members met from September 2020 to January 2021 and then provided its recommendations to the City Council on January 12, 2021.

#### City of Livermore

On June 22, 2020, the City of Livermore formed the ad hoc Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee consisting of its vice mayor and a councilmember. The objective for the committee was to, “Enable equity and inclusion in Livermore through diverse community engagement that will result in a welcoming city, exemplified by equity of opportunity and just treatment for all.” Staff was directed to recruit up to eighteen members to be interviewed by the Subcommittee for inclusion in a “working group” / “subgroup” to be resource to the Subcommittee. The committee met from September 2020 to June 2021 and provided its final report to City Council on July 26, 2021.

#### City and County of San Francisco

On September 18, 2018, the City and County of San Francisco directed its Department of Human Resources to work with all City departments to “promote equity, diversity, inclusion, and fairness in [its] workplaces.” The Executive Directive provided by the City provided authorization to hire staff to focus on diversity recruitment and also provided DEI training requirements to be implemented within the City.

#### **City’s Decision Points for Forming a DEI Committee**

As municipalities have differed in their approach to creating a DEI Committee, the City Council has multiple decisions to make with a variety of options to consider for forming a DEI Committee:

1. The City Council must decide who is going to lead and coordinate the formation of a DEI Committee:
  - a. An outside consultant
  - b. City Attorney’s Office with the assistance of City staff
  - c. City Human Resources Department
  
2. The City Council must decide the composition of the DEI Committee:
  - a. City Council Subcommittee and staff
  - b. City Council Subcommittee and members of the community
  - c. City staff

Upon receiving direction from the City Council, staff and the City Attorney’s office will draft the appropriate implementation documents for the formation of a DEI Committee in Carson.

#### **V. FISCAL IMPACT**

There are no direct costs to this item. In addition to staff time, future fiscal impacts may include costs of consultant contracts.

## **VI. EXHIBITS**

None.

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