

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

AGENDA TITLE: Adopting Ordinance No. 880 - Amending the Shoreline Municipal Code to Modify any and all Masculine or Feminine Language to Gender-Neutral Nouns and Pronouns

DEPARTMENT: City Manager's Office

PRESENTED BY: Jessica Simulcik Smith, City Clerk

ACTION: ☒ Ordinance ☐ Resolution ☐ Motion
 ☐ Discussion ☐ Public Hearing

PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT:

The English language contains many words that have the word “man” in them or that call out an individual’s gender. Gender specific words contribute to gender biases by making gender noticeable and important, treating it as a binary category, and perpetuating stereotypical ideas and views about gender.

Expanding the City’s focus on equity and inclusion has been a City Council Goal since 2016, and in January 2017, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 401, stating that the City is an inviting, equitable, and safe community for all. Removing gender specific words in the Shoreline Municipal Code (SMC) would demonstrate that the City values all residents and treats them as an important part of the Shoreline community, especially those who have been marginalized and underrepresented.

Proposed Ordinance No. 880 (Attachment A) would amend the SMC to prohibit the use of gender specific language and would eliminate any gender language currently existing within the SMC by replacing it with gender neutral language. On January 13, 2020, Council discussed proposed Ordinance No. 880 and directed staff to bring it back for adoption on the January 27, 2020 Consent Calendar.

RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPACT:

If Ordinance No. 880 is passed by Council, the cost to update the Shoreline Municipal Code is approximately \$450 to \$750, which would be paid for out of the existing budget for the City’s contract with the Code Publishing Company.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt proposed Ordinance No. 880.

Approved By: City Manager City Attorney

BACKGROUND

In August 2019, the City Council amended its Rules of Procedure to remove gender pronouns from the language to be inclusive of people who are gender nonbinary. To move Council's policy direction forward, staff reached out to the Code Publishing Company to inquire about the presence of gendered terms in the Shoreline Municipal Code (SMC) and the process for amending the SMC to remove them. A preliminary search of the SMC discovered nearly 300 gendered terms.

Proposed Ordinance No. 880 (Attachment A) would amend the SMC to require all ordinances and resolutions be written in gender neutral terms unless a specification of gender is necessary and intended; and will give the City's codifier the specific authority to edit ordinances as necessary to replace gender specific terms with gender neutral terms.

DISCUSSION

On January 13, 2020, the City Council discussed proposed Ordinance No. 880. The staff report for this discussion can be found at the following link:
<http://cosweb.ci.shoreline.wa.us/uploads/attachments/cck/council/staffreports/2020/staffreport011320-9a.pdf>.

At this meeting, staff proposed two minor edits to the draft Ordinance and Council agreed with them. Proposed Ordinance No. 880 as reflected in Attachment A to this staff report reflects these changes.

COUNCIL GOAL(S) ADDRESSED

City Council Goal 4 is to expand the City's focus on equity and inclusion to enhance opportunities for community engagement. The Council values all community members, including those who have been historically marginalized and underrepresented. Amending the Shoreline Municipal Code to make it gender neutral will be a step towards improving inclusion and equity within the City.

RESOURCE/FINANCIAL IMPACT

If Ordinance No. 880 is passed by Council, the cost to update the Shoreline Municipal Code is approximately \$450 to \$750, which would be paid for out of the existing budget for the City's contract with the Code Publishing Company.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt proposed Ordinance No. 880.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Proposed Ordinance No. 880

ORDINANCE NO. 880

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON
AMENDING THE ENTIRETY OF THE SHORELINE MUNICIPAL
CODE TO MODIFY ANY AND ALL GENDER SPECIFIC
LANGUAGE TO GENDER NEUTRAL LANGUAGE.**

WHEREAS, the Shoreline Municipal Code (“SMC”) was established in 1995 when the City incorporated and currently includes gender-specific pronouns and terms such as he, she, man, or woman; and

WHEREAS, in January 2017, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 401 stating that the City is an inviting, equitable, and safe community for all and the 2019-2021 City Council Goals speak to improving inclusion and equity within the City; and

WHEREAS, it is the City Council’s intent to have the City’s ordinances and resolutions expressed in gender-neutral terms so as to reflect the City’s values of inclusion and equality; and

WHEREAS, the SMC needs to be amended to prohibit the use of gender-specific pronouns and terms, to eliminate any gender preference language currently existing within the SMC, and to replace such language with gender neutral terms;

**NOW THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SHORELINE,
WASHINGTON DO ORDAIN AS FOLLOWS:**

Section 1. Amendments to Shoreline Municipal Code, Chapter 1.05 Code Adoption.

- A. Adding a New Section, SMC 1.05.025 Gender neutral terms.

All ordinances and resolutions enacted, adopted, or amended by the City shall be written in gender-neutral terms unless a specification of gender is necessary and intended. No ordinance or resolution is invalid because it does not comply with this section.

- B. Adding a New Subsection G to SMC 1.05.040 Codification authority.

G. Editing ordinances as necessary to replace gender-specific terms with gender-neutral terms.

- C. Amending Section 1.05.050 Definitions.

H. Gender. ~~The masculine~~ Gender-neutral pronouns includes the feminine and masculine genders ~~neuter~~;

Section 2. Directions to City Codifier.

- A. Subject to final approval by the City Attorney, the City’s codifier, Code Publishing Company, has authority to update terms within every title, chapter, and section of the Shoreline Municipal Code,

when appropriate, as it exists on the effective date of this Ordinance to provide for gender neutral terms.

- B. Gender-specific subject (he, she), object (him, her), and possessive (his, hers) pronouns and gender-specific terms (man, woman) and gender-specific positions (chairman, policeman) shall be replaced by gender-neutral terms unless the specification of gender is necessary.

Section 3. Severability. Should any section, subsection, paragraph, sentence, clause, or phrase of this ordinance or its application to any person or situation be declared unconstitutional or invalid for any reason, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Ordinance or its application to any person or situation.

Section 4. Publication and Effective Date. A summary of this Ordinance consisting of the title shall be published in the official newspaper and shall take effect five days after publication.

PASSED BY THE CITY COUNCIL ON JANUARY 27, 2020.

Mayor

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Jessica Simulcik Smith
City Clerk

Margaret King
City Attorney

Date of Publication: January 30, 2020
Effective Date: February 4, 2020