



CITY OF ANACORTES

Laurie Gere, Mayor

904 6th Street Anacortes, WA 98221

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PRESS RELEASE

City response to Black Lives Matter Sidewalk Chalk Art

June 4, 2020

On Thursday morning, city staff cleaned the Black Lives Matter sidewalk chalk art in front of the Post Office in response to a citizen complaint. Staff routinely perform maintenance on city streets and sidewalks in response to complaints, and their work Thursday was done at the request of their supervisor in the ordinary course of business. The cleaning of the chalk art was done without malice or ill-intent, and without direction from city elected officials or any department head.

Mayor Gere, Councilmembers, and Police Chief Small recognize that the chalk art is a peaceful tribute to victims of systemic racism and inequality, and regrets Thursday's removal of it.

At Mayor Gere's direction, expressive, non-obscene, non-permanent sidewalk chalk art will not be removed by city staff in the future. Peaceful, non-destructive expression and protest are protected under the First Amendment. However, the City cannot allow and will immediately remove any permanent, obscene, or destructive graffiti, or material placed on structures, and will prosecute vandalism.

Mayor Gere addressed the issue of systemic racism in our country and community in her [address to the city Wednesday night](#) (video starting at 32:30), asking all members of the community to come together to combat injustice, applauding all those in our community for standing up for what they believe in, and respecting everyone's right to peaceably assemble and demonstrate. As expressed in a [joint resolution of the City Council and mayor last fall](#), Anacortes is committed to maintaining our city as a welcoming, safe, and just community for everyone and condemns acts of racism, harassment, and intimidation.

We recognize the legitimate and nationwide concerns about excessive use of force. While we have confidence in our local police, we will engage in a full review of our policies and procedures to ensure that our community is confident in the good work of our police department and our other city departments. Mayor Gere, the City Council, and all city departments are open to that conversation, and ensuring that we are doing the best work we can for the people of Anacortes. We promise to continue this dialogue with the active participation of our community.