

STAFF REPORT



Meeting Date:	June 26, 2023	Meeting Title:	Town Council Special Meeting
Submitting Department:	Community Development	Presenter:	Susan Scarlata & Equity Task Force Members
Agenda Item	Equity Task Force: Land Acknowledgement	Public Comment:	Yes

Purpose & Policy Considerations.

Town Council prioritized the creation of an Equity Task Force in 2021 and approved seven recommendations from this Task Force in December of 2022 including one to begin Council meetings with a Land Acknowledgment and connect with Native Tribal members.

Requested Action.

Staff requests that Council consider the recommended Land Acknowledgment to utilize at the beginning of Town Council meetings and actions for continued relationship building between the Town of and local indigenous tribal members.

Recommendations.

Staff recommends that Council consider the recommended Land Acknowledgement and actions for continued relationship building, discuss, ask clarifying questions, and approve the Land Acknowledgement and commitments.

Background.

Council moved to establish an Equity Task Force in August of 2021. Staff put out a call for applications in December of 2021 and received 37 applications. Application materials contained the following description of the impetus for and goals for the Task Force: "The Town of Jackson is launching an Equity Task Force to advise the Town on equity and inclusion strategies and make recommendations to the Town and Town Council on priorities, policies, and solutions to help bring a wider variety of voices and perspectives into conversations to, ultimately, inform decision-making." Council interviewed and appointed nine Task Force members in February of 2022 and staff began facilitating monthly Equity Task Force meetings in April of 2022. In December of 2022, Task Force members presented seven recommendations for expanding equity and inclusion, which included one for a Land Acknowledgement and fostering of relationships with local indigenous tribal members. In April of 2023, the Town hosted a workshop led by Cherokee Brown, an enrolled member of the Northern Arapaho tribe about "Mending Relationships." It was a powerful, experiential workshop that builds understanding about indigenous peoples' lived experience. Staff continues to stay engaged with Ms. Brown, Patti Baldes, who leads the Wind River Native Advocacy Center and works with her husband Jason Baldes on the Wind River Native Tribal Buffalo Initiative, and Kate Jensen at the Wind River Community Alliance.

Analysis & Key Policy Questions.

The Town also administered an Equity & Inclusion survey across the community, which identified that the majority (over 70%) of the nearly 700 community members surveyed felt that equity work is something they want our government and community to continue to focus its time and resources on implementing. There is broad-based community support for this work and effort. From the Equity Task Force's very first meeting, one recurrent theme has been a recognition that this group was created for a two-year period. Task Force members are keenly aware of what a brief timeframe this is considering the complexity of issues related to equity and inclusion. The Task Force is aware that equity and inclusion are not things that happen quickly, or that are ever fully "done" or completely "accomplished." Instead, they are long-term and continuous. The recommendation the Task Force made for Town Council to begin meetings with a Land Acknowledgement that recognizes the earliest inhabitants of our area and their living relatives, is one way to build a thread between our government and that of nearby tribal nations. The same way other parts of Town meetings place emphasis on particular traditions and history, the Land Acknowledgement will regularly draw attention to the Town's relationship with indigenous tribes. The recommendation to incorporate a Land Acknowledgement in Council meetings

came with a recommendation for continued commitment to relationship building with local indigenous tribal members. Below, please find the proposed Land Acknowledgement and a list of potential related commitments.

Land Acknowledgement: We recognize that the land we are gathering on is the ancestral homeland of the Mountain Shoshone People who stewarded it for thousands of years and that many other tribes also lived upon and cared for this area including the Bannock, Blackfoot, Crow, Eastern Shoshone, Gros Ventre, Nez Perce, Northern Arapaho tribes, and others. With gratitude, we honor Indigenous Peoples, past and present. We also acknowledge the sovereignty of the Native nations closest to Jackson whose land was taken through broken treaties that resulted in the creation of the Wind River and Fort Hall Indian Reservations. We recognize this acknowledgement is simply a first step. The Town of Jackson is committed to continued and informed action to connect with indigenous people.

Commitments for Continued Action

- Host two additional “Mending Relationships” workshops with Cherokee Brown for Councilmembers and staff who could not make the first one due to scheduling conflicts to experience it.
- Organize a journey for Councilmembers, Town staff, and Task Force members to Travel to the Wind River Native Tribal Buffalo Initiative outside of Lander, Wyoming.
- Host Patti Baldes’ Buffalo art on the lawn of Town Hall later this summer and fall.
- Commit to reconsidering and potentially updating Town Land Acknowledgement on a regular basis.

Key Question #1: Does Council want to discuss the Land Acknowledgement or related commitments?

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Possible Alternatives.

Council decide not to utilize the recommended Land Acknowledgement.

Comprehensive Plan & Priority Alignment.

The Comp Plan’s third Common Value is ‘Quality of Life,’ which highlights that our community takes pride in our local identity and community character. The Comp Plan states, “Residents and visitors have become accustomed to high-quality life safety, transportation, educational, social, cultural, and recreational services.” Considering if this is true for all residents, the Equity Task Force has recommended an update to the Comp Plan with a more direct focus on equity.

Fiscal Impact.

At its August 30, 2021 meeting, Council authorized Equity Task Force members to be paid \$450 monthly totaling \$48,600 annually for the 9-member Task Force. Incorporating a Land Acknowledgement will not have additional related costs. The commitments listed will have varied costs, which can likely be covered under the Professional Services line item in the Community Development budget and Town Council and Department Travel, Training and Meetings funds.

Staff Impact.

The Community Development Department is using staff capacity to steward the Equity Task Force. As this department seeks to shrink the distance between the people impacted by decisions and those making them, the Equity Task Force is an appropriate and fruitful use of staff time and resources, as this endeavor helps bring a wider variety of voices and perspectives into conversations to, ultimately, inform decision-making. Staff spent approximately 4 hours developing this Land Acknowledgement and list of commitments and working through them with the Task Force.

Attachments or Links.

NA

Suggested Motion.

I move to adopt and start Council Meetings with the recommended Land Acknowledgement.

I move to direct staff to execute the Commitments for Continued Action set forth in this staff report.