From:	Smai Fullerton
To:	Mayor Staff; Grp. City Council and City Web Site
Subject:	2021 Budget
Date:	Sunday, August 2, 2020 1:26:57 PM

Dear Mayor Engen and City Council,

I join the calls of the massive, growing number of people in the United States and here in Montana who support the Black Lives Matter movement and want to see **tangible** actions of power and wealth redistribution to BIPOC from elected officials and institutions.

The 2021 Missoula budget is but the very first of steps to realize antiracist policies. Unfortunately, a budget that increases police funding by over $600,000 while providing only a small fraction of that to housing and community development shows that it is not a priority for the City to take any meaningful action to provide resources to BIPOC and reduce the harm done by the deeply ingrained systemic racism that has *always* been the foundation and basis of all 50 United States from this country's birth.

Thanks to the activism and educational efforts the leaders in the BIPOC community have offered Missoula for many years, I've learned why your proposal for the 2021 budget is exactly the reaffirmation and re-entrenchment of systemic racism you supposedly believe "does not have any part in our community." You've given very public nods to "listening" and doing a research project to determine if racism exists (while not even taking the smallest of actions to schedule a training with the Montana Racial Equity Project). All the while, you've kept white supremacy safely entrenched and reflected in our budget priorities.

A wide body of research proves that more training for the police does not work to curtail systemic racism and racial violence. Body cameras do not work, especially if the footage is not released to the public and strict accountability measures and oversight do not exist. It is unfortunate that you are turning toward solutions that have already been implemented in communities across the US and have conclusively been shown not to reduce the harm and terror against communities of color in the sweeping way we ***need*** as a society that supposedly cares about and values human life and dignity for all people, not just white ones.

The increase for police in Missoula this year is over $100,000 that of last year’s police budget increase. Considering the current calls for change, this increase is of particular concern. Do you understand why it is hard to see how are you possibly "listening" by unveiling this budget plan after all of the outcry by people affected by policing in this community? Why do we need riot gear in Missoula? Is it because of the Black Lives Matter movement? Why do we need an armored personnel vehicle? Why are we spending $19 million for policing and only $2 million for housing and community development? Citizens need opportunities, healthcare, and a safe place to live to thrive. Now more than ever is your chance to re-think how the forces of power in our community are either enhancing or hurting this objective, and prioritize relevant solutions.

I rushed to ask how to support and fundraise for the LEARN project when it was announced, and it was a hard pill to swallow the next week as a white person how my lack of experience doing antiracist work was harmful and counter-productive. Like you, I **must** listen to the BIPOC leaders in this community, correct my course, and support the actions they propose will lead to positive change for Missoulians. It is clear from the City Council meetings I have

watched that many of you are grappling with the same uncomfortable realities and missteps because of your lack of experience addressing these issues at such a deep and fundamental level. I'm glad you say you are listening, but trust is lost when you don't write laws and budgets accordingly.

That is why more than anything I urge you to ***do better at actually listening and responding to what the BIPOC community in Missoula is saying will help the BIPOC community in Missoula.***

I urge you as a resident of Missoula to **drastically reduce the funding increase to the police department for 2021**, including removing funding for riot gear and the armored personnel vehicle. If the statistics you and the police chief are fast to present are true about the lack of force used by police in Missoula, there is absolutely zero need whatsoever to add these militarization tactics to the arsenal of the police department. **I urge you to redistribute this funding instead to help, not harm, marginalized communities in Missoula through housing and community development programs that empower and aid people to live the lives they deserve.**

Thank you,
Smai Fullerton