Resolution Relating to

RACIAL JUSTICE THROUGH ECONOMIC AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE  **revised version**

RESOLUTION 5.12
Sponsors: Councilors Hightower, Hanson, Stromberg, Tracy, Freeman, Pine, Paul, Paulino, and Carpenter
Introduced: 06/29/20
Referred to:  
Action: amended; adopted  
Date: 06/29/20
Signed by Mayor: 07/13/20

CITY OF BURLINGTON

In the year Two Thousand Twenty .................................................................

Resolved by the City Council of the City of Burlington, as follows:

That WHERENAS, systemic racism is at the heart of our economy and continues to adversely impact BIPOC people across all systems of society, including employment, housing, education, access to health services, the justice system, economic development, and across all systems of government; and

WHEREAS, the median wealth of a black family is 1/13th the median wealth of a white family; unemployment rates for African Americans have averaged twice those of whites since data has been recorded; home ownership for black families is a fraction of that of whites; and a study by Vermont Legal Aid found black New Americans may be discriminated against over fifty percent of the time they seek to rent; and

WHEREAS black individuals are on average more likely to see negative health outcomes such as hypertension, heart disease, diabetes and asthma, and are less likely to have a primary care provider and less likely to be insured; have been subjected to racist medical theories, unethical sanctioned research, and through environmental racism are more exposed to polluted air, water, and soil; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 has exacerbated the impacts of systemic racism BIPOC communities face as they disproportionally have fewer cash reserves, have less access to COVID-19 relief funds, are more likely to be employed as essential workers with limited ability to work from home, are more likely to face eviction or foreclosure, experience barriers to remote education, and are less likely to receive timely COVID-targeted testing or adequate care; and

WHEREAS, diverse approaches to public safety through the use of social workers, addiction and recovery specialists, mental health professionals and others prepared and trained to respond to conflict challenges in our community in a variety of ways rather than solely policing, have been shown to decrease crime, increase public safety, and de-escalate potentially dangerous situations for community members and police alike; and

WHEREAS, the above approaches can be particularly beneficial to the community when anti-oppression and racial bias trainings and policies are incorporated consistently, as well as when paired with economic justice initiatives; and
WHEREAS, the role of the City of Burlington’s public safety employees should be to serve the public, build community trust, and ensure the safety of all community members; and

WHEREAS, policing in the United States has its roots in the Fugitive Slave Act and continues to largely protect middle and upper class white communities and their property while over-policing BIPOC communities through disproportionate stops, contact with youth in schools, and targeted community policing, resulting in the disproportionate arrests, uses of force, and incarcerations of BIPOC individuals that have created long-lasting physical, emotional, social and economic damage; and

WHEREAS, a significant number of members of the public have shared their experiences and expressed their concern that the Burlington Police Department has failed to equally and safely serve the public or provide sufficient accountability, causing a loss of trust and ultimately leaving BIPOC communities, in particular, less safe; and

WHEREAS, significant members of the public have shared their concerns that officers Jason Bellavance, Cory Campbell, and Joseph Corrow have inflicted significant physical harm on members of our community and that these officers’ continued service on the Burlington Police Department makes them feel unsafe; and

WHEREAS, Burlington’s number of police officers per capita is more than thirty percent above that of the national average, as well as thirty percent above the median of a survey of university cities with comparable demographic characteristics; and

WHEREAS, black students are disciplined at far higher rates in our schools and schools across the country and are far more likely to come into contact with School Resource Officers; and

WHEREAS, data collected by the Burlington Police Department reflects racial disparities in policed neighborhoods, contact with youth, traffic stops, search rates, use of force and arrest rates;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council declares racism a citywide health crisis; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Burlington shall prioritize the eradication of systemic racism in the creation of the municipal budget; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Burlington Police Department decrease through attrition, allowing officers to elect of their own accord to retire or leave for other reasons, the maximum total number of uniformed police officers by 30% from 105 to 74 uniformed officers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the general fund dollars freed up by reducing the number of uniformed officers shall be used to reduce the demand for police services through a variety of social services,
as well as social justice, racial justice, and economic justice initiatives, including a community-based cultural
eempowerment center, a minority-owned business municipal procurement program, and a capital access
program, as well as operational capacity for the Racial Equity, Inclusion and Belonging function as a City
Office with at least one staff person in addition to the director and funding for a baseline assessment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City shall terminate the Memorandum of Understanding
between the Burlington School District and the Burlington Police Department by the end of spring semester
2021, ensuring that BPD officers not be used for wellness calls and ending the full-time use of BPD School
Resource Officers (SROs). The Council recommends the City and School District come together in the 2020
calendar year to identify the functions SROs have performed that do not require law enforcement officers;
define a new role that will perform as many of these functions as possible under a restorative practices
framework; and create procedures for a coordinated approach between the District, the Community Justice
Center, and the BPD to implement restorative practices for all of Burlington’s school children, regardless of
the school they attend; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a joint committee of the City Council Public Safety Committee
and Police Commission begin an inquiry by July 31 into the question of how to build a healthy and safe
community and what institutions we need to reach that goal, and that this inquiry include a full operational and
functional assessment of the Burlington Police Department that analyzes who, what, where, and how the
department polices and includes a review and analysis of the assessment with full community participation
and input, followed by the implementation of a methodical transition to a public safety apparatus that delivers
services aligned with the values and vision of the community with the first report to the full Council by the
first Council meeting in October 2020; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the above assessment should include rigorous public process and
input and include local groups such as the Racial Justice Alliance, Howard Center, Boys and Girls Club, Anew
Place, Spectrum Youth and Family Services and others, and Burlington Police Department participation in this
process; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that trainings or events that explore the roots, impacts and solutions to
systemic oppression, including but not limited to systemic racism, are required for City staff at all levels at
least two times per year, and three times per year for members of our criminal justice system, for improved
awareness of how perceptions and behaviors can be managed from a culturally competent foundation.
Trainings and events should be greatly varied and be done in partnership with, as they are able, local racial or
social justice groups to ensure mutual understanding and proactive confrontation of the role of systemic state-sanctioned oppression; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City establish a task force to consider an apology or reparations for the role that Burlington has played in Chattel Slavery; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the citizen-led Police Commission be entrusted with access to all complaints about sworn officers and the city-council based Public Safety Committee with all such public complaints with the choice on which ones to follow-up on, and that the complaint form as well as the complaint review process be updated to reflect this; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Police Commission will be entrusted with and may ask for the collection of additional quarterly demographic-disaggregated data such as officer-citizen encounters; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Charter Change Committee review and propose amendments to the City Charter that authorize the Police Commission to approve by simple majority any disciplinary decision, including a decision of non-discipline, the Police Chief wishes to implement in a use-of-force case, with such approval including the right to impose a new and different discipline as the Commission deems appropriate; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City should negotiate for mandatory requirements to report use of force, stronger disciplinary measures and full transparency of disciplinary proceedings in police encounters involving brutal or excessive force, or in cases in which there was a failure to report use of force, in the next contract with the Burlington Police Officer’s Association.
Resolution Relating To

ORIGINAL

Linda Blanche, City Attorney's Office
department(s) on
has been sent to the following
I hereby certify that this resolution

distribution:

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Mayor
Approved: July 13, 2021
Clerk
Adopted by the City Council June 29, 2021

Lieutenant, Voting and Records Coordinator

Lori Aube