



July 7, 2020

Dear Martinez Community:

Recent events in our community have highlighted both racial tensions and matters of free speech. I write to you today to provide a full account of these events and to address questions that we have been receiving at City Hall the last few days. My hope is that this information will both inform our community and provide clarity on the facts and how we plan to move forward together.

On the evening of June 27, the Martinez Police Department responded to a report of anti-black hateful flyers posted on sidewalks near downtown. These offensive flyers threatened to harm those supporting the Black Lives Matter movement.

In response to these flyers, I issued a statement on behalf of the City Council on June 30, 2020 stating:

“The fact that something so morally offensive as the two flyers found in the edges of our downtown area exists is just wrong and morally repugnant. It offends me personally; it offends our entire City Council and frankly is offensive to the community at large. Martinez does not tolerate hate-related crimes and as a community, we need to stand together to promote unity and acceptance of all people. This hateful, hurtful, and offensive act does not and will never define our City.”

Members of the community approached the City asking permission for a temporary public mural in the Downtown. The specific request noted: “Given the hateful rhetoric on the flyers this past weekend, an affirming message in support of Black lives, facilitated and approved by the city . . . is appropriate.” The community group, Martizians for Black Lives, who painted the mural, obtained a special event permit with the City that provided specifics for the project, including the materials used, the artwork to be painted and the protocols involved to ensure social distancing during the event. The group asked for an expedited review by the City to allow for this mural to be painted in a timely manner, so it could serve as a response to the offensive flyers from the weekend before.

Concurrent with review of this permit, on July 1, the Martinez City Council took urgency action and adopted by unanimous vote a resolution on equity and justice for all. The resolution states in part that as “...city leaders, we must and will listen to the voices of those in our communities who have suffered bias and have been treated unfairly. We



must hear their words and turn them into effective action to protect the civil rights of every person.”

Consistent with this resolution, on July 2, our City Manager approved the Black Lives Matter (BLM) mural to be painted on Court Street. Approval of the use of our streets sends a message to all that African-Americans and other people of color are equal members of our community and hateful rhetoric will be actively rejected by our City. Feelings that isolate a single race with hate violates our values as a community and our civic institutions.

Since the mural has been painted, an attempt to paint over the mural and a separate incident that resulted in the brandishing of a firearm at the mural site have taken place. It is my sincere hope that our community’s expression of support for some members of our community does not unnecessarily stir up anger in others.

The City of Martinez has received new requests to use City streets to share other ideas or murals. The consideration of such requests is significantly different than the BLM mural at issue now. The City made a determination that a swift response to hateful rhetoric required a more timely consideration of the BLM permit. Doing so was consistent with and in furtherance of the City Council’s commitment to support equity and justice for all and to send a clear statement rejecting the prior week’s hateful flyers. The City supports the intended message of the BLM mural, namely, that all persons, no matter their race, are entitled to be treated with equality in our society. The City will be considering developing a program by which it will consider the future placement or erection of permanent murals or other expressions on public property in support of social justice and racial equality.

These are challenging times in our nation, our state, and our City. I am proud of our community and our shared belief in the equal worth of all people, and our City’s efforts to set an example of how we live up to that moral imperative.

With Respect for All,

Rob Schroder
Mayor