

City Council – Action Request Form

Date: September 15, 2020

To: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, and Members of the City Council

From: Ben Rowe, Assistant City Manager
Meridith J. Martin, Strategic Initiatives Administrator

Council Action Requested:

Recognizing Juneteenth as a City Holiday

Strategic Focus Area: Livable Neighborhoods

Strategic Objective: Support Inclusion of Community Populations

Strategic Plan Action Item: No

Key Work Item: Yes



Summary of Information:

At the request of Mayor Pro Tempore Adams, staff was asked to provide information related to establishing Juneteenth as a City paid holiday.

Juneteenth celebrates the country’s longest-running observance of the abolition of slavery. This holiday commemorates the emancipation of slaves in Texas on June 19, 1865, after Union soldiers landed in Galveston, Texas. The slaves in this region were the last to learn of their freedom. Initially celebrated in Texas, where it is now observed as a state holiday, the celebration of Juneteenth has gradually spread across the nation.

Every year, June 19 marks the day that African Americans exercised independence from those who benefitted from their labors in the founding of this nation. The United States is currently witnessing injustices to African Americans creating pain and anguish due to generations of systemic racism. In 2020, Juneteenth celebrations were more impactful due to the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd and others.

Committee Action:

Committee	CDHGG 9/15/2020	Action	Approval
For	Council Members Adams, Besse, Clark	Against	None; Abstaining: Council Member Scippio

Remarks:

The City values diversity and inclusion in the community. Winston-Salem is committed to identifying actionable items to improve policies and procedures that allow access to opportunities and ensure employees do not experience inequities in City government. Juneteenth symbolizes the endurance and hardships of African American people.

In North Carolina, Orange County, Wake County, the City of Raleigh, the City of Greensboro, the Town of Hillsborough, and the Town of Carrboro have adopted Juneteenth as a paid government holiday. Various other local jurisdictions plan to discuss the holiday in the coming months. In early August, the Human Relations Commission endorsed the designation of Juneteenth as a paid City holiday. Attached is also a statement of support from Triad Cultural Arts.

Currently, Winston-Salem recognizes the following days as holidays with pay for eligible City employees: New Year's Day, the third Monday in January for Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day following Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and a day designated by the City Manager (floating holiday). When one of the authorized holidays falls on Saturday, the preceding Friday is observed as a holiday. When a holiday falls on Sunday, the following Monday is observed as a holiday.

Approval of this action request will replace the floating holiday with Juneteenth. The date of the holiday will be determined.