

CITY OF NEWPORT

RESOLUTION  
OF THE  
COUNCIL

No.2026-19

*Resolution Recognizing Black History Month and Authorizing an  
Annual Flag Raising*

- WHEREAS,** Black History Month is observed annually in the United States during the month of February to honor the achievements, contributions, and resilience of African Americans throughout the nation's history; AND
- WHEREAS,** Black History Month traces its origins to 1926, when historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History established "Negro History Week" to ensure the study and recognition of Black history, which had been largely excluded from traditional historical narratives; AND
- WHEREAS,** Negro History Week was intentionally placed in February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, and was later expanded into Black History Month in 1976, receiving formal recognition by the federal government; AND
- WHEREAS,** Black History Month serves as an important opportunity to educate the public, reflect on the enduring struggle for freedom and equality, and celebrate the profound cultural, economic, civic, and artistic contributions of African Americans to the United States; AND
- WHEREAS,** the City of Newport has a deep and complex Black history that is inseparable from its identity, dating back to the colonial era, when enslaved and free Africans lived and labored in the city and helped shape its maritime economy, trades, and institutions; AND
- WHEREAS,** Newport was once home to one of the largest free Black communities in colonial New England, and African Americans in Newport played vital roles as sailors, craftspeople, soldiers, entrepreneurs, educators, and faith leaders; AND

**WHEREAS,** the African Union Society, founded in 1780 by Occramar Marycoo (AKA Newport Gardner), was the first African American mutual aid organization in the United States, originally meeting at the Peter Bours house, 47 Division Street, and in 1824 established the Union Colored Congregational Church at 49 Division Street. and recognized as a National Historic Landmark, stands as a powerful symbol of Black self-determination, civic engagement, and community life in Newport; and were crucial for Free Black Community life; AND

**WHEREAS,** African Americans from Newport have made lasting contributions to the city's cultural heritage, social movements, military service, and ongoing efforts toward justice and equality; AND

**WHEREAS,** recognizing Black History Month affirms the City of Newport's commitment to inclusivity, historical truth, education, and respect for the diverse communities that have shaped and continue to shape the city; AND

**RESOLVED,** by the City Council of the City of Newport, Rhode Island, that the City hereby formally recognizes Black History Month each year during the month of February; AND


**RESOLVED,** that the City of Newport shall commemorate Black History Month with an annual flag-raising ceremony, to be held at City Hall and another prominent municipal location, in honor of the history, contributions, and enduring legacy of African Americans in Newport and throughout the nation; NOW, THEREFORE BE IT

**RESOLVED,** that the Mayor, City Council, and City Administration are encouraged to support educational, cultural, and community-based activities during Black History Month that highlight Newport's Black history and promote greater understanding and unity among all residents; AND BE IT FURTHER

**RESOLVED,** that a copy of this resolution be entered into the official records of the City of Newport and shared with community organizations, schools, and cultural institutions.

ELLEN PINNOCK  
STEPHANIE SMYTH  
DAVID R. CARLIN, III

IN COUNCIL  
READ AND PASSED  
**FEBRUARY 11, 2026**

  
Laura C. Swistak, CMC  
City Clerk