

In the Year Two Thousand and Twenty

Upon the recommendation of Councilor Gina-Louise Sciarra, Councilor William H. Dwight and Councilor John T. Thorpe

R-20.107 A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF AND COMMITTING TO ACTIONS AT THE FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL TO COMBAT THE PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS OF SYSTEMIC RACISM

Be it resolved by the City Council of the City of Northampton, in City Council assembled, as follows:

Whereas:

George Floyd, an unarmed African-American man, was asphyxiated by a Minneapolis police officer or officers on May 25th 2020; and

Whereas:

Breonna Taylor, an African-American Emergency Room Technician, was shot eight times and killed in her own home by Louisville police on March 13th, 2020; and

Whereas:

Ahmaud Arbery, an African-American man was shot and killed by two white civilian men while jogging through a South Georgia neighborhood on February 23rd, 2020; and

Whereas:

Mr. Floyd's, Ms. Taylor's, and Mr. Arbery's deaths and the manner of their deaths are yet more examples, in a list of countless examples, of an endemic culture of oppression and racism that exists in our country; and

Whereas:

The widespread revulsion demonstrated by our fellow citizens to this, and to all of the accumulated historical racist actions, requires a reckoning and a commitment from all of us to confront this greatest threat to our society; and

Whereas:

In the absence of presidential leadership, it is incumbent upon local authorities to respond to the suffering that racism inflicts; and

Whereas:

We continue to acknowledge the deaths chronicled in this resolution and all of the racially perpetrated deaths that preceded them, as well as the racial violence and state and federal violence throughout the country that has followed them; and

Whereas:

The City Council of Northampton has for decades decried and condemned by resolution and laws the myriad racist acts committed by individuals and persons in authority; and

Whereas:

The City Council of Northampton will continue to stand unified in our commitment to confront institutional racism, implicit bias, and bigotry in all forms and violence; and

Whereas:

On May 29, 2020 the American Public Health Association declared racism an ongoing public health crisis, deeming racism a barrier to health equity and a driving force of inequitable social

determinants of health; the social, environmental and economic factors that influence health, including employment, housing, education, access to health care and nutritious food; impacting life-long health outcomes even before birth; and on June 7, 2020 the American Medical Association stated that racism is an urgent threat to public health; and

Whereas:

Numerous studies have linked racism to negative health outcomes, which are associated with increased risk for mental and physical chronic conditions such as heart disease, cancer, asthma, stroke, disproportionately high maternal and infant mortality, most recently, COVID-19, and the American College of Physicians has found that Black Americans in particular are at risk of being subjected to race-based discrimination and violence against them, and that hate crimes are a public health issue.

Now therefore be it resolved that the City Council of Northampton:

Reasserts its unequivocal opposition to expressions and acts of hate; and

Be it further resolved that:

We will devote our efforts to expanding the challenging but necessary community conversation on racism and on all of our respective culpabilities; and

Be it further resolved that:

We have an obligation to advance racial equity by undoing the inequities found in the law, and to proactively pass ordinances and make budget decisions that address inequity. During the Periodic Review of Ordinances which occurs every 5 years as per the City Charter Section 10-5, and at other times when it comes to the attention of the Council, we will act to update ordinances that have been shown to have a disproportionate impact on communities of color and adversely affect vulnerable populations. We will also consider these impacts during our annual budget process and as financial orders are brought to the council; and

Be it further resolved that:

We call for increased resources from the Commonwealth for comprehensive anti-racism trainings for state and municipal employees and students; and

Be it further resolved that:

The Northampton City Council supports the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus' proposed 10-Point Plan to Combat Systemic Racism in Policing and Police Brutality stating:

At the Federal level:

1. Pass Congresswoman Pressley's Resolution to condemn police brutality, racial profiling and the excessive use of force.
2. Improve oversight and independent investigations to hold individual law enforcement officers and police departments accountable.
3. Department of Justice must reassert its statutory authority to investigate individual instances of racial profiling, police brutality and violence and investigate and litigate individual law enforcement officers and police departments routinely violating civil rights.

4. Adopt sound and unbiased law enforcement policies at all levels of government that reduce the disparate impact of police brutality, racial profiling and use of force on Black and Brown people and other historically marginalized communities.

At the State level:

5. Resolve to provide for a “Special Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training” to study and make recommendations concerning the implementation of a state-wide Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) system, H2146, to certify police officers and enable de-certification for misconduct and abuse.

6. Pass An Act to Reform Civil Service Exams, H2292, establishing an Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity to establish guidelines and review for diversity plans for all state agencies, establish a peace officer exam advisory board to review examinations for appointment and promotion of peace officers.

7. Pass an Act establishing a special commission on structural racism, H1440, establishing a commission to study how the systemic presence of institutional racism has created a culture of structural racial inequality which has exacerbated disproportionate minority contact with the criminal justice system in Massachusetts.

8. Adopt clear statutory limits on police use of force, including choke-holds and other tactics known to have deadly consequences. Require independent investigation of officer-related deaths. Require data collection and reporting on race, regarding all arrests and police use of force by every department.

At the Municipal level:

9. Declare Racism is a Public Health Crisis and worthy of treatment, assessment and financial investment in order to eradicate negative health impacts.

10. Create a Civil Review Board/Commission with subpoena power to investigate allegations of law enforcement wrongdoing.

The Northampton City Council acknowledges the steps that the Northampton Police Department has previously taken that align with the Plan, including use of force policies and prohibiting chokeholds, and we assert there is more we can do as a city to combat systemic racism in our municipality and policing. We support the work of the Northampton Policing Review Commission created on July 9, 2020 to study and make informed recommendations for change to the city’s approach to policing.

Be it further resolved that:

The Northampton City Council will urge the Mayor to establish an Office of Equity and Human Rights, to promote equity and reduce disparities within City government; provide guidance, education and technical assistance to all municipal offices in achieving equitable outcomes and services; support human rights and opportunities for everyone to achieve their full potential; work to resolve issues rooted in bias and discrimination, through research, education and interventions.

Be it further resolved that:

The Northampton City Council strongly agrees that racism is a public health crisis and in addition to asking to declare it so at the municipal level, asks the Commonwealth to devote the resources needed to combat this crisis at both the state and local levels.

Be it further resolved that:

The Northampton City Council will consider systemic changes that are within our power and advocate for those which are not, including but not limited to a shifting of municipal resources from punitive approaches to public safety to supportive and restorative ones, changes to the tax structure to help build wealth among those who have been discriminated against, and updating zoning codes, housing laws and transportation systems to create more affordable housing and accessible jobs, and to ensure equal access to health care.

Be it further resolved that:

The Administrative Assistant shall cause a copy of this resolution to be delivered to Governor Charles Baker, Attorney General Maura Healy, Senators Elizabeth Warren and Edward Markey, Congressman James McGovern, Massachusetts Senator Jo Comerford and Massachusetts Representative Lindsay Sabadosa and the Chair of the MBLLC, Representative Carlos González; Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Dr. Monica Bharel; Northampton Director of Public Health, Merridith O'Leary.

In City Council, August 20, 2020
Passed First Reading on Roll Call Vote of 9 Yes, 0 No, 0 Absent

Attest: Laura Krutten, Clerk of Council

In City Council, September 3, 2020
Passed Second Reading on Roll Call Vote of 9 Yes, 0 No, 0 Absent

Attest: Laura Krutten, Clerk of Council

Per Charter Chapter 3-6, the resolution was presented to the Mayor for approval but was deemed to be a matter relating to the internal affairs of the City Council not requiring Mayoral approval

Passed two readings and enrolled
I hereby certify that the above resolution passed the Northampton City Council on September 3, 2020

Attest: Laura Krutten, Clerk of Council