RESOLUTION NO. 40622

BY REQUEST OF MAYOR WOODARDS

A RESOLUTION affirming the City Council’s dedication and commitment to comprehensive and sustained transformation of all of the institutions, systems, policies, practices, and contracts impacted by systemic racism, with initial priority being given to policing in the City of Tacoma.

WHEREAS our nation was founded on systems of racism and slave labor, beginning in 1619 when the first slaves are known to have been brought to the British colony of Jamestown, Virginia, and

WHEREAS the abolishment of slavery did not end racism nor the dehumanization and disparate treatment of Black Americans, and instead, new systems of control and oppression were put in place, institutionalizing racism in both the nation’s systems and our cultural norms, and

WHEREAS the United States has engaged in more than 150 years of work to reform societal structures and restore civil rights and social justice, yet full equity has not been achieved, and

WHEREAS, over the course of modern history, high-profile cases across the nation and in Tacoma have repeatedly raised questions regarding the impacts of implicit bias and systemic racism in institutions across all sectors, including policing, and have led to calls for increased transparency and communications from police agencies and the government bodies that oversee them and other public services, and

WHEREAS, on February 20, 2007, at the recommendation of the City’s Human Rights Commission and pursuant to Ordinance No. 27589, the City

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Council adopted TMC 1.06.075.B.1, creating and clarifying the role of a Citizen Review Panel, which is currently known as the Citizen Police Advisory Committee ("CPAC"), and

WHEREAS CPAC is a policy-focused board whose role is to ensure transparency and accountability in the way that the City of Tacoma Police Department ("TPD") operates, and

WHEREAS CPAC’s duties and responsibilities include reviewing police policy at the request of the City Council or City Manager, and providing community outreach and education through public hearings and committee efforts, and

WHEREAS the Equity and Empowerment framework, adopted by the City Council in 2014, makes equity a consistent guiding principle across the City of Tacoma and calls out specific goals to guide the City’s operational and policy decisions, including a commitment to equity in policy making, and

WHEREAS, in January 2015, the City established an Office of Equity and Human Rights, with a mission to achieve equity in City service delivery, decision-making and community engagement by identifying and eliminating the underlying drivers within our community that perpetuate racial inequity and provide opportunity and advancement for all, and

WHEREAS, in 2015, Project PEACE was generated in response to community concerns about nationwide police-related conflicts to build trust, relationships, and understanding between community members and law enforcement officers in the Tacoma area, and
WHEREAS, through the work of Project PEACE, more than 800 community members, police officers and City staff took part in six community-wide conversations, resulting in a 2016 report which identified recommendations under 11 categories, and is work which continues today, and

WHEREAS, on March 4, 2020, Mayor Woodards launched the Compassionate Tacoma initiative, which calls on all leaders, businesses, and residents to commit to making Tacoma a more welcoming, connected, resilient, and vibrant community by listening and serving others with love, and

WHEREAS City Council Members have publicly expressed their support of this initiative, and its core values provide a foundation for how the City can engage in the work of ensuring equity and justice, and

WHEREAS, through past engagements such as the work done by Project PEACE and grassroots violence prevention efforts, community members have demonstrated their desire and ability to engage with compassion in difficult conversations in order to gain understanding and effect lasting change that increases equitable outcomes, and

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the City Manager and the Mayor of Tacoma, pursuant to Chapter 1.10 of the Tacoma Municipal Code and Chapter 38.52 of the Revised Code of Washington, proclaimed that an emergency exists caused by COVID-19 (“Proclamation”) in the City of Tacoma, and confirmed by the City Council on March 17, 2020, and

WHEREAS COVID-19 has shined a light on the deep need for more equitable systems, as “Long-standing systemic health and social inequities have
put some members of racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk of getting COVID-19 or experiencing severe illness, regardless of age;”¹ and

WHEREAS worldwide demonstrations on systemic racism and brutality in policing renewed after the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, an unarmed Black man living in Glynn County, Georgia, on February 23, 2020; of Breonna Taylor, an unarmed Black woman living in Louisville, Kentucky on March 13, 2020; and of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man in living in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on May 25, 2020, and

WHEREAS Manuel Ellis, a 33-year old Black father, brother and son, died in Tacoma Police custody on March 3, 2020, and the Tacoma News Tribune published on June 3rd that the Pierce County medical examiner’s report concluded that Mr. Ellis’s death was by homicide and that the cause was from a lack of oxygen due to physical restraint, and

WHEREAS increasing community demands for reforms have been seen at an unprecedented scale, with daily, peaceful demonstrations across the City of up to 10,000 people calling for equitable justice and other reforms that would ensure that residents of every race and in every geographic area of the City may have equal access to those conditions which create a sense of safety, and

WHEREAS, these losses of life, as well as the countless others lost to the impacts of systemic racism on public health and safety, are evidence of the limited impacts made by reform efforts, not only in Tacoma, but across the nation, and

WHEREAS disparities by race continue to be seen across the nation and in Tacoma in almost every measure of human health and wellbeing, including perceptions of safety, incarceration and arrest rates, risk of death from homicide, annual income, net worth, access to education, and key indicators of public health, such as maternal and infant mortality, heart disease, and diabetes, and

WHEREAS we, as a City, mourn every loss of life, and

WHEREAS the institutions and systems formed to protect human life, health, and wellbeing have failed to do so equitably, despite more than 150 years of work to reform societal structures and restore civil rights and social justice, and

WHEREAS the Tacoma Mayor and City Council acknowledged the failure of reform efforts to result in equitable outcomes at the June 23, 2020, Committee of the Whole meeting, described the inequitable current state as unacceptable, and thereby called for a need to transform all of the institutions, systems, policies, and practices impacted by systemic racism, with initial priority placed on policing in the City of Tacoma, and

WHEREAS the City acknowledges that the challenges of dismantling more than 400 years of systemic racism to ensure measurable improvements in the equitable health and wellbeing of all members of the community is an adaptive leadership challenge that will require a radical reimagining of institutions and an innovative and collaborative response, and

WHEREAS, at the June 23, 2020, Committee of the Whole meeting, the Mayor and City Council discussion acknowledged a need for this transformation to begin with creating a shared community understanding of what it means to feel
safe, and acknowledged that the conditions that create a sense of safety may be vastly different for various members of our community, and

WHEREAS institutions and systems of the United States, including local governments, have been operating under the influence of racism for centuries, and we, as the City of Tacoma, should not endeavor to transform our systems without first listening to the voices of those which have been marginalized, silenced, or ignored, nor without incorporating the advice of experts in the field of reform and

WHEREAS, at the June 23, 2020, Committee of the Whole meeting, the Mayor and City Council highlighted a need for this work to be community-led, driven by the best practices of reform as defined by national experts, informed by the foundational work of CPAC and Project PEACE, and that it should engage local leaders in this work, including members of the CPAC and Project PEACE Executive Board, and

WHEREAS collective efforts are required for collective change, and to effectively address the root causes of racial inequity named by the Mayor and City Council members at the June 23, 2020, Committee of the Whole meeting, including education, poverty, housing, mental health, economic opportunity and more, a need was expressed to engage and collaborate with all organizations across all sectors in the work of transformation, and

WHEREAS community members serving at all levels in business, faith organizations, education, environment, public health, utilities, libraries, housing, social services, government, police services, and more have acknowledged the
inequities perpetuated by racial injustice and expressed their commitment to transformative change, and

WHEREAS leaders across many of these sectors have specifically committed to reimagining community safety, looking at innovative ways that safety could be enhanced, convening conversations on how each agency has a role and can support behavioral health, establishing social service programs that are both preventative and serve acute needs, and creating opportunities to rethink safety in schools, libraries, parks, and other public spaces, and

WHEREAS to successfully change systems, we must engage with a deep understanding of the needs they serve and their policies, practices, contracts, and administration, and

WHEREAS the TPD performs many necessary public safety services within our community that add to quality of life in Tacoma, and they have had an active role in community conversations and work related to justice and reform, and

WHEREAS effectively transforming our systems of policing will require a process that engages with personnel at every level of the TPD to assess our current state, ensures that staffing models provide the ability for officers to both protect and serve through authentic and community-oriented policing, and looks for ways that we can innovate and assist police officers on the front line by identifying alternate models for engaging with emergency calls for service related to societal issues outside of police officers’ core training, such as homelessness and mental health crises, and
WHEREAS transformation cannot be done effectively through policy alone, but also requires hiring, training, and accountability systems that align to ensure just outcomes, and

WHEREAS an unprecedented act of transformation is an adaptive leadership challenge, where learning is required in each stage of defining the problem, seeking a solution, and working to implement the solutions generated,\(^2\) and

WHEREAS this will require all involved to learn, change, and grow throughout the process, and potentially require those involved or impacted to, “give up things they hold dear: daily habits, loyalties, ways of thinking,”\(^3\) and

WHEREAS creating and implementing in an innovative model of collaboration and community engagement that is effective, authentic, and transparent will require substantive resources and time, the scale of which are currently undetermined, and

WHEREAS the City acknowledges that it is undertaking this historic work of sustained and comprehensive transformation concurrently with the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19 on public and economic health, and

WHEREAS, while acknowledging these challenges, at the June 23, 2020, Committee of the Whole meeting, the Mayor and City Council expressed an aspiration to create an effective model of transformation, tailored to the specific needs of the Tacoma community, that could set a standard for the nation, and

\(^2\) Heifetz, Ronald A. Leadership without Easy Answers, 1994, p. 76.
\(^3\) https://hbr.org/2002/06/a-survival-guide-for-leaders
WHEREAS state and federal government elected leaders and the agencies they oversee are responsible for enacting legislation, allocating funding, and establishing administrative procedures that can have either disparate or anti-racist impacts, and

WHEREAS Washington State and the United States government are currently taking action on funding, legislation, policies, and legislative procedures that address justice and accountability in policing, and these actions will certainly impact residents of the City of Tacoma, and

WHEREAS the Mayor and City Council hereby affirm their dedication and commit to comprehensive and sustained transformation of all of the institutions, systems, policies, practices, and contracts impacted by systemic racism, with initial priority being given to policing in the City of Tacoma, and

WHEREAS the Mayor and City Council commit to a comprehensive transformation process that will establish new practices based on community and expert opinion, as well as past reform efforts, centering the voices of those most impacted by systemic racism; Now, Therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:

Section 1. That the City Manager is hereby directed to keep anti-racism as a top priority in the process of budget development and prioritize anti-racism in the planning of an economic recovery strategy following COVID-19.

Section 2. That the City Manager is hereby directed to prioritize anti-racism in the evaluation of new policies and programs, as well as the sustained and
comprehensive transformation of existing services, with initial priority being given
to policing.

Section 3. That the City Manager is hereby directed to assess the current
state of systems in place at the Tacoma Police Department in consultation with
police reform experts, and give specific attention to how current policies and
existing studies, agency composition, hiring, promotions, staffing levels, training,
and accountability systems align to create just outcomes and use this assessment
as a foundation for the work of comprehensive transformation.

Section 4. That the City Manager is hereby directed to actively seek and
implement interim administrative changes and process improvements that can
legally be taken immediately to improve transparency and accountability in
policing.

Section 5. That the City Manager is hereby directed to work with the
Mayor and City Council to build a legislative platform at the local, state, and
federal levels that works to transform institutions impacted by systemic racism
for the greater equity and wellbeing of all residents of Tacoma, Washington
State, and the United States.

Adopted ____________________

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Mayor

Attest:

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City Clerk

Approved as to form:

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City Attorney