

March 8, 2024

Dear Mayor Compton and Councilors Dibble, Gilmore, Nagrod, Patrone, Raimondo and Warfield:

I have spoken with siblings, and current and former residents who knew Roy McCathran. He was known for his big personality, his kindness, and thoughtfulness. My brother, Jim McCathran, told me stories of Roy McCathran taking him along to visit Robert Taylor, a person of color who lived next to Hershey's store, and whom Roy McCathran often hired to do odd jobs and plow snow in Washington Grove, paying out of his own pocket. They visited Mr. Taylor to make sure he had enough food to eat and fuel to stay warm.

There is no evidence of the racist behavior he is falsely being charged with. In the United States, a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

The only thing we all agree on is that Roy McCathran performed in minstrel shows and appeared in black face at least once in the early 1900s. Does that misjudgment, as we see it today, cancel everything a person devoted his life to?

Interestingly, the privilege of voting on this issue was provided for by the very man we now judge, Roy McCathran. How sad it is that we are on the forefront of choosing fixation on unpleasantness in our past, versus moving forward. I am reminded of 1950s McCarthyism, where anyone who challenged McCarthy's view was branded a communist and punished. Racism is of course an important and critical issue, but we need to address it with an attitude of moving forward.

Do we really believe our vibrant community was founded on hate and division? If so, I question why anyone would want to move into such a horrible place. The hatred and division I see, having lived here for 71 years, comes from RASEC, and I said so in the survey. In contrast, I have seen and heard many testaments from current and former residents, saying what a wonderful place Washington Grove was/is to grow up in.

Is our goal to be diverse or divisive? Will my grandchildren be shamed when attending Summer In The Parks? Mason has enjoyed participating in the past few SITP programs and is eager to attend again this year. We were looking forward to having his brother, Liam, attend, but I am now filled with trepidation.

Please, let's not go down the rabbit hole of hate. Let's build on our Town Resolution 2023-01, rather than using it as a weapon to further divide us. The resolution is a solid step forward, and I support it.

Keep McCathran in McCathran Hall.

Thanks,
Ken McCathran