



To: Mayor Alan Webber
Santa Fe City Councilors
From: League of Women Voters of Santa Fe County
Date: November 5, 2020
Re: Culture, History, Art, Reconciliation and Truth (CHART) Committee

Mayor Webber and Councilors:

The LWVSFC has been following the development of the city's proposed CHART committee, which would, among its duties, host community conversations, develop recommendations for existing and new statues, remembrances and monuments, and articulate ways in which the people of the city can find common ground about shared histories and support a more humane and compassionate community with full participation by and from all.

The League believes that local governments should encourage input and listen to their constituents, making it easy for constituents to comment on local issues. We support the proposal's intent to address in an open and inclusive manner the existing and potential future issues that have resulted in unrest in the community.

We have reviewed the proposed resolution and amendments to date and have no comments on the proposed composition of the committee or its duties and responsibilities as currently delineated, but we acknowledge and support its emphasis on broad and deep community involvement. We trust that this language means that the committee's work will be open and transparent to ensure buy-in from the many cultural groups here in Santa Fe.

The League vigorously promotes civil discourse through action and education for all government bodies, staff, and citizens for the purpose of improved public policy decisions and processes. Civil discourse means, at a minimum, mutually respectful, courteous, constructive, and orderly communication. We note that the proposal currently includes funding for a culturally competent facilitator on contract to conduct community listening sessions and produce a written report. We hope the governing body will take care to seek a contractor with a track record beyond cultural competence. When addressing issues that arouse deep-seated feelings, it is essential to find a skillful, impartial third party with no ties to any participants and no vested interest in any specific outcome. We suggest that the governing body consider having the facilitator also be involved in the committee meetings.

Organizations exist that provide not only such facilitators but also proven processes to address controversial issues and produce outcomes that are acceptable to multiple stakeholders. As an example, the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University has a track record in helping local and regional entities resolve problems systematically. We do not presume to recommend any one facilitating organization; we merely suggest the Stanford group as an example. The League believes the governing

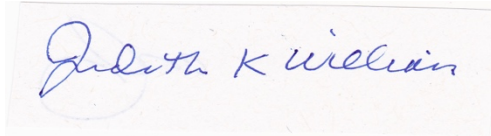
body should look carefully for such an organization to lead its efforts in the interest of increasing the potential for overall success and timeliness.

Convening and documenting listening sessions looks like a start, but the current proposal contains no mention of an approach for conflict resolution or that the process begin with identifying stakeholders and a set of shared facts. With the community experiencing deep-seated divisions that have led recently to near-violence, the governing body needs to ensure that this committee will confront such issues and deal with them skillfully and openly, resulting in true and lasting reconciliation, not just the short-lived appearance of reconciliation or the inability to achieve even that.

The League urges the city to investigate carefully its options in securing appropriate facilitation for this essential but daunting effort.

Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Judy Williams".

Judy Williams, Vice President
League of Women Voters of Santa Fe County