



SUMMIT COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY OF SUMMIT, OHIO

December 7, 2020

To: Summit County Council Members:

On June 1, 2020, Resolution 2020-174 was introduced declaring, “racism a public health crisis” in Summit County; the Resolution was subsequently adopted unanimously by council on June 15, 2020. The resolution’s passage enabled the establishment of a Special Review Committee empowered to determine how best to explore and effectively address the historic impact of racism, both systematic and structural, in Summit County.

After great thought and contemplation we began the work with an internal review of our own operations and of those most closely aligned, i.e., all constitutionally chartered offices, before seeking to move outwardly into the broader community.

This inward examination included hours of interviews and followed up via the sharing of supplemental reports, data and anecdotal submissions. The following report is our attempt to distill this information to inform our colleagues, and chart a path to move this effort forward. Our hope for this report is to share the good work that is already happening at the County, but is not well known by residents; to begin to examine important work that has slowed significantly and/or ceased for any number of reasons, and to identify immediate action items the County can take to improve.

The work over the last six months was a very informative learning experience and provided insightful and viable ways of moving forward. Those insights and other important findings are set forth in the attached report. We must underscore that this is just the beginning of the really challenging, yet transforming work that lay ahead. Together we can help to ensure that every resident of Summit County, especially those that have been historically omitted, find Summit County an equitable, healthy and prosperous place to live, work and play.

We are deeply grateful to County Executive Ilene Shapiro and her executive team, Council staff, and each County office holder for their openness and commitment to this work.

Sincerely,

Veronica R. Sims
District 5 Representative
Special Review Committee Co-Chair

Elizabeth Walters
Representative At Large/Vice President
Special Review Committee Co-Chair

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More Work to do: Promoting Racial Equity in Summit County

Introduction

In the proceeding days following massive protests that erupted across the country in the wake of the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, the heightened illumination of police brutality faced by black and brown people and the historic systems of racism that perpetuates and supports these racial injustices in the United States, took center stage for the entire world to witness. These magnifications lead to outcry for long overdue change prompting local governments across the country to take action. In Summit County, we have plenty of information, studies and data to show us that action in our community is imperative and urgent. Determinants like infant mortality, juvenile detention, poverty, life expectancy and more, provide an early pathway for action.

Statistics show a national disparity between black and white infant mortality rates. The State of Ohio consistently ranks among the worst states concerning black infant mortality; moreover, in Summit County, black infants are two times more likely to die before their first birthday compared to white infants. These infants are also three times more likely to die from complications of having a low birth weight compared to white babies. Lastly, Black mothers are twice as likely to receive prenatal care too late (by their third trimester) or not at all, when compared to white mothers. Nationally, black women are 3 to 4 times more likely to die from pregnancy related causes and childbirth – with access and quality of care being leading cause contributors.

On any given day, 70 to 80 percent of the children in Summit County juvenile detention are black/minority and black/minority youths are 60 percent more likely to be detained than white youths. Nationally, black youth are upwards of 5 times more likely to be detained or committed to detention than their white counterparts.

The rate of poverty in the Summit County for black residents is more than three times that of white residents, and the median income for white residents is over twice that of black residents. Without question, the 2020 COVID 19 pandemic has exacerbated this fretful quality of life condition. Unemployment also has contributed greatly to this dilemma. According to the Economic Policy Institute State of Unemployment by Race Report - August 2020, Ohio's overall unemployment rate was 4.6% (9.0% for blacks and 3.0 % for whites respectively).

The rates of chronic diseases such as: asthma, diabetes and hypertension and other health issues, including depression are twice as high for black residents of Summit County; and heart disease and cancer tip the scales as leading culprits nationally. Adding further devastation is the rate of homicide for blacks – mainly by firearm. Nationally, gun violence ranks at number 7 among the top 10 causes of death for African Americans. Yet it does not rate at all in the top 10 causes for whites (2016 - 38 per 100,000 for AA vs. 5 per 100,000 for whites). Summit County does not deviate much from national findings. From a comparative analysis, the three leading causes of death for both blacks and whites are the same in Summit County, i.e., heart disease, cancer and stroke. The alarm comes when you examine rates of death related to the before mentioned. Per 100,000 the rates play out as follows: heart disease – 219.2 black vs 177.7 white, cancer – 207.6

black vs 179.0 white, and stroke – 62.9 black vs 39.0 white. The life expectancy of black residents of Summit County is nearly 6 years less than that of their white neighbors.

Summit County Council recognizes that racism is a public health crisis that affects all members of our society both on a local level and nationwide and deserves action from all levels of government and civil society. Council has established a Special Review Committee to determine how best to address these issues and to:

- seek solutions to reshape the discourse and actively engage all citizens in racial justice work;
- continue to work to build alliances with organizations that are confronting racism and encourage partners to recognize racism as a public health crisis;
- continue to promote racially equitable economic and workforce development in Summit County;
- continue to promote racially equitable hiring and promotion of all employees including County employees; and
- advocate and draft relevant policies that prioritize the health of people of color and mitigate exposure to adverse childhood experiences and trauma in childhood

The long-term goals outlined in our legislation are no small task. We also recognize that working for justice in our community means looking inward to “clean our own house,” working externally with other partners that make-up the larger system in which we operate and enabling community participation through the convening of a task force. These three important pieces are interconnected, will cross-inform one another and each will provide its own unique set of opportunities, challenges and goals.

It is important to note that these conversations and this work intersects frequently with the real and present threat of COVID-19. For the full text of the legislation, please see Appendix A.

County of Summit Work and further Opportunity

We know that systemic racism in government and public services is not new. And while we have made some important steps in recent years, we have much work left to do. With the assistance of County Executive Shapiro’s cabinet, we assembled an inventory of recent initiatives, programs, and other efforts aimed at creating a more equitable and just Summit County government. Additionally, interviews were conducted with every Summit County Department and every constitutional office. With the assistance of the Summit County Human Resources Department questions were sent in advance of these conversations for reflection and create a shared understanding of intent (see Appendix B). What follows is a summary of learning from these interviews.

Recent Efforts

Though the declaration of racism as a public health crisis occurred in Summit County in June of this year, many leaders and staff in county government have been implementing changes, building programs, or working in coalition with other partners to address systemic racism locally. We’ve

included below some of the most relevant work below. While there is much work yet to do, these efforts have shown an intentionality and focus that is encouraging.

Executive's Council on Diversity and Inclusion: Commencing in 2017, 27 community members met over the course of 2 years in subcommittees and in full to advise the county on improving diversity and inclusion in our employee recruitment, retention and development, procurement practices, and representation on county boards and commissions. The efforts of this council have led to the following results in various stages of completion:

- Creation of a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) strategy for Summit County workforce and leadership. This includes expanded recruitment, assessment and analytical talent development for retention, promotion and succession planning. Since this work has begun, the unclassified hires and promotions in Summit County is 59% female, 32% people of color, 8% self-identified LGBT.
- Update of the mandatory employee training required for all Summit County employees to include substance abuse awareness, anti-harassment and diversity. Trainings will also be supplemented by supervisory training, with topics such as unconscious bias, recognizing micro-aggressions, emotional intelligence and more.
- Authorized funds for the Development Finance Authority's (DFA) newly created Minority Contractor Capital Access Program (MCCAP). MCCAP was designed in coordination with Summit County to support minority contractors and provide opportunities for long-term success and stability. The program includes financial and technical assistance to Akron and Summit County-based minority, women, LGBTQ, disabled and veteran-owned contracting businesses.
- Working with the Greater Akron Chamber on the development and use of the Inclusion Marketplace, a web site that will link minority businesses with business and procurement opportunities.
- Expanded role for the Social Services Advisory Board to create a womb to tomb overarching strategy to address social, economic, educational, physical and mental health of all of Summit Counties residents in a more comprehensive way.
- Developed the Summit County Sheriff Hiring Scholarship and Recruiting Program to bring more diversity to the Sheriff's staff and operations.
- Improved the diversity of appointments to county boards and commissions. **42% of new board and commission appointments since the creation of this council have been people of color.**

Economic Initiatives:

Elevate Greater Akron – In 2017, Elevate Greater Akron (EGA), a collaborative effort among Summit County, the City of Akron, the GAR Foundation, and the Greater Akron Chamber led to a comprehensive strategic plan for economic development in the County's inclusion narrative for the region. Among the key findings of this report was the chronic exclusion of the County's black residents from economic development opportunity. A key objective for this coalition is and will remain creating the capacity to integrate inclusion into all strategies.

Working with the City of Akron, EGA agreed to be highly intentional in ensuring Akron's black population is empowered to share in regional success. The EGA strategy is on-going with

community, non-profit and governmental entities working together to address equity issues. Several programs are being implemented in conjunction with and as a result of this collaborative.

Raise Good Jobs - RAISE is an acronym: Reach (job seekers and employers); Access (in your neighborhood); Inform (residents of opportunities and options); Support (to prepare for success); and Elevate (individuals, employers and our city). RAISE, Good Jobs for Greater Akron, is tied to the Elevate Greater Akron initiative, with a top goal to help the region's economically disenfranchised minority population. Local jobs connector ConxusNEO is the primary organizer in partnership with Summit County, the Greater Akron Chamber and a long list of other organizations and businesses including the Akron Urban League, Akron chapter of the NAACP, Akron Public Schools, House of the Lord, Stark State College, City of Akron, Huntington Bank, Progressive Alliance CDC, Akron-Summit County Public Library and Summit Developmental Disabilities.

Western Reserve Community Fund (WRCF) - a private nonprofit created with the mission of a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) to support further development in economically distressed areas of Northeast Ohio. In 2019, DFA, DFWR and Summit County initially capitalized WRCF with grants totaling \$1.07M. WRCF was created to help fill the regional gap in access to capital and provide support to disadvantaged businesses and projects located in low-income communities within Summit, Medina, Portage, Stark and Wayne counties. To accomplish this, WRCF fills lending gaps in its target market; offers non-traditional financial products; attracts outside investment and provides development services to borrowers. To date, WRCF has closed five loans with a total value of \$971,000. These projects directly resulted in the creation of quality jobs, support of local entrepreneurship and increased services within neighborhoods sorely in need of investment.

MCCAP - In 2020, Summit County, the City of Akron, the Urban League and the Western Reserve Community Fund created the Minority Contractor Capital Access Program. This program provides no interest, working capital loans and wrap around support services to help small minority contracting firms get their businesses off the ground and become sustainable. Summit County provided a \$1 million bonding reserve pool to ensure minority contractors are always able to secure bonding at rates comparable to more established firms when competing for bids on projects.

Criminal Justice Initiatives:

Summit County Jail Operations Advisory Council – In 2018, County Councilmember David Hamilton convened a working group to assess and advise on improving the operations and outcomes for the Summit County Jail for both staff and inmates. The following recommendations have been implemented to date:

- Glenwood Jail – Converted a minimum-security facility to a Community Alternative Sentencing Center (CASC) and expanded the treatment and Re-Entry Service model. Additionally, increased the contract to allow for private security and returned 12 full-time deputies to the County Jail to assist with staffing needs.
- Moved the Sheriff's Office deputies to 12-hour shifts, which created the equivalent of 6 additional full-time staff and allowed for coverage and overtime savings necessary to

restore programming to jail and provide much needed time-off for deputies, which in turn, reduced stress within the jail.

- Installed 300 plus high-definition cameras and additional interior fencing in the Jail with the goal of increasing deputy and inmate safety and enabling the deputies to more effectively operate in "remote" status, thus reducing the amount of overtime and again reducing overall stress within the jail.
- Improved inmate services by hiring additional service workers, reopening the gym to inmate use and broadening religious services by providing books and material for people of all religions. Also, re-instituted services for groups such as Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous.

Technology - Over the past year, the County has invested in some areas that have historically been neglected by government and institutions in the overall discussion of equity. Interestingly, it's been COVID-19 and the need to conduct remote operations and the federal government's stimulus act which has led and allowed the County to move forward with many of these investments at a rate that is fairly astounding for government and criminal justice.

- The County is investing approximately \$14 million into technology projects designed to make its criminal justice system more efficient and to produce better outcomes. In coordination with the Cities of Fairlawn and Akron, the County is investing \$6.5 million to create a 1 Gig closed fiber network which links all of its municipal, common pleas and appellate courts with its corrections facilities, prosecutors, public defenders and various other partners in criminal justice. The County is investing another \$5 million in equipment within those facilities which includes high tech and high-quality video, sound and recording equipment. These investments will significantly reduce the need for transporting prisoners, increase security and will greatly speed up the process for Invested \$1 million in a new case management system for its Jail, which will be integrated with its new countywide next generation consolidated dispatch system to provide everyone involved in its criminal justice system the ability to make holistic, informed decisions.
- Begun the use of a smart phone probation application. This application better supports probationers' ability to build the necessary life pillars for success, by ensuring work and family demands are not disrupted with in-person appointments.
- Re-invented its public defender's office and is working with the Ohio Public Defender on implementing a case management system aimed at improving workflow and allowing the office to gather data to improve outcomes within the public defense system.
- Begun to work with the City of Akron and University of Akron on the South of Exchange project, to study ways to introduce technology into furthering neighborhood safety and reducing gun violence.

Housing Initiatives:

Summit County Affordable Housing Trust Fund Program - on August 19, 2020, the Board of Directors of the Western Reserve Community Fund, Inc. ("WRCF") passed a resolution creating the Summit County Affordable Housing Trust Fund Program (the "Program") to assist in the creation, development, rehabilitation, programming and preservation of affordable housing in Summit County, especially in underserved areas of the County, for the benefit of low-income

households. The County has agreed to provide a two phased program grant from the general fund to provide funding for carrying out housing programs, with the first phase being a \$500,000.00 cash payment to the WCRF to fund non-administrative project costs and the second being \$500,000.00 in matching funds that may be drawn upon on a dollar-for-dollar basis, as a match, as other sources of funding are attracted to the Program. The Program already has several potential projects they are considering in partnership with local agencies such as East Akron Neighborhood Development Corporation, The Well Community Development Corporation, Habitat for Humanity and Nazareth Housing Development Corporation.

Investment in Community Partners:

Working in successful partnership with outside organizations has long been a hallmark of Summit County. We know that we cannot create a healthy, equitable community without strong community anchors meeting important needs. Summit County annually funds millions of dollars to support community partners and their programming.

Stabilization Initiatives for Akron Urban League (AUL) – Provided \$2,750,000 of financing, construction management services, financial operating assistance, financial planning assistance, brokered a lease of space with the Ohio State University Agricultural Extension to sublet space and hired a Finance Executive (a County employee who is contracted out to AUL) all in an effort to achieve financial stability for this vital community partner.

Financial Empowerment Center - Working with the United Way of Summit and Medina to create a Financial Empowerment Center in one of the city's most economically distressed neighborhoods. To date, they have conducted 3,830 financial coaching sessions with 1,397 individuals, total savings increased \$957,083 and debt decreased \$1,345,020.

PCs for People – In 2020, Summit County has hosted 3 events and provided several hundred free personal computers to minority school aged children.

COVID 19 Response:

In March 2020, the federal government passed The Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES). Included in this package was support for local governments, including a direct allocation for Summit County. Despite cumbersome regulation and slow-moving state and federal partners, Summit County was able to put its relief dollars to use across the community in innovative ways:

- Covid Testing Initiatives – Ongoing work with Summit County Public Health, Akron General/ Cleveland Clinic and Summa to bring Covid testing centers and pop-up testing online. With the investment of \$1.4 million in testing events and necessary material, we've made testing access free to the public and removed the barrier of a doctor's referral.
- Covid Small Business Grant Program - 1,889 small businesses were awarded \$7,680,936 in grants.
 - 923, or 49%, were awarded to disadvantaged businesses (DBE);

- 78% of DBE applicants were awarded, compared to 60% of non-DBE applicants
- 73% of Black-owned business applicants were eligible; 78% of women owned business (WBE) applicants were eligible; 62% of non-Black and non-WBE owned business applicants
- Rental, Mortgage, Utility Assistance – provided funding for \$14.7 million in assistance will allow for thousands to remain in their homes during 2020.
- Public School Re-opening Grants - provided \$7.3 million to public school districts in Summit County to support remote learning.
- Direction Home Senior Assistance – Provided over \$600,000 to support remote connectivity for seniors.
- COVID-19 Lessons Learned – Working through the Greater Akron Chamber, the County has employed a consultant to prepare an analysis on the health and economic impact of COVID-19 on the minority community.

Recent Learning

Beginning in July of 2020, Councilwomen Veronica Sims and Elizabeth Walters conducted interviews with all County Departments and constitutional office holders (or their representative). Through these hour-long conversations we learned about past practices and future aspirations as they relate to racial equity and to find out how we can improve county practices and provide assistance and support in combating racism both systemic and structural.

Seeing the universal understanding that racism is a public health crisis was perhaps the most positive outcome of these interviews. Every leader within the county acknowledged this crisis and is eager to be a part of finding the right solutions. While many entities grappling with this issue often face barriers around the agreement of the existence of racism, we were encouraged to see our work begins from this shared perspective.

Additionally, there is positive and innovative work happening across the county in various offices and departments. From a formalized program inside the Prosecutor's office to bring together staff for cultural competency learning and improved culture, to the intentional recruitment of diverse candidates for leadership by the Clerk of Courts, leaders across county organizations are working on equity and inclusion in their own ways.

But this work is complex, difficult and often times made harder as a result of the piece meal approach. It is clear that a big picture strategy, with aligned outcome goals, is needed to move the full breadth of the county organization more meaningfully into the work of combating racism. It's important to note this is a foundational piece to move us to action, but not the total solution.

Any attempt to craft a long-term, sweeping strategy at this time would not suffice. The most startling finding from these interviews was the complete lack of, or sporadic collection of data on who the County serves, in particular race data. With few exceptions, the County does not have a data collection plan or standard, barring those mandated federal partners. Furthermore, it is clear of the data we collect, and need to start collecting, requires consistent review and consideration in order for County programs, staff and policies to improve. Both in culture and practice, racial data use also needs dramatic improvement.

Immediate Recommendations

While the work of instilling more justice and equity into the day-to-day operations of an organization as large and complex as the County will take more time, there are some immediate action items we can take now.

Develop a universal data collection standard policy for all Summit County Departments and Offices – without accurate and aligned data collection about our workforce, our programs, and most importantly the direct interactions we have with the residents we serve, meaningful change will be difficult. Thoughtful policy updates around the type of data we collect on our interactions with those we serve is sorely needed.

Develop better data review and use practices for all Summit County Departments and Offices – that help to drive not only how and where invaluable, scarce resources are allocated, but to also help ensure that the lives of the targeted community are actually being impacted in a real tangible way for the better.

Create plans for each county department on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) practices in hiring, training, and cultures - This important step is already underway. It is included here to emphasize its importance.

Access to more robust and frequent training for County staff – with the increased role of technology in the management of County staff, we have an increased opportunity to provide more comprehensive training for all staff. Currently, more advanced bias, emotional intelligence, and workplace equity trainings are focused on management. Time and again we heard from County leaders the need for more help in this space.

Convene the Racism as a Public Health Crisis Special Review Committee with additional members in Q1 of 2021 - As specified in Resolution 2020-174, the Special Review Committee will seek solutions to reshape the discourse and actively engage citizens, continue to build alliances with organizations confronting racism, continue to promote work to combat racism across several county government functions, and advocate and draft relevant policies that prioritize the health of people of color. Appointments should be finalized by January 4, 2021 and the Committee should convene by March of the same year. In addition to the Committee appointments, each constitutional office holder and county department will be asked to send an empowered representative to participate in these meetings.

Hire a consultant or designate a staff position to take the big picture view, pull down silos, and help convene the Task Force with a workplan and outcomes - As is evident in this document, Summit County has a long list of programs and other efforts underway to improve outcomes for all our residents, including people of color. There are even more programs that have been created or improved in the last few years, but we made the choice to leave them out of this report in order to improve clarity and intent. However, these efforts are mostly siloed and a big-picture plan for addressing systemic racism in Summit County government structure and operations is greatly needed. Dedicating the resources and time

to this work, with the right skills, is vitally important. While no one person will be equipped, or should be expected, to “fix” racism as a public health crisis, this work will require a dedicated professional with the appropriate skill set and knowledge.

Imperative to Convene

Perhaps the most challenging aspect to fighting racism head on is the limitations of a single government entity itself, and the complexity of interplay between the various levels of government. As we move into working with external partners it is imperative that we understand what the county (and other partners) have the legal authority to change, and what we do not. While we cannot tax racism, or vaccinate racism, we can do everything in our power to ensure optimum justice in the systems in which we operate. For those things that are not in our power, we must do everything we can to advocate for change or bring together those with the ability to make change.

Similar to the external work, we must be thoughtful about how we convene the systems together, how we hold ourselves to the highest standards for transparency and accountability, and how we ensure “buy-in” from all participants. It is likely we will need to identify a professional and appropriately trained facilitator for this work, too.

We recommend this work begin with the creation of a clear position statement for these broad categories: housing, criminal justice, education, health, economic opportunity, and elder care.

Conclusion

Exploring racism from an inside out lens, we would submit, was the most responsible way to take on this enormous historically transforming opportunity. While the inward glance was rewarding and revelatory, there were still areas that remind quite poignantly how far we still have yet to go. There is not a lot of room, nor should such valuable time be taken, to point fingers but there is certainly room to grow and absolutely room enough for all who would desire to do so.

Appendix A

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-174

SPONSOR Ms. Sims

DATE _____

COMMITTEE Committee of the Whole

A Resolution declaring racism a public health crisis and establishing a Special Review Committee to determine how best to promote racial equity in the County of Summit, for the Council, and declaring an emergency.

WHEREAS, there is clear data that racism negatively impacts the lives of people of color throughout Summit County; and

WHEREAS, almost all of the 400 years of black America's experience was under slavery and Jim Crow laws which allowed preferential opportunity to some while at the same time subjected people of color to hardship and disadvantage in all areas of life; and

WHEREAS, still now, racism – not race – causes disproportionately high rates of homelessness, incarceration, poor education and health outcomes and economic hardship for African Americans; and

WHEREAS, racism acts on systemic, institutional and interpersonal levels, all of which operate throughout time and across generations; and

WHEREAS, racism unfairly disadvantages specific individuals and communities, while unfairly giving advantages to other individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources, and Summit County's collective prosperity depends upon the equitable access to opportunity for every resident regardless of the color of their skin; and

WHEREAS, this Council believes that the time is *now* to declare racism a public health crisis in our community; and

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization defines "public health" as "the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts of society" and those efforts "aim to provide conditions under which people can... be healthy, improve their health and well-being, or prevent the deterioration of their health"; and

WHEREAS, the United States Office of Disease Prevention recognizes that discrimination negatively impacts health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the Social Determinants of Health – the social and material factors that influence health outcomes - impact life-long outcomes beginning even before birth; and

WHEREAS, the Boston Public Health Commission states that racism impacts Social Determinants of Health, including Social Capital, Education, Transportation, Employment, Food Access, Health Behaviors, Socioeconomic Status, Environmental Exposure, Access to Health Services, Housing, and Public Safety; and

WHEREAS, the negative repercussions of historical racism, including but not limited to discriminatory lending practices of the 20th century known as “redlining,” impact current

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outcomes regarding access to nutritious food, economic security, educational achievement, rates of lead poisoning, and infant mortality; and

WHEREAS, research indicates that adverse childhood experiences are disproportionately experienced by black children when compared to white children thus having negative impacts on academic, behavioral, and physical health outcomes of black children; and

WHEREAS, statistics show a national disparity between black and white infant mortality rates and the State of Ohio consistently ranks among the worst states concerning black infant mortality rates; moreover, in Summit County, black infants are two times more likely to die before their first birthday compared to white infants. These infants are also three times more likely to die from complications of having a low birth weight compared to white babies. Lastly, Black mothers are twice as likely to receive prenatal care too late (by their third trimester) or not at all, when compared to white mothers; and

WHEREAS, on any given day, 70 to 80 percent of the kids in Summit County juvenile detention are black/minority and black/minority youths are 60 percent more likely to be detained than white youths; and

WHEREAS, the rate of poverty in the Summit County for black residents is more than three times that of white residents, and the median income for white residents is over twice that of black residents; and

WHEREAS, the rates of chronic diseases such as: asthma, diabetes, and hypertension and mental health issues, including depression are twice as high in black residents of Summit County; and

WHEREAS, the life expectancy of black residents of Summit County is nearly 6 years less than that of their white neighbors; and

WHEREAS, this Council recognizes that racism is a public health crisis that affects all members of our society both on a local level and nationwide and deserves action from all levels of government and civil society; and

WHEREAS, this Council supports the establishment of a Special Review Committee to determine how best to address these issues and to: seek solutions to reshape the discourse and actively engage all citizens in racial justice work; continue to work to build alliances with organizations that are confronting racism and encourage partners to recognize racism as a public health crisis; continue to promote racially equitable economic and workforce development in Summit County; continue to promote racially equitable hiring and promotion of all employees including County employees; and advocate and draft relevant policies that prioritize the health of people of color and mitigate exposure to adverse childhood experiences and trauma in childhood; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the County of Summit, State of Ohio, that:

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-174

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SECTION 1

That this Council declares racism to be a public health crisis and will establish a Special Review Committee to determine and make recommendations on the best action steps this Council can take in promoting racial equity in the County of Summit.

SECTION 2

That this Special Review Committee shall be chaired by Councilwoman Veronica Sims and shall report its findings and recommendations to Council and the Executive no later than December 31, 2020 so that this Council can take meaningful action steps towards enacting real change and promoting racial equity in the County of Summit.

SECTION 3

That the Clerk of Council is directed to transmit copies of this resolution to the NAACP Akron Branch, the Akron Urban League, Summit County Public Health, Community Action Akron Summit, City of Akron Office of Health Equity, United Way of Summit County and the Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce.

SECTION 4

This Resolution is hereby declared an emergency in the interest of the health, safety and welfare of the residents and employees of the County of Summit and for the further purpose of immediately declaring racism as a public health crisis and establishing a Special Review Committee to determine how best to promote racial equity in the County of Summit.

SECTION 5

Provided this Resolution receives the affirmative vote of eight (8) members, it shall take effect immediately upon its adoption and approval by the Executive; otherwise it shall take effect and be in force at the earliest time provided by law.

SECTION 6

It is found and determined that all formal actions of this Council concerning and relating to the adoption of this Resolution were adopted in an open meeting of this Council, and that all deliberations of this Council and of any of its committees that resulted in such formal action, were in meetings open to the public, in compliance with all legal requirements, including Section 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code.

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-174

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INTRODUCED June 1, 2020

ADOPTED _____

CLERK OF COUNCIL

COUNCIL PRESIDENT OF

APPROVED _____

EXECUTIVE

ENACTED EFFECTIVE _____

Appendix B

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Listening Sessions Individual Director Interviews

Introduction and Purpose

During June 2020, the County of Summit's County Council passed a resolution "declaring racism a public health crisis and establishing a Special Review Committee to determine how to best promote racial equity in the County of Summit" with findings and recommendations to the County of Summit Council and the County Executive no later than December 31, 2020. This resolution is "declared an emergency in the interest of the health, safety and welfare of the residents of the County of Summit." The sense of urgency is compounded by recent events across the U.S. highlighting the health care disparities and inequitable care, and police treatment provided to minority communities, and specifically to the Black community. County Council members involved with the Special Review Committee are preparing to engage County of Summit leaders and stakeholders, starting with the county executive's office, via listening sessions. There are three broad purposes for these listening sessions:

1. To identify challenges and opportunities related to promoting and sustaining diversity, equity, and inclusion, and specifically racial equity within the County of Summit.
2. To utilize shared feedback to better shape diversity, equity, and inclusion within the organization and community served.
3. To assess how Summit County can meaningfully respond and take tangible next steps for action.

Establishing Shared Understanding

What we mean when we use the following terms:

Diversity- the communities we serve have unique elements of diversity that extend beyond race, ethnicity, and gender dimensions. They include any dimension that can be used to differentiate groups and people from one another; including their race, ethnicity, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, socio-economic status, physical and/or mental ability, education, work experience, and many other dimensions of diversity such as veteran, marital, and family status, and others. These are the qualities, experiences, and behaviors that make individuals unique.

Equity- Equity asks us to acknowledge that everyone has different needs, experiences, and opportunities; therefore, in the context of this conversation, we will assume that equity is about correcting imbalances. Equity is about the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all while striving to identify and eliminate

barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically under-served and under-represented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups.

Inclusion- at the organizational level, inclusion is a set of strategies or “ways of being” at all levels of an organization that are designed to leverage the diversity of employees, customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders both internal and external to the organization. Internally, inclusion is an organizational culture that connects each employee to the organization, encourages collaboration, flexibility, and fairness; and leverages diversity throughout the organization so that all individuals participate and contribute to their fullest potential. Externally, inclusion is about community outreach, engagement, partnerships, and investment (i.e. supplier/vendor diversity, social responsibility, volunteer programs, etc.).

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) listening sessions have the potential to shift the individual, group, and organization towards a more respectful, welcoming, equitable and inclusive ecosystem. These sessions will provide an opportunity to hear from you and other leaders regarding current issues, concerns, challenges, and strengths. The types of questions utilized in listening sessions are crucial in framing them as safe space and an opportunity to authentically hear from leaders and employees. Some of these questions can include:

1. **Reflect:** What is uppermost for you right now as it relates to the current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the County of Summit:
 - a. What is your understanding of the strategic priorities for DEI?
 - b. What is not clear?
 - c. Based on your understanding, what has been accomplished to date?
2. **Roles:** What role should each of us play in creating more inclusive and equitable Summit County?
 - a. What is your understanding of the role and work of the Inclusion Advisory Council created by the County Executive?
 - b. What should leaders (manager level and up) do to promote and model inclusive and equitable best practices?
 - c. What resources do you need (i.e. training, coaching, etc.)?
 - d. How can the County of Summit Council support the diversity, equity, and inclusion priorities of the County Executive and the Inclusion Advisory Council?
3. **Responsibilities:** What do individual, organizational and collective responsibilities toward better outcomes look like?
 - a. What should inclusive leadership look like right now?
 - b. What additional supports do you need to be successful as an inclusive leader?
 - c. What resources does your team and/or service line need?

d. In what way can you be of service/add value in this ongoing effort?

4. **Actions:** In what ways can the County of Summit play an active role in the movement toward greater racial equity, social justice, and inclusive ecosystems for all of us? What does that look like?

- a. What are we doing well?
- b. What needs to change?
- c. What do we need to create?
- d. What supports do we need to successfully launch and sustain an inclusive and equitable work setting and community?

Proposed Guidelines for Today's Conversation

We (interviewer and interviewee) will:

- Create and designate safe space for us to have this conversation
- Keep confidence
- Expect and encourage candor
- Listen with the intent to understand; and ask for clarity when we do not
- Lean into discomfort with the spirit of inquiry
- Respect each other's experiences
- Anything else? _____

Director Name	
Date	
Time	
Interviewee Name	

QUESTIONS	NOTES
Reflect	
Roles	
Responsibilities	

Actions	
Other	