

Meeting Place: Remote

Meeting Called To Order: 6:01, Monday, May 24, 2021

Chair read the Chairperson Statement.

Roll Call: Loreen Flockerzie, Mo Lyons, Peter Michael Smith, Wendy Goodman, Wid Perry

Regrets: Daniel Yalowitz, Carolyn McDaniel

Others Present: Keith Barnicle, Communications Director, Town of Greenfield

Public Open Forum: No guests in attendance.

Juneteenth Sub-Committee Report and Discussion

Subcommittee (Daniel, Wendy, Pete) met twice to draft Juneteenth Proclamation and Informational Primer – a public statement acknowledging the significance of June 19th in American History.

Subcommittee was hoping to add resources and events but no local Juneteenth celebrations or gatherings were scheduled.

It was suggested that we add a statement about COVID restrictions and express our hopes for Juneteenth 2022.

Suggested revision: “Out of an abundance of precaution due to the Corona Virus pandemic, we were unable to celebrate Juneteenth as we as a HRC would like to and which it is deserving. We look forward to a Greenfield-based celebration at this time next year.”

The committee discussed the use of ‘Human Rights Commission of Greenfield’ vs. Greenfield Human Rights Commission (GRHC).

We should be consistent in our practice.

Motion: Name our body identified as Human Rights Commission of Greenfield in all of our public affairs and documentation.

Motion seconded, passed 3-0 with two abstaining

Can we continue to abbreviate the Commission as HRC? (Yes)

Do we want to add the Primer to the Proclamation? (Yes)

Note: The State and city celebrates Juneteenth on Friday, June 18th this year.

A discussion was held regarding the strength of our commitment (now) for a Juneteenth 2022 celebration. Do we want to put a stake in the ground now and be more forcefully committed to a celebration or be more fluid in our calendar?

Should we add our Vision Statement to the Proclamation?

(Keith notes that the Mayor's Office has approved our Vision Statement but that the Mission Statement will require further discussion (make an agenda item for June Meeting).

Motion: That the Human Rights Commission of Greenfield formally adopt and embrace the Proclamation as amended.

Motion seconded and passed, 5-0.

PRESS RELEASE

CITY OF GREENFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS
Greenfield Human Rights Commission

Recognizing and Celebrating Juneteenth

As individuals, citizens and residents of Greenfield, and members of the Human Rights Commission (HRC) of Greenfield, we proclaim our active support and engagement with the upcoming annual holiday of *Juneteenth*.

Each year, Juneteenth – also known as Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Liberation Day, and Emancipation Day – commemorates and celebrates the anniversary date of the June 19, 1865 announcement by Union Army General Gordon Granger, proclaiming freedom from slavery in Texas. Juneteenth was made a legal holiday here in our Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as proclaimed by Governor Baker in 2020. Currently, Juneteenth is recognized in forty seven states across the United States.

Residents, friends, and allies throughout our city and across Franklin county are actively engaged in the spirited work of confronting our American legacy of racialized violence and injustice. The Human Rights

Commission of Greenfield wishes to acknowledge this holiday, its meaning, and the ongoing reparations work being done in efforts to reckon with the lasting impact of slavery and racial bias in the United States. The struggle to build and maintain civil rights, human rights, justice, equity, and inclusion in every realm of our lives in our city is ongoing, and the HRC is committed to advocating for the rights of citizens of Greenfield.

The Human Rights Commission of Greenfield supports and encourages residents to learn, to get involved, and to find your way to become active in sharing in the importance of Juneteenth. We believe that this is a holiday to be celebrated by *all* people in recognition of the end of legal slavery in our country, even as we continue the work of confronting the challenges that remain. It is one step toward healing our world.

Out of an abundance of precaution due to the coronavirus pandemic, we are unable to celebrate Juneteenth as we as a HRC would like to and of which it is deserving. The Human Rights Commission of Greenfield looks forward to a near future when celebrations of our equality can be held together, in community. The vision for our future holds that Consideration for human rights is integrated into every decision made in the city of Greenfield and every citizen is empowered to advocate for the protection of their rights and the rights of others.

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Juneteenth...An Intro and Primer for Those Curious to Know

Compiled by Daniel Cantor Yalowitz, Ed.D.

Juneteenth (June 19th each year) is also known as Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Liberation Day, and Emancipation Day. It is a holiday celebrating the emancipation of those who had been enslaved in the United States. Originating in Galveston, Texas, it is now celebrated annually throughout the United States, with varying degrees of “official” recognition. It is commemorated on the anniversary date of the June 19, 1865 announcement by Union Army General Gordon Granger, proclaiming freedom from slavery in Texas.

President Abraham Lincoln’s *Emancipation Proclamation* had officially outlawed slavery in Texas and the other states in rebellion against the Union almost two and a half years earlier. Enforcement of the Proclamation generally relied in the advance of Union troops. Texas, being one of the most remote of the slave states, had a low presence of Union troops as the U.S. Civil War ended; thus enforcement there had been slow and inconsistent before Granger’s announcement. Although Juneteenth generally celebrates the end of slavery in the United States, it was still legal and practiced in two Union border states (Delaware and Kentucky) until later that year when ratification of the *Thirteenth Amendment* to the U.S. Constitution abolished chattel slavery nationwide in December of that year.

Celebrations date to 1866, at first involving church-centered community gatherings in Texas. It spread across the Southern U.S. and became more commercialized in the 1920s and 1930s, often centering on a food festival. During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, it was eclipsed by the struggle for postwar civil rights, but grew in popularity again in the 1970s with a focus on African American freedom and arts. By the 21st century, Juneteenth was celebrated in most major cities across the United States. Activists are campaigning for the United States Congress to recognize Juneteenth as a national holiday. Hawaii, North Dakota, and South Dakota are the only states that do not recognize Juneteenth, according to Congressional Research Service.

Modern observance is primarily in local celebrations. Traditions include public readings of the *Emancipation Proclamation*, singing such traditional songs as “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” and “Lift Every Voice and Sing” and reading of works by noted African American writers such as Ralph Ellison

and Maya Angelou, among many others. Celebrations also include rodeos, street fairs, cookouts, family reunions, park parties, historical reenactments, and “Miss Juneteenth” contests. The *Mascogos*, descendants of Black Seminoles, who escaped from U.S. slavery in 1852 and settled in Coahuila, Mexico, also celebrate Juneteenth.

Keith will ensure the above is posted on all the City sites and platforms. Keith will also check with the Recorder to see if they will publish it (free).

If we need to do an ‘interview’ to get the Proclamation published, Daniel should be our spokesperson.

Motion made at 6:45 to adjourn meeting (Mo). Motion Seconded and approved. Meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting: Monday, June 14th 2021 at 6:00 p.m. Submit agenda items to Loreen no later than noon, Monday, June 7th, 2021.