



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** City Council

**FROM:** Whitney McDonald, City Manager

**SUBJECT:** Consideration of Adoption of a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Policy

**DATE:** January 11, 2022

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### **SUMMARY OF ACTION:**

Consider and adopt a Resolution (Attachment 1) approving the proposed Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Policy stating the City's commitment toward supporting, promoting, and implementing DEIJ principles and practices.

### **IMPACT ON FINANCIAL AND PERSONNEL RESOURCES:**

The financial impact on the City and personnel resources include staff time to develop and implement DEIJ efforts, outreach to diverse social and professional organizations and publications, and incorporating DEIJ initiatives into the City's economic development efforts, including support for small and diverse businesses.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Consider and adopt a Resolution approving the proposed Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Policy.

### **BACKGROUND:**

On September 22, 2020, the City Council adopted a set of Top 10 Priorities for Fiscal Year 2020-21 identifying the Council's major goals for the year. One of the identified priorities was to "develop and implement a Council-adopted goal to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion," including presentation of a proposed policy to Council and implementation of "diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in areas of hiring, retention, and community engagement." Workload and staffing constraints, and the desire to conduct research and outreach efforts surrounding the development of a policy document, delayed the presentation of the proposed policy until fiscal year 2021-22.

A working group of City staff conducted research and developed a draft Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Policy over the course of several months to prepare a policy statement of the City's intent to implement DEIJ principles and practices. Careful attention was paid to the terms and language included in the draft policy to ensure that it reflects

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the spirit and intent of the City's commitment to supporting the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. The draft policy was also shared with local representatives of RACE Matters to receive feedback and was researched by staff to help flag any problematic terms or omissions in the policy.

#### **ANALYSIS OF ISSUES:**

The City's organizational mission is to make Arroyo Grande the best place possible for all citizens who live, work, and visit here. The work that the City's officials and staff carry out every day furthers this mission, providing essential services to support a vital, flourishing, and safe community. To date, however, the City has not adopted a policy or explicit set of statements to acknowledge that part of this mission includes the pursuit of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice for the City's residents, visitors, businesses, and employees. The Council's adopted goal in Fiscal Year 2020-21 referenced above acknowledged the need to develop a policy stating the City's commitment to the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice and to implement measures to support greater inclusivity for the community.

The proposed policy expresses support for the diversity of the City's residents, visitors, representatives, and employees, and states the City's commitment to the principles of justice, equity, and inclusion. Each of these terms is defined in order to encompass and clearly delineate the intended meaning behind the City's commitments. In addition, the policy includes a statement of purpose as follows:

Members of our community face challenges and opportunities related to their race, religion, gender, ethnicity, language, age, sexual orientation and gender identity, socioeconomic background, and diverse abilities. It is important for members of our community and the City as a whole to assume the responsibility of facing the challenges and seizing the opportunities created by diversity, and to identify opportunities in policies, regulations, and guidance to address systemic inequities.

Inclusion and equity do not seek to 'treat everyone the same,' but recognize that everyone is different, that there are strengths inherent in those differences, and that people's needs are met in different ways. This can be as a resident, visitor, City Council Member, City Advisory Body Member, or employee. Diversity awareness recognizes that each individual is unique, engendering recognition, respect, and celebration of the added value that differences bring.

The policy commits the City to carrying out this stated purpose through measures that include but are not limited to the following:

- Providing informed, authentic leadership supporting diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice through eleven identified measures that include, for example:

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- Connecting diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice to the City's mission as critical principles to ensure the well-being of the City's employees and the community;
  - Acknowledging and dismantling inequities within the City's policies, systems, programs, and services, including continual review and updates to support ongoing progress;
  - Embedding language in the City's plans, policies, and goals consistent with the intent of this Policy to promote diversity, equity, inclusivity, and justice;
  - Exploring potential underlying, unquestioned assumptions that interfere with diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice;
  - Practicing and encouraging transparent and inclusive communication in all interactions, including focus on and commitment to reducing and preventing incidents of prejudice;
  - Championing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice by leading with respect, awareness, and acceptance;
- Supporting diversity and inclusion in the workplace through ten stated steps that include, for instance:
  - Pursuing cultural competency throughout the organization by creating substantive learning opportunities and formal, transparent policies;
  - Improving the City's cultural leadership pipeline by creating and supporting programs and policies fostering leadership that reflects the full diversity of American society;
  - Identifying and incorporating DEIJ efforts and components in the City's recruitment, retention, and training efforts;
  - Pooling resources and expanding offerings for underrepresented communities by connecting with other organizations committed to DEIJ efforts;
  - Being intentional in bringing awareness and consciousness of bias during the hiring, promoting, and/or evaluating process and instituting practices to increase DEIJ in all aspects of recruitment and retention;
- Promoting inclusive outreach to diverse communities through means such as:
  - Identifying traditionally underrepresented or marginalized communities within the City and developing and implementing strategies to increase effective communication and engagement;
  - Regularly conferring with representatives of diversity groups to better understand and support the community and to ensure ongoing application and review of this Policy;
  - Intentionally incorporating DEIJ initiatives into the City's economic development efforts, including support for small and diverse businesses;
  - Evaluating barriers to participation in decision-making processes by traditionally underrepresented or marginalized communities and developing mechanisms to reduce identified barriers;

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- Fostering an environment of inclusivity in internal and public-facing events, meetings, and processes through intentional application of this Policy.

These measures, as well as those included in the policy but not specifically recited above, identify some of the ways that the City intends to carry out its stated commitment to modeling and implementing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice within the community and the City organization. The proposed policy expresses the understanding that ongoing efforts are required to support diversity and inclusivity, and that continual improvements are needed as part of the commitment to DEIJ principles.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

The following alternatives are provided for the Council's consideration:

1. Adopt the Resolution approving the proposed Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Policy;
2. Direct staff to make revisions to the proposed policy and either adopt the Resolution to approve the revised policy or direct staff to return with proposed revisions consistent with Council direction;
3. Do not adopt the Resolution approving the proposed policy; or
4. Provide other direction to staff.

#### **ADVANTAGES:**

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Policy creates the opportunity for the City of Arroyo Grande, and its citizens, to make Arroyo Grande the best possible place for those who live, work, and visit here. The Policy encourages transparency and enables the City, and its citizens, to be proactive in improving systemic inequities.

#### **DISADVANTAGES:**

There are no disadvantages identified in this recommendation.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

No environmental review is required for this item.

#### **PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND COMMENTS:**

The Agenda was posted at City Hall and on the City's website in accordance with Government Code Section 54954.2.

#### **Attachments:**

1. Proposed Resolution
2. Exhibit A to the Proposed Resolution - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Policy

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