

DRAFT HRC 20200729-002b

DECLARATION NO.

WHEREAS, On June 19th, 1865 Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston, Texas with news that the Civil War was over and that enslaved Africans and African descendants were now free; and,

WHEREAS, the following year, June 19 became “Juneteenth,” and was marked with celebrations and political rallies across the State of Texas; and,

WHEREAS, news of the end of slavery did not reach the State of Texas and other Southwestern States until months after the conclusion of the Civil War, more than two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863; and,

WHEREAS, in East Austin, freed persons pooled resources together to purchase Emancipation Park to celebrate, which is located at present-day Rosewood Courts; and,

WHEREAS, as a result of anti-Black bigotry and racism, the Juneteenth holiday has been historically held in obscurity; and,

WHEREAS, Texas House Bill 1016, which passed in the 66th Legislature Regular Session declared June 19th, “Emancipation Day in Texas,” a legal state holiday effective starting in 1980; and,

WHEREAS, recently, multiple municipalities have begun to acknowledge Juneteenth and commemorate it as a formal holiday; and,

WHEREAS, bipartisan bills in the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives propose to establish Juneteenth as a federal holiday; and,

WHEREAS, The City of Austin is committed to challenging and undoing anti-Black racism and systemic racialized inequality; and,

WHEREAS, The City of Austin is committed to condemning Austin's history as a participant in American chattel slavery; and,

WHEREAS, Black Lives Matter,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF AUSTIN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION: The 19th day of June of each year beginning in the year 2021, shall be known in the City of Austin as ‘Juneteenth’ to memorialize the end of chattel slavery in the United States and to celebrate the Africans and African descendants who survived an inhumane economic system and thrived as American citizens.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: The Human Rights Commission supports City Council in directing the City Manager to analyze and present several options for amending the City of Austin's Personnel Policies to establish Juneteenth as a paid holiday or other benefit for City employees, to begin in June 2021. Analysis should include detailed and comprehensive evaluations of costs and budget impacts, including personnel costs. Consideration should be given to the value to City employees of a holiday as a benefit of employment, community benefits that may result from the City government more actively promoting educative material on American slavery, the Civil War, and Juneteenth by example and in other ways The City Manager should present these options and analysis prior to the adoption of the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 budget.

DRAFT