

# NEWS RELEASE

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## County Racism as a Public Health Crisis committee presents Phase II findings

**SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO**—The special review committee convened by Summit County Council in 2020 to examine how to best promote racial equity in the County presented findings to the full Council and community on Monday evening. The work, led by Council President Elizabeth Walters and Council member Veronica Sims with assistance from County Executive Ilene Shapiro and staff, has focused on how the County can improve internal policies, practices, and procedures to foster operations that are antiracist, diverse, equitable and inclusive (ADEI). The committee completed two phases of work and is set to begin the third and final phase in the coming months.

County Council unanimously approved the racism as a public health crisis declaration in the summer of 2020, leading to the establishment of the special review committee and kicking off Phase I of the work. The County initially conducted an examination of internal operations through dialogue and data analysis to assess existing promising practices and determine next steps to address racism in the County. This assessment included analysis of previous efforts, like County Executive Shapiro's Advisory Council on Diversity and Inclusion, formed in 2017 to discuss the County's initiatives and practices relating to employment, contracting and purchasing, representation on commissions and boards, and community engagement, and other initiatives like the Minority Contractor Capital Access program and the Inclusion Marketplace as well as Executive Shapiro's partnership with the Summit County Sheriff's Office to provide scholarship opportunities in an effort to recruit a more diverse workforce.

"The Racism as a Public Health Crisis committee is a progression of work that has been ongoing in my office and the County for the past few years. Summit County is unequivocally committed to becoming an antiracist, diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace. I am proud of all those who have been brave enough to say we can and should do better, especially Council President Walters and Council member Sims, and for their willingness to lean into this work," said County Executive Shapiro. "We have much work to do, but are undoubtedly headed in the right direction, together."

Special review committee members were convened in early 2021 to seek solutions and engage residents. Committee members include elected officeholders and community stakeholders. Later in 2021, the County hired UPD Consulting to facilitate committee meetings, collect, analyze and report on data,

develop a work plan, review data collection and provide county officials with recommendations, ideas and assistance to improve policies and procedures related to diversity, equity and inclusion.

“This work is about change, not blame. If we have learned anything since beginning this journey, it is that systems, not just individual people, are responsible for present inequities,” said Council President Walters. “It is also clear that change will require bold leadership. I am certain my colleagues on County Council, County Executive Shapiro and all County officeholders, in addition to our other County agencies, are willing to engage in the hard work that lays ahead.”

On Monday, Council President Walters and Council member Sims shared the results of the committee and UPD’s work, representing Phase II. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied to assess many aspects of Summit County departments and agencies. To determine findings and develop recommendations, UPD utilized data analysis, staff surveys, interviews and focus groups, and document review. UPD’s [executive summary](#) and [full report](#) show Summit County is on its way to becoming an ADEI organization, but has work to do to foster stronger community, commitment, culture and climate in County operations.

To begin Phase III, Council President Walters and Council member Sims are now assembling a smaller working group to define a vision and set goals for the County to meet. This group will work together in the coming months to develop a longer-term strategy for ADEI work and outline performance management metrics.

“Since engaging in this work, we have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from our internal and external partners. These partners are excited to know the County is committed to taking action, not just talking about the problem,” said Council member Sims. “In the coming months, we will plot a roadmap forward, focusing on recommendations provided by the committee and UPD, and working to deliver a model for other communities and organizations to follow.”

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