

CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE MEMORANDUM
#35-2020

DATE: June 22, 2020

TO: Honorable Mayor Meredith Leighty and City Council Members

FROM: Heather Geyer, City Manager 

SUBJECT: Light Pole Banners Recognizing Black Lives Matter

PURPOSE

To revisit the City Council discussion to place banners around the city showing support for our black community and specifically the phrase "Black Lives Matter."

BACKGROUND

At the June 8, 2020 City Council meeting, during a discussion related to the city Police Department in response to the death of George Floyd, Council directed staff to propose light pole banner designs demonstrating the city's support for our black community and commitment to fight racism. At the June 15 City Council meeting, Council provided consensus to move forward with using the two banners that were proposed (included on page 2 of this memorandum). Following the June 15 City Council meeting, several Council members voiced concern to the City Manager that using the phrase "Black Lives Matter" may be confused with organizations that support defunding the police and include anti-police messaging. This is contrary to their intent in using the phrase "Black Lives Matter" on street pole banners.

The phrase "Black Lives Matter" has morphed over time in how it is being used by different groups. Black Lives Matter is a political organization and created the phrase. More information can be found here: <https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

There is confusion around whether or not it is appropriate to use the phrase "Black Lives Matter." We are providing this resource, a video clip from an NBC "Meet the Press" interview with Black Lives Matter co-founder Alicia Garza, who speaks to the slogan "defund the police." <https://www.axios.com/defund-police-black-lives-matter-7007efac-0b24-44e2-a45c-c7f180c17b2e.html>

Staff checked with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) message board and most organizations view the use as a human rights issue not a political issue. Staff also spoke to our GARE Regional Director, Roberto Montoya, about this issue for guidance. He reinforced that use of the phrase "Black Lives Matter" is about acknowledging the moment and black lives. Silence is not neutral in this time and the messages are not mutually exclusive. It is possible for the City to support Black Lives Matter and to be pro-police.

If Council decides to move forward with both banners as the original Council consensus, it is recommended the City include a statement to clarify that the message is not a political message and does not involve support to defund police or anti-police messaging. Staff will draft this message if Council provides direction to move forward with both banners.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The City Manager recommends City Council clarify their position on use of the phrase "Black Lives Matter" on one of the two banners proposed to Council on June 22.

BUDGET/TIME IMPLICATIONS

Banners will be produced in-house and installed by staff; the only hard cost is banner materials. Following clarification on direction, banners will be printed the week of June 22.

STAFF REFERENCE

If Council members have any comments or questions, they may contact Heather Geyer, City Manager, at 303.450.8706 or hgeyer@northglenn.org.

Proposed banners:

