

## City leaders consider - Sanford Herald, The (NC) - August 21, 2020

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The city council plans to address racial inequality inside the Sanford city limits, according to Mayor Chet Mann.

Following nationwide protests over police brutality this summer — which were triggered by the death of a Minneapolis man at the hands of police there — the Mann said he knew it was time to take action.

"We had all been trying to determine, as a council, how to respond," he said Friday. "We want to try to move as quickly as we can to get resolved; to get a better understanding of what we need to be doing different and better. Obviously, we're failing somewhere, so we're gonna figure out what that looks like and how we can do a better job."

At a workshop last week, council members began discussions on racial disparities by examining a report on inequality. The report was compiled by the Institute for the Study of the Americas at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill.

Sanford's population is 27% African American, 26% Hispanic and 44.6% white, according to the report. Yet African Americans face significantly higher levels of poverty than the white community, as well as lower incomes, lower rates of home ownership, lack of healthcare and lower graduation rates, according to the report.

Among those who live below the poverty level in Sanford, 30.8% are African American, 24.2% are Hispanic, and 8.4% are white, the report states.

Other findings of the report included:

— In Lee County, 20% of the population is African American, 20% is Hispanic and 58% is white. Among those who live below the poverty level, 23.83% are African American, 26% are Hispanic and 10% are white.

— African American residents have the lowest income of all races and ethnicities in Lee County, according to the report. Compared to the average 2018 white household income of \$58,862, African American households earned only \$30,362.

— Life expectancy rates are 77.8 years for white residents, and 71.1 years for Black residents, according to the report. Among white residents, 91% graduate from high school and 26% earn bachelor's degrees, while among Black residents, 81% graduate from high school and 13% obtain bachelor's degrees.

When it comes to law enforcement, "Even though African Americans make up only 20% of Lee

County's population, they are subject to 37% of the searches by Lee County Sheriff's Department from January 2018-2020," the report states.

"During traffic stops by Lee County sheriff officials, African American males are more likely than White males to be arrested and receive citations. White males are more likely to receive verbal warnings or have no action taken."

Statistics about the Sanford Police Department were not addressed in the report.

Mann said Friday, the reports findings are similar to nationwide trends in cities of similar size. He thinks education is the key to eliminating poverty and addressing other systemic racial issues, he said. But current participation of African Americans in education programs like Central Carolina Works and Lee County Promise is in the single digits, according to Mann.

"Why is that, is the question," he said. "And how can we come up beside people where they are and learn how to connect better?"

Looking at local data is the first step, according to the mayor. The city may assemble a small task force of community leaders to come up with actionable solutions to the problems, Mann said. Reaching out to the African American community is also on the to-do list, he noted.

"The (Black) community has not told us what they want. I don't know if anyone can put their finger on it," Mann said. "This situation didn't create itself overnight and we're not gonna fix it overnight. But if the community wants to better themselves and wants our help, then we've all got to work together. It's time to put the feet to the ground and rubber on the road."

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