



## Message From Your City Manager

Friday, June 5, 2020

Eugene,

For more than three months, I've been writing you a letter to keep you connected and informed through the pandemic of COVID-19. Starting today, this letter is shifting to a whole community focus. While I will continue to share important milestones about COVID-19, you're probably getting our [weekly community email](#) with the most up to date information on reopening and long-term community recovery (you can [sign up to receive that here](#)).

The last two weeks have been extremely painful. Like many of you, I'm experiencing a full range of emotions and struggling to hold deep sadness, anger, fear, grief and regret. My heart aches for George Floyd's family and for all people of color who live every day with the fear that they, or their family, will be called names, be beaten or killed based on the color of their skin. While I feel a deep sorrow and the heaviness of the exact moment we are in, I'm committed to staying in these feelings while leading us in a direction that addresses systemic racism and bias in our community and organization.

It's hard to summarize the last week of activities here in Eugene. From the violence and destruction of Friday night to Sunday's protest and march where thousands and thousands of community members peacefully gathered and marched in support of Black Lives Matter. The organizers shared their anger and frustration and also talked about the need for more love. We've continued to have protests and marches each night this week that have allowed many voices to join in the call for equity and justice.

After watching footage of Friday evening and surveying the downtown on Saturday, I consulted with the Eugene City Council and declared a state of emergency. Later that same day, I implemented a 9 p.m. curfew for downtown that was extended citywide at midnight. We continued to have curfews on Sunday and Monday with different times and areas. I did not reach any of these decisions with ease as I understand and support the rights of our community to protest. Between the businesses being destroyed, looting, "kill the cops" graffiti, gunshots fired in downtown and the individual who drove through the protest and stepped out with an automatic rifle around his neck, I felt all of Eugene was at risk for serious injury or deaths. And those are just a few examples. Even last night as we escorted a peaceful demonstration and march through Downtown and the Whiteaker, rocks were thrown through the windows of other local businesses in another part of town.

Why a curfew? On Friday night, the protest shifted to a riot very rapidly and we were quickly beyond our resources. I'm grateful to Springfield and Lane County who assisted us as we worked to deescalate the violence and destruction and maintain the safety of human lives. When looking at tools to help us maintain community safety, the curfew felt the most equitable and safe. Limiting the size of gatherings creates the possibility of bias and places our public safety team in the position of choosing which areas and groups to enforce. The boundary limits of the curfew were intended to focus on the area most at risk, and most recently victimized, by the Friday evening riots. As the evening went on and the curfew went into effect, the protest groups moved outside the boundaries which led to eventual citywide curfews. After two nights of the curfew, many reached out to me and shared their frustration about not knowing when it took effect and wanting to be alerted if we instituted another one. I asked our team to look into this and most of you received a [loud text alert](#), or two, communicating the curfew was in effect. It's an example of how we are listening and adjusting each day. I'm hoping we never have another curfew and that we continue working together to stay safe as we voice our anger and hopes through the night.

The tools used by Eugene Police over the weekend are a source of concern for many of you. I expect we will continue to have a community conversation about this as we work through our systems of accountability. I've heard personal stories of how individuals were impacted and their fear and experiences of trauma through some of these actions. One example is the Eugene Weekly reporter who was authorized to be in the area, had his credentials, but was struck with a can of teargas. I feel terrible this happened and immediately reached out to the Weekly when I learned of it and apologized. I had made a specific allowance for credentialed media to be exempted from the curfew. We made immediate changes when this happened to require journalists to be more readily identifiable and visible. I also understand and respect the risk all journalists take when they report in dynamic events. No one feels good about what happened, it's not what was intended, and we will review this, and other complaints, through our systems of accountability. In addition to Eugene Police Internal Investigations, Eugene has an [Independent Police Auditor](#) and [Civilian Review Board](#) to ensure our accountability. In response to the weekend's events, community members have forwarded and asked Eugene to comply with policies listed in the "8 Can't Wait" campaign. I was encouraged to see that we haven't waited for those 8; [here's a review of our current policies as they relate to the article](#).

Our community has a tremendous amount of resilience, though times like this are not about bouncing back and feeling better. They are about moving forward and making changes to be better. There isn't a quick action or a fast fix. Moving forward is going to take some deep reflection, listening, understanding and commitment to change. And, it starts with each of us doing our own work. Even after years of unraveling my own history and relationship with race and class, I keep needing to look again at what else I need to learn and acknowledge. Right now, I'm reading [How To Be An Antiracist](#) by Ibram X. Kendi and doing a lot of listening to our community. This is an important and emotional time in our history and I'm tremendously optimistic about the changes ahead and how Eugene will emerge from this a stronger and more united community. If you're looking for a way to engage, learn and make a difference, there are so many places to start. The Eugene Public Library is working on a resource list and I'll share that next week when it's ready to be published. In the meantime, here's a [Guide to Allyship](#) that helps explain what it means to be an ally.

We have a lot going on, Eugene. We're still in a pandemic and more things will open up as we [move into Phase 2](#), but we have a long recovery ahead. Next week, we'll be giving an overview to the [City Council](#) about our tools and strategies to support the unsheltered and vulnerable populations in our community. Our temporary designated shelter sites are still operational as we seek longer term solutions for the current occupants and new micro-sites for ongoing services. That said, earlier today as we entered phase 2, Lane County closed their emergency respite center which was providing safe shelter for around 45 individuals.

If you feel a little heavy after reading all of this, you're probably in good company. I've been encouraging everyone to stay in their feelings as much as possible while also finding ways to find joy in the small things and hope for the big. We can do this a step at a time, but we really need to do it together.

In community spirit,

Sarah Medary  
City Manager Pro Tem

## Previous Letters

- [Community Letter from May 29, 2020](#)
- [Community Letter from May 22, 2020](#)
- [Community Letter from May 15, 2020](#)
- [Community Letter from May 8, 2020](#)
- [Community Letter from May 1, 2020](#)
- [Community Letter from April 24, 2020](#)
- [Community Letter from April 17, 2020](#)
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- [Community Letter from April 3, 2020](#)
- [Community Letter from March 27, 2020](#)
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- [Community Letter from March 13, 2020](#)
- [Community Letter from March 7, 2020](#)