

Dear Mayor Compton and fellow members of the Town Council,

I have reviewed the proposed Resolution 2023-01. Acknowledging the Town's history of racism is a significant step both in recognizing what we want the Town of Washington Grove to be and in repairing our relationships with neighboring communities. Because this resolution is so essential, it's crucial that we get it right. I have carefully reviewed it and below have set forth issues I've identified with the proposal. I've characterized the issues as overarching, specific, or minor. At the end of this document, I have included a proposed revision to the draft. I do not intend my revision to be a final document, but hope that it can serve as a starting place for further discussion.

- I urge you to review the "Overarching Issues" before you look at my revision, so that you can keep them in mind as you review it. I believe that it is critical that we discuss them as soon as possible.
- The authors of the original proposal clearly put a great deal of effort into crafting it. I therefore added the "Specific Issues" section below to explain why I made virtually every change that I did. Some of these specific issues reiterate "Overarching Issue" themes.

Overarching Issues

1. It's unclear whether you intend for this document to cover the past practices of the Camp Meeting Association (WGCMA) as well as the practices of the Town. Some of the commenters clearly do not believe that this is appropriate. Ken McCathran, for example, stated that we should not speak for the WGCMA because "that association was part of the Methodist Church, which would have to address the issues that occurred under their purview. The United Methodist General Conference, which speaks for the church, released a statement on May 5, 2000." ***This is an important point that requires discussion.***
 - If we decide we want to include the practices of the WGCMA, we need to make this clear, as I have tried to do in my draft (so far, I don't really have an opinion about including the practices of the WGCMA; I mentioned the WGCMA in this draft only to show how the resolution might look if we do). We also need to briefly explain in the resolution why we are including the WGCMA's actions in the resolution.
 - If we do not want to include the actions of the WGCMA in this document, then we should remove any of the cited actions (i.e., the bullets in my document) that occurred only prior to 1937, when the Town was incorporated, and as Ken notes, "when the Mayor and Town Council were empowered to take action."
2. The document is titled "Acknowledging Washington Grove's Racially Exclusionary Past" yet it frequently strays from that topic to:
 - describe racist policies of the schools, the county, the state and the railroad, and

- include statements that we condemn Islamophobia, sexism, anti-Semitism etc. -- statements that are not relevant to acknowledging our past racism.

I created my draft so that it more narrowly sticks to what **ONLY** the WGCMA and the Town did in the past **ONLY** to Black Americans. If we want to address **all** marginalized and minority communities, then I recommend that we craft a second, separate resolution stating that we condemn Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, sexism and xenophobia. Including these condemnations in **this** resolution only blurs its focus, and adds to the impression that this resolution was designed to be a “kitchen sink” antiracist resolution.

In addition, that second resolution could include a recognition, as Tom Land suggested, that the land upon which we live was originally Piscataway land. Tom also suggested that we open Town meetings with a statement acknowledging this part of our history. I support this suggestion with respect to our annual Town meetings, but don’t think it’s necessary at monthly Council meetings.

3. I deleted all end notes and references. Although they are extremely helpful in crafting this document, I don’t believe that they should be part of the final document; resolutions should stand on their own, without citations.
4. I deleted the proposed statement for the web page. I’m happy to put a statement like this on the Town’s website but don’t believe that it needs to be, or should be, part of a Council resolution. I think the text of the statement should be discussed more informally, after the resolution passes, and should reflect language in the resolution. Which brings me to the question: why does the language in the proposed website statement not more closely mirror the language in the resolution? Or put another way, why do the operative clauses of the resolution require **so much** verbiage, when the same points could be made more simply, as in the website language?

Specific Issues

1. First paragraph: I expanded the discussion of how racism has affected Black Americans to mention voting rights, home ownership and environmental justice, and to make it a bit more concrete.
2. Second paragraph: I moved the text down the page.
3. Third and fourth paragraphs: I deleted these. Although I agree wholeheartedly that racism is a threat to public health, this discussion is too far afield of the purpose of the document.
4. Fifth paragraph: I moved this text into the first paragraph. I also decided to omit mentioning Maryland and Montgomery County – their actions are off-topic.
5. Sixth paragraph: I deleted this because the cited reference does not support it.

6. Seventh and eighth paragraphs: I deleted these because the discussion of the schools is too far afield of the purpose of this document. UNLESS the Town actually managed the schools back in the day, in which case we should make that clear and add it back in.
7. Ninth paragraph: I have captured this text in the bullets of my third paragraph. I deleted the bit about the 1950s because, as Ann Philips and Ken Shapiro pointed out in their comments, it's really not clear what Phil Edwards meant when he said that the covenants remained on the deeds well into the 1950s.
8. Tenth paragraph: I deleted this. My first paragraph covers a lot of this territory. I don't think we need more than one "whereas" paragraph that covers how Black Americans have systematically been cheated out of opportunities open to White Americans.
9. Eleventh paragraph: I have captured this in my third paragraph bullets. I am not clear about the notion of "accepting Washington Grove's train station that required...". In order to be clearer, I have changed this in the interim to read that the Town "failed to protest the B&O Railroad's requirement" of a separate waiting area, but is this what you are really claiming – that is, a "failure to protest"?
10. Twelfth paragraph: I have captured the text in my third paragraph bullets. I don't think it's necessary to explain why Black people wanted to traverse the Town to get to, for example, Emory Grove; only that we forced them to take a longer route. Also, with respect to the sidewalk construction, do we have a year for that?
11. Thirteenth paragraph: I have captured this text in my third paragraph bullets.
12. Fourteenth paragraph: I believe that I left this largely untouched.
13. Fifteenth and sixteenth paragraphs: I removed most of this text because I believe that this resolution should keep a laser-like focus on the Town's past racist policies. See item 2 above under "Overarching Issues."
14. Seventeenth paragraph: I moved this text; it's now in my fifth paragraph.
15. I left the operative clauses (A) through (G) largely untouched, but reformatted them into bullets.
16. Please note that my wording for the second paragraph in my revision is deliberate. I am trying to capture the fact that both official policies, and unofficial practices, contributed to our racist history. In addition, I added some language to make more prominent in the document the effects of these policies and practices on neighboring communities. I took some of the language that I added from Reverend Warner's thoughtful letter in support of the resolution.

Minor Issues

1. There are references to “Black communities” and “African Americans.” I changed all of these references to “Black” and/or “Black Americans”, in order to use current and consistent terminology. If we decide to use “African Americans” then let’s also use “African-American communities”.
2. I removed the reference to “building an antiracist Washington Grove” since the use of the term “antiracist” is not well understood and is therefore problematic. As Ann Philips and Ken Shapiro commented, it means different things to different people.

Resolution

Acknowledging Washington Grove's Racially Exclusionary Past

WHEREAS, racial disparities have existed in America for centuries, to the detriment of Black communities and people of color, and institutional racism persists even today, resulting in fewer opportunities for Black Americans to build wealth, own homes, exercise their voting rights, live in safe and healthful communities, access quality health care and education, and receive fair treatment by law enforcement officials and in the criminal justice system; and

WHEREAS for much of its history, the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association (WGCMA) and the Town of Washington Grove (the Town) explicitly practiced race-based, exclusionary Jim Crow policies, and engaged in racist practices that were demeaning, exclusionary and painful to neighboring communities, and symptomatic of a continuing refusal to acknowledge the damaging history of slavery; and

WHEREAS, these policies and practices included the following:

- The Town’s requiring, at its founding, that homes adopt racially-restrictive covenants and deed restrictions, which kept Black Americans and other marginalized communities from purchasing property in Washington Grove;
- The Town’s failure to allow a theater group to use the Town’s auditorium because the group would not agree to exclude Black Americans from attendance at its shows;
- The WGCMA’s and Town’s failures to protest the B&O Railroad’s requirement that the train station at Washington Grove required Black Americans use a separate area;
- The WGCMA’s closure of the Town gates in 1897, forcing members of neighboring communities, including Black Americans, to walk around the Town’s boundaries;
- The Town’s objection to the construction of a county sidewalk on the Washington

Grove section of Washington Grove Lane, so that the sidewalk ended at the border of the town, thus contributing to neighboring communities' perception of the Town as unwelcoming; and

- The WGCMA's and Town's annual parades and minstrel shows, in which performers adopted 'blackface' costumes, which we now recognize as behavior that disregarded the dignity of Black Americans and as such was wholly inappropriate; and

WHEREAS, the Town understands the importance of examining its role in institutional racism, both historically and currently, and is ready to embark on a journey towards racial equity; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL OF WASHINGTON GROVE does hereby resolve, declare, and determine, that The Mayor and Town Council of Washington Grove and its representatives:

- (A) Acknowledge, apologize for, repudiate, reject and condemn all racially-motivated, discriminatory, or exclusionary aspects of the WGCMA's and Town's history, and deeply regret the pain, hurt, and suffering that has been caused; and
- (B) Will welcome all people; recognize the rights of individuals to live their lives with dignity, free from discrimination; value inclusion, equity and justice; unequivocally condemn racism and bigotry of any kind, whether in rhetoric or in action; and envision a Town that fosters diversity, equity, and inclusion; and
- (C) Where they have authority and responsibility, will take steps honestly and directly that undo the effects of systemic racism, bias, discrimination, and inequities that impact the quality of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for Town residents and our neighbors; and
- (D) To these ends, will:
 - continue to engage in individual and collective work to understand bias;
 - continue to examine any policies or practices that may have the effect of being racially biased or harmful, and to foster an unbiased and inclusive environment that is free of discrimination and harassment toward any person or group;
 - treat all persons in a fair, equitable and objective manner, without consideration of their race ethnicity, national origin, gender, religious dress, ability or disability or other individual characteristics;
 - promote inclusion and equity, and will stand up to bigotry, hatred, intolerance, racism, and violence;
 - support ties with neighboring communities, consider the welfare of our neighbors, and work with our neighbors in policies or decisions that the Town advances so that the results are to the benefit of all;
 - reject racism in all its forms; and

- work towards building a Town where people of all races and cultural backgrounds are welcome to live and prosper.

Adopted this ____ day of _____, 2023.