

April 8, 2023

Dear Mayor, Fellow Councilors, and Interested Parties,

I have thought long and hard about the proposed resolution, “Acknowledging Washington Grove’s Racially Exclusionary Past.” I have looked at examples of similar resolutions, read all the comments, and spoken with residents. I strongly believe it is important to pass this resolution (or some reasonable form of it), and I also believe the resolution *will* be passed on Monday night-- the only question is how far will it stray from the original version.

I am writing out my thoughts so I can be ready to discuss at the council meeting. I am still waiting to read the FAQs being prepared by the RASEC committee, and I know there may still be more resident comments. It’s quite possible my thoughts will continue to evolve, but this is my best attempt at transparency on where I stand:

### **#1 The Original Version.**

**At first my only major issue with the original version was the inclusion of citations, references, and a reference document.** No other resolution I studied contained citations or references, and I don’t see why Washington Grove should be an exception. The references were certainly helpful in creating the resolution, but they don’t need to be included in its final form. The references and reference document can be placed on the town website.\*

**Though the original version is long and is perhaps lacking a laser-beam focus, I can also understand that RASEC believes this to be the most complete acknowledgement.** While it’s more efficient to only mention issues directly relating to Washington Grove and the WGCMA, the original resolution’s inclusion of country-wide and county-wide issues paints a broader picture that acknowledges the cumulative harm to which Washington Grove’s actions contributed.

**The question is: what is the purpose of this document? To focus on WG’s actions, or to provide a complete picture and WG’s contributions to that full picture?** From an efficiency standpoint, this isn’t a history document and perhaps we don’t need to include the broader context, but from the point of view that this is a document intended to begin a healing process, why *not* include everything that might contribute to the healing? For example, paragraphs 15 and 16... yes, they stray from the original title of the resolution, but maybe it’s helpful to state these things in writing. I’m not sure efficiency and laser-focus should be our number-one priority.

I doubt we can all agree on whether this document should focus only on WG and the WGCMA’s actions, or if it should be more wide-reaching. But I think we can all agree that **one very important purpose of this resolution is to mend the town’s relationships with surrounding**

**communities in the most helpful and positive way possible. If having a less focused but more complete resolution is the best way to achieve that goal, perhaps it's the way to go.**

**And so, I endorse the original version of the resolution with the following caveats:**

- The citations and references be removed from the resolution.
- We discuss revising the resolution to include the mention of the Washington Grove Camp Meeting Association (WGCMA) where appropriate (for anything happening before 1937).
- We discuss a potential revision of paragraph 6 because, as Christine pointed out, the given references do not support it
- We discuss the wording of paragraph 9 (and there is also an extra space in that paragraph that needs deletion).
- The reference document, to be placed on the town website, be revised with an eye to clarity and completeness – see my note below.

**\*I recommend that, no matter what form the resolution takes, the reference document be revised so it's more reader-friendly.** As it is now, many residents (myself included) find it confusing. Some pages have a hodge-podge feel, and it's not always clear where the information is coming from or what it's trying to convey. Though I'm sure this was not the intent, being given only a section of a page or a piece of a paragraph might give the reader the sense that they are reading something out of context.

In any case, **each image should have a caption beneath it with an explanation tying it to the resolution, giving context if necessary, and giving the source in MLA format** so readers can access the information on their own. I think it's reasonable to spread the references out over more pages in the name of clarity and completeness.

**#2 Christine's Alternate Version**

First, I want to thank Christine for taking the time and energy to think through the resolution carefully and propose a reasonable alternative. **Her version is focused and efficient, and the writer in me likes it for that. But it brings us back to the question: what is the purpose of this document?** To focus on Washington Grove's actions, or to provide a complete picture and Washington Grove's contributions to that full picture? Should efficiency and focus be our top priority? (Perhaps not.)

**At this point, my preference is to pass the original resolution with my caveats stated above, however, I am open to compromise.** The compromise could be taking Christine's version and adding back in some of the items from the original version so that it can still provide a complete acknowledgement and be the healing and helpful document it needs to be.

For example:

- I would add back in paragraph 4 from the original version (or perhaps paragraphs 3 and 4 combined).
- I would add back in a mention of school inequalities as in the original version, but perhaps paragraphs 7 and 8 from the original version can be combined and summarized into one?
- I would consider adding back in some version of paragraphs 15 and 16.
- I would ask to revise the word “perceived” in the second paragraph. Perhaps instead: “...engaged in practices that, no matter their intent, were racist, demeaning, exclusionary, painful, and/or symptomatic of a continuing refusing to acknowledge the damaging history of slavery and inequality...”

This is a very important resolution, and I support it whole-heartedly. I think we should all be proud to live in a town that is taking such a step forward.

Sincerely,  
Eva Patrone