



PINELLAS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Office of Commissioner Janet C. Long

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners
CC: Barry Burton, Pinellas County Administrator
Jewel White, Pinellas County Attorney
Rick Kriseman, Mayor – City of St. Petersburg
Anthony Holloway, St. Petersburg Police Chief
Bob Gualtieri, Pinellas County Sheriff

FROM: Commissioner Janet C. Long *Janet C. Long*
District 1, Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners

SUBJECT: Murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Trayvon Martin, Amadou Diallo, Tamir Rice, Philano Castille, Emmet Till, et al; Protests, Rioting, Impacts of Poverty, Health Impacts of COVID-19, Criminal Justice Reform

DATE: June 3, 2020

For too long many of us have remained silent as we have witnessed decades of injustice that have led to the ongoing protests and riots unfolding not just all over our Country but, across the World.

As leaders in this community, we collectively cannot remain silent any longer. All of these issues are very difficult and hard to address because they all make us so uncomfortable in our own skin. We don't speak up because we just don't know the right things to say to make it better and we don't want to offend anyone. That must end. It doesn't feel good; it may not be politically correct, it may even be twisted as partisan politics. To address the issue of racism in our society is something that most of us have never searched deeply enough within our souls to say or do something profound or powerful about.

I was awake in the middle of the night last night, 3:00 A.M. to be exact. It was quiet, my heart was, and still is, aching. Like many of us, I want to do something, and I don't know what to do. As a white woman, a wife, a mother, and a grandmother it feels like I should be crying - yet the tears do not come.

These powerful emotions of hopelessness and fear are difficult to fight through. The shocking news of United States Military on our streets, videos of protests and violence, ransacking of businesses, rioting and constant attention on the moment and its sheer ugliness in the midst of a global pandemic, all while we are preparing for a potentially major hurricane season, is terrifying. I am deeply worried about my

grandchildren and the message we are sending to that generation. In an effort to DO SOMETHING, I would appreciate your consideration of the following:

1. Let us hold a public meeting - in person - perhaps at Tropicana Field - to gather our community - Black, White, Asian, Hispanic, as well as the law enforcement community and elected officials, to have a conversation about changing the dynamic, and to listen & grow.
2. Take a fresh look at the report we all received eight years ago on The Five Pockets of Poverty in Pinellas County. Has it improved, is it different today? In light of current events, what have we NOT addressed?
3. Senator Rouson and Senator Brandes worked valiantly to change elements of the criminal justice system in recent legislative systems - they made great progress – but, I don't recall that it made it through the process to the Governor's desk. We need to make immediate changes in this area and have a conversation and listen to our community.

Why is it that we so often work to address hunger, poverty, the economy, jobs, etc. and have made so much progress in many of these areas but, yet we don't move forward with our discussions on race? For heaven's sake we just sent another manned mission to the International Space Station - so, it surely isn't just about the money, or lack thereof, as a solution.

It goes without saying that the issues are much more nuanced than any memo is able to capture but, these ideas are a beginning. We know we cannot keep on with this civil unrest. Solutions are going to have to come from us, local elected officials, because we know we are not going to get this kind of movement at the Federal level and have not been able to address it at the State level, either. I need to do a better job of listening. We need to do a better job of listening. Let's really open the wound - dig deep - rely on our Faith to lead us in the right direction and just be honest about the root causes of what is causing so much pain in our society. The gift of Faith allows us to know with great certainty that Hope lies right in the middle of Faith and Charity.

Thank you for listening. And, now for the moment, I **will** be silent - BUT - not for long - it's time to listen and for ACTION!