



## AGENDA COVER MEMO

Memorandum Date:

Order Date:

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TO: Board of County Commissioners

DEPARTMENT: County Administration

PRESENTED BY: Mo Young, Equity and Access Coordinator

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: APPROVING A RESOLUTION DENOUNCING WHITE NATIONALISM IN LANE COUNTY

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### I. MOTION

In the matter of Approving a Resolution Denouncing White Nationalism in Lane County.

### II. AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

The Board is being asked to approve the attached resolution denouncing white nationalism in Lane County.

### III. BACKGROUND/IMPLICATIONS OF ACTION

#### A. Board Action and Other History

In November 2009, the Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution censoring hate speech and displays. In November of 2016, the Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution reaffirming the values of integrity, respect, openness and accountability, public engagement, the pursuit of excellence, diversity, stewardship, and empathy. These two resolutions provide the framework from which this recommendation stems.

In July of 2019, a group of community members that includes nonprofits, community based organizations, and local government agencies drafted a resolution denouncing white nationalism and forwarded it to the Lane County Equity and Access Advisory Board (EAAB). This draft was brought to the Lane County Board of County Commissioners on August 27th, 2019.

The Lane County EAAB took the feedback from the commissioners and came up with a new draft resolution. This resolution was approved by the Lane County

EAAB at their December 2019 meeting after a long and thoughtful discussion about definitions of the terms in the resolution.

The recommendation that was passed was for the County Administrator to bring the resolution to the Board of County Commissioners.

B. Policy Issues

No policy issues to consider at this time.

C. Board Goals

The recommendation is connected to the Lane County Strategic Plan in the following ways:

Safe, Healthy County: protecting and enhancing the safety of Lane County residents and visitors.

Vibrant Communities: normalizing the understanding of and acceptance for all people based on the unique background, culture and diversity of our employees and the people we serve.

D. Financial and/or Resource Considerations

No financial impact for endorsing this resolution.

E. Health Implications

When people live in fear of racism, anti-Semitism, and other forms of bigotry, their stress levels are higher. Increased stress levels lead to myriad health outcomes including cardiovascular disease and higher rates of infant mortality.

The goal of this resolution is to increase social support across the County. Social support buffers stressful situations, supports illness recovery, prevents isolation, contributes to self-esteem, and reduces the risk of early death. This will, in turn, reduce the need for health services.

F. Analysis

Both Lane County and the State of Oregon have racist governing histories, including the forcible removal of indigenous communities from their ancestral lands and continued refusal to recognize Tribes, Oregon entering the Union as a "whites-only" state," the state's refusal to ratify the 14th and 15th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and enacting black exclusion laws. We must recognize that there has been rise in white nationalist, white supremacist, and alt-right groups in the U.S., and specifically in the State of Oregon. We must look back in order to move forward.

Recent gains in establishing policies and values that create a better place for all who live and visit here will only be sustained if we also acknowledge the impact of Oregon's history of exclusion and racism.

[JMW1]SB577 was passed by the Oregon Legislature in June 2019. It requires a state-wide, state funded, reporting system for the tracking of incidents of hate and bias. It directs law enforcement agencies that are responding to bias incidents to refer victim(s) to qualifying local victims' services. The Oregon Department of Justice is still developing the services that will be offered following the passage of SB577 and will be in touch with local jurisdictions as those services are defined and created.

At the December 2019 Lane County EAAB meeting, a long and thoughtful discussion about definitions of the terms identified in the resolution took place. The EAAB also discussed adding a glossary section to the EAAB website. For the purpose of this resolution, the Equity and Access Advisory Board agreed to use these common definitions:

- Xenophobia: the fear and hatred of foreigners
- Racism: prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against people of a different race based on the belief that one race is superior to another.
- White Supremacy: the belief that white people are superior to those of all other races, especially the black race, and should therefore dominate society.
- White Nationalism: a type of nationalism that espouses the belief that white people are a race and seeks to develop and maintain a white racial and national identity.
- Anti-Semitism: hostility to or prejudice against Jews.
- Islamophobia: dislike of or prejudice against Islam or Muslims, especially as a political force.
- Homophobia: dislike of or prejudice against homosexual people.
- Transphobia: dislike of or prejudice against transgender people.
- Ableism: discrimination in favor of able bodied people.
- Sexism: attitudes or behavior based on traditional stereotypes of gender roles.

Because we remain committed to fostering a community that is welcoming, safe, and inclusive to everyone, we must always make use of opportunities proactively and reactively to restate our values on behalf of Lane County.

#### G. Alternatives/Options

The Board could do the following:

1. Approve the resolution recommended by the Lane County EAAB.
2. Request that staff return with an amended resolution.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approving the resolution as written.

V. TIMING/IMPLEMENTATION

This resolution would go into effect immediately.

VI. FOLLOW-UP

No follow-up needed at this time.

VII. ATTACHMENTS

None

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF LANE COUNTY, OREGON

ORDER AND RESOLUTION  
NO:

In the Matter of

Approving a Resolution Denouncing White  
Nationalism in Lane County.

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Commissioners of Lane County have joined with other elected officials throughout Lane County and Oregon to pledge their commitment to providing safe, welcoming, and respectful communities that includes the following:

- Continue to build strong and vibrant communities that promote kindness, compassion, and respect; and
- Support each other to speak our minds in appropriate ways, welcome all viewpoints, and disagree respectfully; and
- Understand that language and actions rooted in prejudice, fear, ignorance, or hate are not acceptable at any time; and
- Help each other to collaborate, problem solve, and resolve our differences using positive language and approaches; and
- Work to bring our teams and communities together and to maintain a welcoming environment where every person feels safe; and

**WHEREAS**, in alignment with the Board of Commissioners' goals of a safe and healthy county and vibrant communities; and

**WHEREAS**, we recognize there has been a rise of white nationalist, white supremacist, and alt-right groups in the United States, many of which have been emboldened by the national political dialogue; and

**WHEREAS**, we are committed to a just and inclusive democracy. White nationalism places the interests of white people over those of other racial groups, and is an ideology focused on maintaining white political, economic, and demographic dominance, and it is at odds with our vision for Lane County; and

**WHEREAS**, the Oregon Constitution states, "No law shall be passed restraining the free expression of opinion, or restricting the right to speak, write, or print freely on any subject whatever; *but every person shall be responsible for the abuse of this right*" (emphasis intentional.) Free speech is a core principle of our democracy. The agenda of white nationalist groups seeks to destabilize our democracy, use fear as a tactic of control, divide our communities, and promote and ignite social animosities; and

**WHEREAS**, we understand Lane County exists within the historical context of our nation and state. Marginalized communities have experienced generational oppression and

traumas related to the decisions made by people and governments in both the past and present. White supremacy groups have a history of advocating for the marginalization of communities of color through government policies.

The State of Oregon also has a history of enacting racist policies that have left lasting harm on communities of color, including entering the Union as a “whites only” state in 1859, refusing to ratify the 14th and 15th amendments to the United States Constitution, and enacting black exclusion laws.

**NOW, THEREFORE,** the Board of County Commissioners of Lane County **ORDERS and RESOLVES** as follows:

1. The Board of Commissioners support Lane County being a welcoming, inclusive, and safe community for everyone who lives, learns, works, and plays in Lane County. We condemn actions that promote hate, xenophobia, racism, white supremacy, white nationalism, Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, sexism, and other forms bigotry.
2. The Board of Commissioners recognizes the importance of elected officials responding publicly (e.g. press release, press conference) when groups or individuals experience hate and bias activity in order for the affected communities to feel supported.
3. The Board of Commissioners applauds the recent state legislation SB577 requiring a system to track incidents of hate and bias and will work with staff to allocate resources and implement the system in conjunction with other jurisdictions.

**ADOPTED** this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2020.

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Heather Buch, Chair  
Lane County Board of Commissioners

APPROVED AS TO FORM

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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LANE COUNTY OFFICE OF LEGAL COUNSEL