



MAYOR REX RICHARDSON

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REVISED

Date: June 11, 2024

To: Members of the City Council

From: Mayor Rex Richardson, Vice Mayor Cindy Allen,
Councilmember Dr. Joni Ricks-Oddie

Subject: Promoting Inclusion and Addressing Hate in Public Meetings and Forums

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation to request the City Attorney to draft a resolution condemning all forms of racism, religious or ethnic bias, discrimination, incitement of violence, and hate crimes, and affirming the City's values of inclusivity, diversity, equity, and acceptance in relation to public meetings.

DISCUSSION

The City of Long Beach has a [longstanding commitment](#) to advocating for peace, social justice, equity, safety, and fostering mutual respect and understanding among all residents and community members. This summer, the city has invested greatly in expanding youth opportunities, violence prevention initiatives, and community engagement strategies to keep our diverse communities and vibrant neighborhoods safe. Ensuring the safety and dignity of all Long Beach residents also requires a focus on addressing the growing prevalence of hate-motivated speech and incidents.

The LA County Commission on Human Relations' most recent [Hate Crime Report](#), revealed that hate crimes rose across the county by 18%, the second-highest number in more than 20 years. The most common motivation of all hate crimes was race at 57%, and religiously motivated hate crimes increased by 41%. The report detailed alarming increases in the number of anti-Black, anti-Latino, antisemitic, and anti-LGBTQ+ hate crimes countywide, including soaring numbers of assaults, vandalism, and acts of intimidation.

Public government forums, such as City Council meetings and Board and Commission meetings, are not immune to hate-motivated speech and incidents. Though constitutionally protected, public comments made by private citizens speaking in their individual capacities may sometimes result in perpetuating prejudices and undermining the safety of other community members from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

Faith and educational leaders, students, residents, and civic groups have called on City leaders to challenge hateful and divisive rhetoric expressed during public forums, including City Council meetings, commission meetings, and online. The City of Long Beach has a duty to address hate and intolerance to ensure all residents feel secure in public meeting spaces where critical public policy decisions are being made on their behalf.

In response to these trends, Long Beach has an opportunity to clarify its opposition to and condemnation of racism, religious or ethnic bias, discrimination, incitement of violence, and hate crimes and to affirm Long Beach's core values of inclusion and acceptance in relation to public meetings, without infringing on public commenters' freedom of speech. While Long Beach officials cannot control, regulate, censor, or stifle what is said by individual members of the public during these forums, they can disassociate from harmful speech and actions by underscoring the city's shared values and modeling civic discourse that does not perpetuate any forms of hate or intolerance.

A resolution condemning all forms of racism, religious or ethnic bias, discrimination, incitement of violence, and hate crimes, and affirming the City's values of inclusivity, diversity, equity, and acceptance, provides City officials an opportunity to make clear the City's position on speech that promotes racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, antisemitism, islamophobia, agism, ableism, or any other forms of prejudice expressed in public meetings.

Long Beach city leaders must work together to ensure the foundations of equity, inclusion, and mutual respect are employed in every aspect of our city government so that every resident, business owner, and visitor feels safe and welcomed.

This matter has been reviewed by Budget Analyst Joe R. Guerrero on June 6, 2024.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation requests the City Attorney to draft a resolution condemning all forms of racism, religious or ethnic bias, discrimination, incitement of violence, and hate crimes, and affirming the City's values of inclusivity, diversity, equity, and acceptance in relation to public meetings. The requested action is anticipated to have a minimal impact on staff hours beyond the budgeted scope of duties and a minimal impact on existing City Council priorities.

SUGGESTED ACTION

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rex Richardson", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Rex Richardson, Mayor



Cindy Allen, Vice Mayor



Dr. Joni Ricks-Oddie, Councilmember