



CITY OF MODESTO
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE OF MEETING:

June 8, 2021

Date: May 27, 2021

TO: Mayor and City Council

THROUGH: Joseph P. Lopez, City Manager

FROM: Caluha Barnes, Deputy City Manager

SUBJECT: Forward Together Initiative – Working Group and Themes

CONTACT: Edgar R. Garcia, Management Analyst, edgarcia@modestogov.com, 571-5101

DESCRIPTION:

Consider approving the *Forward Together* working group and listening session themes; and directing staff to carry out the appropriate next steps and return to Council with recommendations. (Funding Source: Not applicable)

STRATEGIC PLAN ELEMENT:

This item supports the City of Modesto's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan Area of Focus for Governance and Service Delivery, Goal I: Promote trust and engagement between the community and the City.

BACKGROUND:

In policing, the importance of building trust is the foundation of a strong relationship between law enforcement and the community. Over the course of the past several years, the Modesto Police Department (MPD) has embedded community engagement and trust-building initiatives into the day-to-day work of an officer to help promote trust. MPD has done this through programs such as Coffee with a Cop, National Night Out, Clergy Council, and many others. However, there is still work to be done.

The death of George Floyd in May 2020 triggered protests in hundreds of cities across the United States and renewed the national discussion around police use of force, police-community relations, and reform. Recent events in the City added to the local conversation and calls intensified the demands for the City to address police use of force, police-community relations, and reform issues.

To reaffirm the City's commitment to maintaining and strengthening community trust, Mayor Sue Zwalen announced the launch of a community engagement process to solicit feedback on police-community relations. Branded as *Forward Together*, the community engagement process will both educate and explore solutions that address the broad areas of expressed community

concerns. Further, the community-based process is intended to provide the opportunity for broader community involvement in the development of recommendations to improve the police-community relations in the City of Modesto.

DISCUSSION:

Listening Session Themes

The formal launch of the *Forward Together* initiative was the Listening Session on May 22, 2021. A total of 43 individuals spoke during the Listening Session and the key themes (overarching areas of concern) that emerged were:

- **Accountability** – for police conduct, decisions and how they impact the Modesto community.
- **Policies and Practices** – that support safety, fairness and equity throughout the department and the community.
- **Alternate Response Models** – that ensure the right type of response and resources are applied to a situation.

These themes represent the key issues identified during the Listening Session, those that were provided during public comment at Council meetings prior to the Listening Session and included among those received via email.

Forward Together Working Group

The Forward Together working group will be tasked with extensively reviewing and researching these themes to provide recommendations to Council in the next 6 to 12 months. To arrive at the membership of the working group, staff solicited interest from stakeholder organizations in the community and asked that the organization provide a member that can commit the time and effort required for this very complex and important issue. Based on the feedback from each organization, the following individuals are being recommended to form the working group.

Organization Name	Appointee
ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California)	Thomas Helme
Black Student Union ¹	TBD
City Ministry Network	Wade Patton
CVPC (Central Valley Pride Center) MoPride	Zola Hayes
Downtown Modesto Partnership	Josh Bridegroom
El Concilio	Alvaro Ramirez
Golden Valley Health Center	Yamilet Valladolid
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	Johnny Garcia
Latino Community Roundtable	Amanda Duran
Modesto Chamber of Commerce	Trish Christensen
Modesto City Schools	Tim Zearley
Modesto Clergy Council	Darius Crosby
Modesto Neighborhoods, Inc.	Brad Hawn
Modesto PD Internal Affairs	Aaron Tait
MPOA	Dan Starr
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)	Wendy Byrd

¹ To date staff has been unable to make contact, but efforts to do so continue.

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Stanislaus	Darlene Thomas
Stanislaus County Behavioral Health	Ruben Imperial
Stanislaus County District Attorney	Birgit Fladager
Stanislaus County Interfaith Council (SCIC)	Matthew Mason
Stanislaus & Tuolumne Counties Central Labor Council	TBD
West Modesto Community Collaborative	Perfecto Munoz

Additionally, it is recommended that the *Forward Together* working group be expanded, by receiving, reviewing and selecting 4 additional members from the community. If approved by Council, staff will accept applications for approximately 4 weeks with an application closing date determined by the day the application process opens. The *Forward Together* working group will review these applications at their first meeting tentatively scheduled for July 20th and consider and approve the appointment to fill the 4 vacancies.

Meetings of the full *Forward Together* working group will be open to the public and may be held at various locations throughout the city to further engage the community in the process. The initial several months of the initiative will include educational presentations from a variety of law enforcement stakeholders and subject matter experts to create a shared understanding and language as the group develops recommendations to bring back to the Council.

Staff that is assigned to this initiative will provide periodic updates to Council on *Forward Together's* progress and will implement a communications strategy to ensure that the public is informed and has an opportunity to participate in the process.

FISCAL IMPACTS:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this item at this time. Staff expects to develop cost estimates for recommendations that are brought to the Council for consideration.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

This item was not considered by a Council committee because of its urgent nature.

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:

Staff Recommendation:

Resolution approving *Forward Together* working group and listening session themes; and directing staff to carry out the appropriate next steps and return to Council with recommendations.

Approved By:

Caluha Barnes, Deputy City Manager

Joseph P. Lopez, City Manager

Attachments:

1. Resolution