



Memorandum Date: June 27, 2023

Order Date: July 11, 2023

TO: Board of County Commissioners

DEPARTMENT: County Administration

PRESENTED BY: Equity Manager Latiffe Amado and Public Information Officer Devon Ashbridge

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: ORDER: In the Matter of Establishing a Board Response to Incidents of Hate, Bias or Violence and Providing the Board Chair with Approval Authority

I. MOTION

Establish Attachment A as the framework for the Board of County Commissioners to formally respond to incidents of hate, bias or violence and provide the Board Chair with authority to approve responses on behalf of the Board.

II. AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

The Board is being asked to approve a response framework for incidents of hate, bias or violence. In the past, it has been difficult for the Board of County Commissioners to offer a timely response to such incidents due to the once-weekly meeting schedule. The proposed framework (Attachment A) will establish guidance for when and how to respond. It also establishes the Board Chair, with the Vice Chair as an alternate, as the representative of the Board of County Commissioners who can approve responses on behalf of the Board.

III. BACKGROUND/IMPLICATIONS OF ACTION

A. Board Action and Other History

On February 28, 2023, Commissioner Buch, with the assent of her fellow commissioners, made a staff assignment to come back to the Board with options related to creating “policies and procedures for response to incidents of hate and bias in the community.”

B. Board Goals

Lane County's stated purpose is to improve lives. Supporting a community that is welcoming of all and that does not tolerate hate, bias and violence is in line with that purpose.

C. Financial and/or Resource Considerations

None. Once enacted, this process will require minimal staff time.

D. Health Implications

Supporting a safe, health county for all may have health implications for residents. Continuing to make it known that hate is not welcome here can contribute to a more welcoming community. When residents and visitors feel more welcome and supported they may experience lower levels of stress.

E. Analysis

It is an unfortunate reality that incidents of hate, bias and violence occur in communities across the United States every day, and in Lane County with far more regularity than often understood.

The Board of County Commissioners has [previously adopted a resolution](#) reaffirming Lane County's values of integrity, respect, openness and accountability, public engagement, the pursuit of excellence, diversity, stewardship and empathy. This resolution has served as the backbone for subsequent statements denouncing, for example, antisemitic flyer distribution in Lane County neighborhoods.

While the Board of County Commissioners has been supportive in formal statements denouncing such behavior, the once-weekly meeting schedule does not allow the Board to respond in a timely manner.

Adopting a process that provides the flexibility for the Board to respond to incidents of hate, bias and violence will allow the Board to act more speedily on its stated values.

F. Alternatives/Options

Option 1: Approve the Board Order and proposed framework as included in this packet.

Option 2: Make adjustments to proposed framework and approve the Board Order with those adjustments.

Option 3: Do not approve the Board Order and continue without an established framework.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend approval of the Board Order as outlined in Option 1 above.

V. TIMING/IMPLEMENTATION

If approved by the Board, implementation would begin immediately.

VI. FOLLOW-UP

No additional follow-up required if approved by the Board.

VII. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Communication Response Plan for Incidents of Violence, Hate or Bias

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF LANE COUNTY, OREGON

ORDER NO: 23-07-11-05

In the Matter of Establishing a Board
Response to Incidents of Hate, Bias or
Violence and Providing the Board Chair with
Approval Authority

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners is committed to providing a safe, welcoming and respectful environment for all who reside in, visit, and pass through our communities; and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners identified strategic areas of focus within the Strategic Plan that include Safe and Healthy County and Vibrant Communities; and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners is resolved in its commitment to the values of integrity, respect, openness and accountability, public engagement, the pursuit of excellence, diversity, stewardship and empathy.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Board of County Commissioners of Lane County **ORDERS** as follows:

1. Adopt the framework for the Board of County Commissioners to respond to incidents of hate, bias and violence in a timely manner as outlined in Attachment A.
2. The Board Chair, with the Vice Chair as an alternate, is granted authority to approve response statements on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners as outlined in Attachment A until such time as the Board of County Commissioners rescinds that authority through a vote.

ADOPTED this 11 day of July, 2023.

Pat Farr, Chair
Lane County Board of Commissioners

Communication Response Plan for Incidents of Violence, Hate or Bias

Purpose:

To determine whether a formal response to an incident of violence, hate or bias is appropriate either to staff from the County Administrator or to the greater community from the Board of County Commissioners.

Values:

In Lane County, we are committed to creating a community that is safe and welcoming for everyone. We will not tolerate hate or discrimination in any form. We encourage all members of our community to join us in speaking out against hate whenever and wherever they see it.

The Board of County Commissioners has pledged its commitment to providing safe, welcoming and respectful communities.

Criteria:

An incident of violence, hate or bias will be considered for a formal response if it meets the following criteria:

- *Proximity* – Did the incident occur within Lane County, a neighboring community or Oregon? An incident occurring outside Lane County should rarely qualify for a formal response and should reflect the incident's unusual or exceedingly severe effect.
- *Severity* – How many people are affected and in what way? This is the most difficult criteria to define and should be considered alongside proximity. An event such as the George Floyd tragedy would not be considered proximate to Lane County; however, its affect on communities across the country was unprecedented. Severity will be evaluated among the Equity Manager, County Administrator, and Public Information Officer.
- *Intersection* – Does the incident relate to services provided by Lane County? If an incident is directly connected to Lane County services the need for a formal response increases. If an incident is not connected to a type of service that Lane County offers a formal response may not be needed unless proximity and severity are significant.
- *Repetition* – Is this an incident that has occurred multiple times? For example, one incident of hate flyers distributed in a limited area may not warrant a response, but two incidents may.
- *Confirmation* – Has the incident been verified by a trustworthy source? Is there documentation or evidence of the incident? If an incident cannot be reasonably confirmed a statement should at minimum be delayed.

Internal vs. External Response:

If an incident meets the intersection and proximity criteria, but doesn't meet the severity criterion, it may be most appropriate for an internal response from the County Administrator to staff.

An incident that includes high degrees of proximity, severity and intersection will likely require an external response for the Board of County Commissioners rather than – or in addition to – a response to staff.

Each incident is different and discussion of internal versus external response may include consideration of factors not included in this document.

General Format of External Response:

Elements of an external response, in the format of a letter from the Board of County Commissioners, will include:

- clear identification of the incident to which the letter is responding.
- clear language denouncing the incident and its effect on victims and larger community.
- acknowledgement that other communities face similar discrimination and bias, if appropriate based on the type of incident.
- reference to the Board's [2016 resolution](#) reaffirming Lane County values of integrity, respect, openness and accountability, public engagement, the pursuit of excellence, diversity, stewardship, and empathy.
- information related to any efforts Lane County may be taking to directly counter incidents of violence, hate or bias in the community.

Review Process:

If a formal response is warranted, the draft response should be reviewed and approved by:

- County Administrator or designee
- County Counsel
- Public Information Officer
- Equity Manager

If an incident involves law enforcement, the Sheriff should also participate in the review process.

Any response *should not compromise the privacy, safety or dignity of victims or others affected by the incident.* Nor should a response in any way compromise a lawful investigation or potential prosecution.

Internal Communication Process:

1. Establish that the incident meets the above criteria and warrants an internal communication.
2. Determine who is most appropriate to draft the communication on behalf of the County Administrator.
3. Send the draft through the review process above.
4. County Administrator sends the final communication to all staff via email.
5. Communication should be sent within 24 hours of becoming aware of the incident.

Board Letter Process:

1. Establish that the incident meets the above criteria and warrants an external response.
2. Determine who is most appropriate to draft the communication on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners.
3. Send the draft through the review process above.
4. Send the approved draft to the Board Chair (or Vice Chair if the Chair is not available) for final approval.¹
5. Release the letter on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners. Share with staff via email, post on the Lane County website, and share on Lane County social media channels.
6. The response should be sent within 24 hours of becoming aware of the incident.

¹ This process will require Board approval to designate review and approval authority to the Board Chair so that delay in response can be avoided.

Communication Response Plan Checklist

Check all that apply:

- ☐ The event occurred within Lane County.
- ☐ The event was severe and affected many people or affected people in a significant way.
- ☐ The event relates to services provided by Lane County.
- ☐ The event is part of a series of repeated events.
- ☐ The details of the event have been confirmed with an appropriate source.

If three or more boxes have been checked, including the final box, review the Plan and determine what level of response is most appropriate.

Remember that any response *should not compromise the privacy, safety or dignity of victims* or others affected by the incident. Nor should a response in any way compromise a lawful investigation or potential prosecution.

Check Your Biases

Everyone has biases, and it's important to be aware of them. Reflect on your own beliefs, experiences, and potential areas that might affect your judgment. Review personal experiences: Recognize that individuals' personal experiences and histories can shape their perceptions of an incident. Be mindful that what may appear insignificant to one person might hold significant emotional weight for another due to past traumas or sensitivities and vice versa.

Sample Response

Dear Lane County,

We are writing to denounce the recent acts of antisemitism that have taken place in our community. We stand in solidarity with all those who have been affected by these hateful actions and want to make it clear that there is no place for white nationalism, hate, or bias speech in our society.

The history of antisemitism is long and painful. Throughout the centuries, the Jewish community has been the target of discrimination, persecution, and violence. From the Middle Ages to the Holocaust, antisemitism has taken many forms and caused immeasurable suffering.

It is important to acknowledge this history and to remember that antisemitism is not a thing of the past. Even today, the Jewish community faces prejudice and discrimination in many parts of the world, including our own. We must all do our part to combat antisemitism and to build a more just and inclusive society.

We must also recognize that antisemitism is not an isolated phenomenon. It is part of a larger pattern of hate and bias speech that affects many different communities. We must stand together against all forms of hate and bigotry, whether they target Jews, Muslims, immigrants, people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals, or any other group.

In Lane County, we are committed to creating a community that is safe and welcoming for everyone. We will not tolerate hate or discrimination in any form. We encourage all members of our community to join us in this effort and to speak out against hate whenever and wherever they see it.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



AMADO Latiffe

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- clear identification of the incident to which the letter is responding.



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- clear language denouncing the incident and its effect on victims and larger community.



AMADO Latiffe

- acknowledgement that other communities face similar discrimination and bias, if appropriate based on the type of incident



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- reference to the Board's [2016 resolution](#) reaffirming Lane County values of integrity, respect, openness and accountability, public engagement, the pursuit of excellence, diversity, stewardship, and empathy



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- information related to any efforts Lane County may be taking to directly counter incidents of violence, hate or bias in the community