



RESOLUTION NO. 40621

1 BY REQUEST OF MAYOR WOODARDS, DEPUTY MAYOR BLOCKER, AND
2 COUNCIL MEMBER HUNTER

3 A RESOLUTION establishing a communications protocol for any death that
4 occurs while an individual is in the custody of Tacoma Police or as the
5 result of the use of deadly force by Tacoma Police.

6 WHEREAS high-profile cases in Tacoma and across the nation have
7 raised questions regarding the impacts of implicit bias and systemic racism in
8 policing, and lead to calls for increased transparency and communications from
9 law enforcement agencies and the government bodies that oversee them, and

10 WHEREAS the Equity and Empowerment framework, adopted by the City
11 Council in 2014, makes equity a consistent guiding principle across the entire
12 organization and calls out specific goals to guide operational and policy decisions,
13 including a commitment to equity in policy-making, and

14 WHEREAS a Black resident of Tacoma, Manuel Ellis, died in Tacoma
15 Police custody during an incident which ensued on March 3, 2020, and

16 WHEREAS the City Manager and Mayor were notified by Tacoma Police by
17 e-mail on the morning of March 4, 2020, and

18 WHEREAS, under a City policy establishing independent investigations for
19 deaths in custody, Tacoma Police also communicated that the Pierce County
20 Sheriff's Department had been asked to handle the investigation of the death, and

21 WHEREAS a media release from the Pierce County Sheriff's Office on
22 March 4, 2020, provided notice of the death in custody and an account of the
23 events that took place on March 3, 2020, and
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WHEREAS the Tacoma News Tribune reported on the death in custody on March 4, 2020 and March 5, 2020, and

WHEREAS the Pierce County Sheriff's Office did not provide updates to the Mayor or City Manager related to the status of the investigation until June 2020; according to standard procedures for independent investigations, the Tacoma Police Department did not receive any updates on the substance of the investigation, and

WHEREAS, in a press conference held on June 4, 2020, the Ellis family noted a lack of communication from public officials regarding the death of Mr. Ellis, and indicated a belief that attention was drawn to Mr. Ellis's case only after their work with the Tacoma Action Collective and their individual efforts to raise awareness; the death of George Floyd; and the rise of demonstration activity across the nation, as well as in Tacoma, and

WHEREAS the City is developing a long-term approach to reforming the City's criminal justice system and establishing an anti-racist recovery plan, which will involve the City's Citizen Police Advisory Committee and will incorporate feedback from Tacoma residents, the Project Peace Executive Board, key stakeholders, community leaders, those most impacted by systemic racism, and experts in reform, and

WHEREAS, simultaneously, there are interim policy changes and process improvements which can be implemented immediately to improve transparency and accountability in our criminal justice system, and



1 WHEREAS establishing a process for communications for any death
2 occurring in police custody or as the result of the use of deadly force by Tacoma
3 police is one such action, and

4 WHEREAS this communications protocol is intended to be established as
5 an interim process, subject to review and refinement as the City works through a
6 formal and comprehensive reform; Now, Therefore,

7 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA

8 Section 1. That the City Council hereby establishes a communication
9 protocol for any death that occurs while an individual is in the custody of Tacoma
10 Police or as the result of the use of deadly force by Tacoma Police. This
11 communications protocol is intended to be established as an interim process,
12 subject to review and refinement as the City works through a formal and
13 comprehensive reform process.
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15 Section 2. That, following any death occurring in police custody or as the
16 result of the use of deadly force by Tacoma Police, the City Manager is hereby
17 directed to take the following actions:
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- 19 A. Notify the Mayor and City Council of the death as soon as
20 practicable;
- 21 B. Provide the Mayor and City Council with an account of events, the
22 names of involved officers, and the race of the decedent as that
23 information is made available;
- 24 C. As soon as practicable, seek confirmation as to whether the matter
25 requires an independent investigation pursuant to I-940 and
26 SHB 1064. If an independent investigation is required pursuant to
state law, the City Manager will seek confirmation as soon
practicable from the independent investigation team that a family
liaison has been assigned;



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- D. Provide the Mayor with contact information for the deceased person's next of kin as soon as possible once the next of kin has been notified of the death of their loved one; and
- E. Confirm that any community trauma response team has been advised.

Section 3. That the Mayor shall contact the family of any person who dies in Tacoma police custody within 24 hours of receiving their contact information to express condolences for the family's loss, and further, that these actions shall be a Mayoral responsibility going forward.

Adopted _____

Mayor

Attest:

City Clerk

Approved as to form:

City Attorney