

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-068

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BELMONT REAFFIRMING THE CITY'S COMMITMENT TO SAFEGUARD THE CIVIL RIGHTS, SAFETY, AND DIGNITY OF ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

WHEREAS, the City of Belmont is made up of individuals, both native born and immigrants, whose collective cultures, religions, backgrounds, orientations, abilities, and viewpoints join to form a healthy community that prides itself on being a place that welcomes persons and families of all walks of life regardless of how long they have lived here or where they came from; and

WHEREAS, the past few years there has been a sense of uncertainty and fear among communities in Belmont and across our State and the Nation due to changes in national policies necessitating the creation of Belmont's Civil Rights Resolution in 2017 safeguarding the civil rights, safety and dignity of all community members; and,

WHEREAS, more recently fear and uncertainty around COVID-19 coupled with hateful political rhetoric at the national level has coincided with a sharp increase in violence, hateful acts of racism, and stigmatization of groups of people across the country, notably Chinese Americans and other Asian American groups, and incidents of hate against Chinese Americans and other Asian American groups have been increasingly documented in the Bay Area; and,

WHEREAS, today, we are witnessing another time in history, where there is an awakening to racial injustice, police brutality, and the dehumanization of African Americans in the criminal legal system. Mass protests across the nation and around the world have been sparked, as people are grappling with their sorrow, anger and despair of the murder of Mr. George Floyd while in the Minneapolis police custody on May 25, 2020;

WHEREAS, Mr. Floyd is joining a long list of Americans who have suffered similar fates; most recently, their names are Breonna Taylor, Elijah McClain, Ahmaud Arbery, Miles Hall, Philando Castile, Oscar Grant, Tamar Rice, Sandra Bland, and so many others. In the 21st Century, Black people in America continue to live in fear of losing their lives at the hands of law enforcement, members of white supremacist groups, and individuals who are knowingly or unknowingly affected by racism. The effects of racism are far more pervasive, resulting from long-standing and deeply embedded systems of racial discrimination and bias;

WHEREAS, studies have shown that racial discrimination takes a tremendous toll on the physical and mental health of Black people in the U.S. Racial discrimination is now recognized as a public health crisis. It's a chronic stressor, contributing to even higher COVID-19 mortality rates among Black people. These higher death rates are not a random coincidence; but, instead, is the result of systemic racism and a consequential lack of social, economic and political opportunities. In the pursuit of happiness, people of color experience different outcomes in terms of health, financial security, and homelessness, in addition to disparate treatment by law enforcement;

WHEREAS, we deeply appreciate the dedicated women and men of our police force, who are free of racial discrimination in their service and work tirelessly to keep our community safe.

Undoubtedly, there is a tremendous responsibility that law enforcement ensure that all individuals are treated with respect and equal under the law.

WHEREAS, We will recommit to a shared understanding of how we treat all members of our community and affirm our commitment to fighting for racial justice and changing the systems that continue to perpetuate racial disparities. Government must lead and call on every individual to assume the responsibility for actively addressing racial injustices, structural inequities, and economic disparities.

WHEREAS, stigmatization represents a serious threat to our collective emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic and furthers dangerous and false information about how COVID-19 spreads, misinforms people's perception of risk, and repeats mistakes in our own history during past emergencies when racist and xenophobic sentiment targeted vulnerable groups; and,

WHEREAS, Chinese Americans and other Asian American groups and immigrants cannot be made the scapegoats of COVID-19 and Asian Americans do not represent a greater risk of spreading COVID-19; and,

WHEREAS, the City wants to reassure its residents and visitors that Belmont is a place that celebrates diversity and inclusion; and

WHEREAS, the City will not tolerate any prejudice, racism, bigotry, hatred, bullying, or violence towards any groups within our community; and

WHEREAS, the City rejects any attempt to intimidate, threaten, or otherwise marginalize members of our community; and

WHEREAS, the City Council wishes to declare that Belmont is a safe place for everyone, including vulnerable communities regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, or country of origin; and

WHEREAS, the City assures its vulnerable communities that the City supports them, will do all it can to maintain and improve their quality of life, and will not tolerate acts of hate-based discrimination, bullying, or assault; and

WHEREAS, it is the City Council's desire to ensure that all residents, regardless of country of origin, participate in civic life and daily activities without fear of being arrested or detained based solely on immigration status; and

WHEREAS, the City of Belmont is, and has been, well served by a professional Police Department with a history of protecting and respecting the rights of all people while working diligently to keep Belmont safe; and

WHEREAS, the enforcement of civil immigration laws is not the duty of the Belmont Police Department and can run the risk of potentially undermining the trust and cooperation it has established with immigrant communities, as well as distracting from the core mission of the Belmont Police Department to keep Belmont, its residents, its businesses, and its visitors safe; and

WHEREAS, the City wishes to foster trust and cooperation between the City and its immigrant communities and encourages all people to report crime and speak to the police without fear of being arrested, detained, or reported to the Federal Government based on their immigration status; and

WHEREAS, the City values its long-standing relationship with students and all youth and wishes to encourage a sense of safety and support among all of our young people; and

WHEREAS, the City encourages all residents and visitors in Belmont to celebrate each other's differences and learn from one another.

NOW, THEREFORE, the City Council of the City of Belmont resolves as follows:

Section 1. The Belmont City Council calls upon all City Departments and employees and all who live, work, or visit in Belmont to speak out against acts of bullying, discrimination, stigmatization, racism, xenophobia, and hate violence and to stand up for all those who are targeted for by such acts.

Section 2. The Belmont City Council opposes deportations based solely on immigration status, which tear apart families and communities, and calls upon the Federal Government to promptly legislate a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

Section 3. City employees, including members of the Belmont Police Department, do not investigate, question, detect, detain, or apprehend persons solely on the basis of a possible violation of immigration law.

Section 4. The Belmont City Council will lead by example in promoting safety, security, and respect for human and constitutional rights, and welcomes opportunities to partner with the Legislature, other jurisdictions, local organizations, educational institutions, residents, and businesses that support and defend all individuals in Belmont.

Section 5. The City recognizes, values, and will proactively work to promote diversity and inclusion within Belmont.

Section 6. The City will protect the rights and privileges of everyone in Belmont, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, country of birth, immigration status, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

Section 7. The City does not tolerate discrimination, harassment, stigmatization, racism, xenophobia, or any hate-based crimes.

Section 8. The City hereby rejects prejudice and bigotry in all forms, including but not limited to anti-Semitism, genderphobia, homophobia, Islamophobia, misogyny, nativism, racism, and xenophobia.

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ADOPTED July,14, 2020, by the City of Belmont City Council by the following vote:

Ayes: McCune, Stone, Hurt, Mates, Lieberman

ATTEST:

Terri Cook
City Clerk

Warren Lieberman
Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Scott Rennie
City Attorney