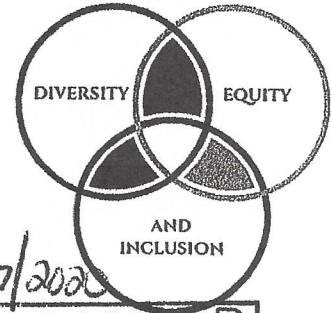


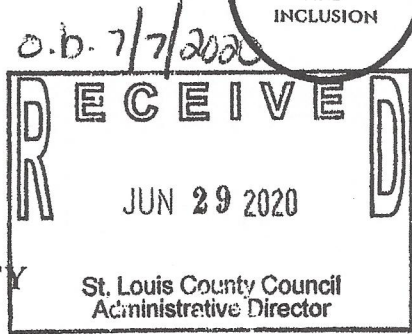
# MEMO

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OFFICE OF



DATE JUNE 29, 2020  
TO COUNTY EXECUTIVE SAM PAGE  
ST. LOUIS COUNTY COUNCIL  
FROM HAZEL ERBY, DIRECTOR  
SUBJECT AN EQUITABLE ST. LOUIS COUNTY



THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION HAS RECEIVED SEVERAL REPORTS OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS THAT HIGHLIGHT A TROUBLING PATTERN OF SYSTEMIC DISCRIMINATION AND INTOLERANCE:

- THE RESIGNATION OF JOANNE BOULTON FROM THE FIRE STANDARDS COMMISSION - CITING RACISM,
- THE TERMINATION OF A BLACK EMPLOYEE OF 19 YEARS FROM THE COUNTY ASSESSOR'S OFFICE DURING THE PANDEMIC,
- AND THE PAY INEQUITY FOR MINORITIES AND WOMEN THROUGHOUT COUNTY GOVERNMENT.

IN AN EFFORT TO CORRECT THESE SERIOUS MATTERS, WE ARE REQUESTING FUNDING FOR AN EQUITY AUDIT TO BE CONDUCTED TO INTERNALLY EXAMINE HOW EACH DEPARTMENT CAN IMPROVE THE RACIAL DISPARITIES THAT CONTINUE TO EXIST. THE TEMPLATE THAT WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TOMORROW WILL SERVE AS A GUIDE ON HOW THIS PROCESS WILL WORK AND OUTLINE THE NECESSARY STEPS EACH DIRECTOR WILL NEED TO TAKE WITH THEIR STAFF TO ENSURE AN EQUITABLE RETURN-TO-WORK POLICY FOR ST. LOUIS COUNTY.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS WITH REGARD TO THE RACIAL DISCOURSE IN OUR COMMUNITY HAVE ILLUSTRATED THE NEED FOR US TO RE-EXAMINE HOW WE ARE ADDRESSING THESE SAME ISSUES WITHIN OUR OWN DEPARTMENTS. IT IS BEYOND EVIDENT THAT SYSTEMIC RACISM DOES IN FACT PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN THE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICES TO OUR MOST VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES. AS WE MOVE FORWARD IN DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN THAT ADDRESSES THESE DEFICIENCIES, WE WILL UNDERGO AN EQUITY AUDIT THAT WILL ALLOW US TO PINPOINT BLIND SPOTS AND TARGET SPECIFIC AREAS OF GREATEST CONCERN.

CURRENT AND FORMER EMPLOYEES OF THE COUNTY HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE CURRENT STATE OF MULTIPLE COUNTY DEPARTMENTS WHEN IT COMES TO THE INSTITUTIONAL DISCRIMINATION THEY HAVE WITNESSED. TO IGNORE THESE PLEAS WOULD BE TANTAMOUNT TO NEGLIGENCE AND WOULD BE GROSSLY IRRESPONSIBLE IN OUR DUTIES AS LEADERS. WE CANNOT ALLOW THIS MOMENT TO PASS WITHOUT MAKING SUBSTANTIAL CHANGES IN HOW WE ACCOMMODATE THE COMMUNITIES WE'VE HAD THE HONOR OF SERVING.

AN EQUITY AUDIT WILL PROVIDE US THE EMPIRICAL DATA NEEDED TO UPROOT BIASES AND RACIST CONSTRUCTS THAT HAVE PROHIBITED OUR ABILITY TO SERVE THESE COMMUNITIES. THIS ASSESSMENT WILL PROVIDE DETAILED INSIGHT INTO OUR PAST AND PRESENT PROBLEMS, WHILE HIGHLIGHTING TANGIBLE SOLUTIONS THAT CAN BE IMMEDIATELY IMPLEMENTED. OUR OBJECTIVE IS CLEAR: TO ENSURE THAT THESE MEASURES REACH THE COMMUNITIES WHO HAVE WAITED LONG ENOUGH FOR REAL RESULTS.

THE JOB AHEAD IS FAR FROM SIMPLE AND WILL REQUIRE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS WITH NO EASY ANSWERS. HOWEVER, MY DEPARTMENT WANTS THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE, ALL DEPARTMENTS AND ITS EMPLOYEES TO KNOW THAT THESE MATTERS ARE OF THE HIGHEST PRIORITY. IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE MAXIMUM SUCCESS, THESE MATTERS WILL REQUIRE EVERYONE'S IMMEDIATE ATTENTION AND IT IS MY HOPE THAT EACH DEPARTMENT HEAD WILL ENCOURAGE ENGAGEMENT IN THIS NECESSARY CONVERSATION.

I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU AS WE ADDRESS THESE SYSTEMIC ISSUES AND WORK TOWARDS A MORE EQUITABLE ST. LOUIS COUNTY.

WARMEST REGARDS,

