

TO: Human Relations Commission (HRC)
FROM: Minka van der Zwaag, Human Services Manager
DEPARTMENT: Community Services
DATE: June 9, 2022

SUBJECT: Agenda Item # 3 - Referral from the City Council – Follow up on Recognizing Key Dates to Advance Race & Equity

Background

On March 7, 2022, Council considered a Colleague’s Memo from Vice Mayor Kou and Mayor Burt titled Recognizing Key Dates to Advance Race & Equity (Attachment A) in which they recommended the local recognition and celebration of dates of historic significance that provide “an important opportunity to increase community awareness and for us to acknowledge the struggles and accomplishments of groups who have been fundamental to the development of American society.” These recommendations were intended to help the City progress on its equity goals as stated in its [Equity Mission Statement](#) passed by Council in November 2020. The Equity Mission Statement reads:

The City of Palo Alto is committed to creating a respectful, fair, and professional workplace and city. We will identify prejudices, eliminate inequities, welcome many perspectives, and use a collaborative approach to create an environment that works for everyone. The City's commitment to achieve equity in Palo Alto is the shared responsibility of our residents, organizations, governments, and other institutions.

The memo also stated that to “help meet those goals, the City should pursue opportunities to recognize and embrace our diversity and civil rights and oppose hate crimes. As a next step, we should formally recognize and celebrate significant multicultural dates and months to promote equality, honor diversity and oppose racism.”

Formal recognition of the following dates was proposed:

- June 19th as “Juneteenth” – Commemoration of the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States. June 19th is recognized as the date when freedom was obtained in the last locations of the south and has become a symbolic date of African American freedom.

- May 31st as “Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta Day” – Paying homage to two key leaders of the United Farm Workers who fought for farm workers’ rights, economic justice, and civil rights.
- October 11th as “Indigenous People’s Day” – Changing Christopher Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples’ Day.
- Proclaim May as “Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.”

During the Council discussion of the recommendation, Mayor Burt stated that the recognition of these events and individuals “gives us an opportunity to have ongoing education and celebration and respect for the contributions of the diverse groups that have built our democracy and who have challenged and continue to challenge us to live up to our ideals.”

There was general support of the dates proposed, with key discussion centering on other possible dates to consider, including the following: Holocaust Remembrance Day and Armenian Remembrance Day (in keeping with the educational component suggested by Mayor Burt); and on changing October 11th (or the date of the second Monday annually in October) from Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples’ Day. There was some interest by a member on the City Council to consider the recognition of the second Monday in October as “Italian Immigrant Day” as an option in addition to another option of recognizing it as both “Columbus Day” and “Indigenous Peoples’ Day” as do some states and as President Biden did last year.

As the HRC has previously played a strong role in engaging on issues related to diversity in the community, it was suggested that the commission could give helpful input on how the dates identified could be celebrated, the evaluation of the other possible holidays/remembrance days mentioned, and the consideration of the possible re-naming of the October 11th – second Monday in October (currently Columbus Day) Holiday. This direction is included in the motion passed as shown below.

MOTION: The City Council voted to formally recognize and celebrate the following dates:

- A. Juneteenth, Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta Day, and add Indigenous Peoples’ Day as dates of historic significance, and May as Asian American Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Heritage Month; and
- B. Authorize Proclamations celebrating the above dates;
- C. Refer to the Human Relations Commission recommendations on how to best recognize and celebrate these dates (ones above);
- D. Ask the HRC to evaluate recognition of Holocaust Remembrance Day and Armenian Remembrance Day and evaluate if October 11th should be re-designated as Italian Heritage Day

The motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Discussion

At present, the following holidays are recognized by the city:

Federal Holidays –City employees receive a day off:

- New Year's Day
- Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day *
- Presidents' Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day*
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veterans Day *
- Thanksgiving Day and the day after (2 days)
- December 25
- A Floating Holiday between December 25 and January 1

*City sponsored/co-sponsored events on these days

In addition, the following days have been recognized by the City or a City Department with varying degrees of activity:

- Palo Alto Day
- Earth Day
- World Music Day
- Arbor Day
- Coastal Clean Up Day

In addition, the City often recognizes special days or months through proclamations (e.g., Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, Affordable Housing Month, etc.).

There is not currently an established policy for adding days or events for local recognition. Those recognized in the past have been primarily brought forth by staff and/or in association with a City sponsored/co-sponsored event.

The HRC must now consider how best to respond to the Council referral as listed under C and D in the motion above in addressing whether the HRC should create a policy or process on the recognition of holidays, days, months of historical significance. The following questions may be helpful in framing the discussion.

- Should the HRC recommend a policy on recognition of holidays and days or months of historical significance?

- Should there be named “categories” for dates to be acknowledged by the City (in addition to state and federal holidays, i.e. local holiday, heritage day, commemorative holiday)?
- Should there be a baseline “level” of recognition of each day based on their “category?”
- How could educational and celebratory components be included in the recognition?
- How could the community be engaged in the celebration of these events?

The Council referral does not include any additional request for days off for City employees. Just the referral related to the renaming of an existing holiday (October 11/second October in October).

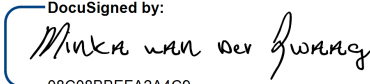
Staff asks that HRC keep in mind the resource implications for any recommendations made including staff time and budget.

Action at this meeting

The HRC is being asked to provide recommendations to the Council on the following:

- How best to recognize and celebrate the holidays listed in the Council motion and;
- Evaluation of:
 - o The addition of Holocaust Remembrance Day and Armenian Remembrance for local recognition
 - o Whether October 11th should be re-designated as Italian Heritage Day or something else.

The Commission can frame their recommendations to the Council as part of a memo or report.

PREPARED BY:  _____
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Minka van der Zwaag, Human Services Manager



City of Palo Alto

COLLEAGUES MEMO

DATE: March 7, 2022

TO: City Council Members

FROM: Council Member Kou, Council Member Burt

SUBJECT: COLLEAGUE'S MEMO FROM VICE MAYOR KOU AND MAYOR BURT:
RECOGNIZING KEY DATES TO ADVANCE RACE AND EQUITY

Issue

The City of Palo Alto strives to be a welcoming and inclusive community for people of all backgrounds and ethnicities. In November 2020, the Council made an important commitment to the City's equity goals by its adoption of an Equity Mission Statement¹:

The City of Palo Alto is committed to creating a respectful, fair, and professional workplace and city. We will identify prejudices, eliminate inequities, welcome many perspectives, and use a collaborative approach to create an environment that works for everyone. The City's commitment to achieve equity in Palo Alto is the shared responsibility of our residents, organizations, governments, and other institutions.

To help meet those goals, the City should pursue opportunities to recognize and embrace our diversity and civil rights, and oppose hate crimes. As a next step, we should formally recognize and celebrate significant multicultural dates and months to promote equality, honor diversity and oppose racism.

Background Discussion

Unfortunately, we are too frequently reminded that significant challenges remain in our society, and some of the recent national political environment has undermined our mission of inclusion. Federal² studies have shown a troubling growth in hate crimes nationally in recent years with hate incidents becoming an increasing concern locally and regionally. Recognition of historic leaders and events provides an important

¹ <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/City-Hall/Hot-Topics/Race-Equity>

² <https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/fbi-releases-updated-2020-hate-crime-statistics>

opportunity to increase community awareness and for us to acknowledge the struggles and accomplishments of groups who have been fundamental to the development of American society.

Juneteenth –On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation³ declared freedom for enslaved Americans in the Confederacy and that the war for the Union must be a war for freedom, codifying the moral force to the Union cause. The Emancipation Proclamation has assumed a place among the great documents of human freedom.

June 19th, 1865 has become recognized as when freedom was obtained in the last locations of the south and Juneteenth has become a symbolic date of African American freedom.

Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta - On March 28, 2014, President Barack Obama used his authority to proclaim each March 31st as Cesar Chavez Day, a federal commemorative holiday.⁴It celebrates the birth and legacy of the civil rights and labor movement activist, Cesar Chavez, and of the fight for Latino rights. With dedication and selflessness, Cesar Chavez and his full partner, Dolores Huerta, co-founded what became the United Farm Workers, along with Larry Itliong who led the Filipino farmworker movement on behalf of Asian rights. They fought for farm workers’ rights, economic justice, and civil rights.

When President Bill Clinton awarded Chavez the Medal of Freedom posthumously in 1994, he declared, “The farm workers who labored in the fields and yearned for respect and self-sufficiency pinned their hopes on this remarkable man who, with faith and discipline, soft spoken humility and amazing inner strength, led a very courageous life”

We want to recognize Dolores Huerta, one of our leading civil and women’s rights activists to this day, as a full partner in the movement with Chavez. They were farm workers from childhood who “possessed a deep personal understanding of the plight of migrant workers and labored all his years to lift their lives.”

Chavez’s successor, UFW President Arturo Rodriguez said, “Every day in California and in other states where farm workers are organizing, Cesar Chavez lives in their hearts. Cesar lives wherever Americans’ he inspired work nonviolently for social change.”⁵

October 11th Christopher Columbus Day change to Indigenous Peoples’ Day

³ <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation>

⁴ <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/28/presidential-proclamation-cesar-chavez-day-2014>

⁵ <https://ufw.org/research/history/story-cesar-chavez/>

On October 8, 2021, President Joe Biden became the first U.S. President to formally recognize the holiday, by signing a presidential proclamation declaring October 11, 2021 to be a national holiday.⁶

Palo Alto and much of our region are located on the traditional lands of the indigenous Ohlone people who were subjugated and often enslaved under the Spanish government in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, followed by oppression and massacres after California statehood.

Asian American Pacific Islander (Native Hawaiian) AAPI(NH)

May is Asian, American, Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, a celebration of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States. AAPI Heritage commemoration was first proposed in 1977 to observe the immigration of the first Japanese to the United States (May 7, 1843), and the completion of the transcontinental railroad, constructed mainly by Chinese immigrant workers (May 10, 1869). In 1978, President Carter made it an annual week-long event and President George H.W. Bush extended the proclamation to include the entire month of May.

On May 28, 2021, President Biden established the White House Initiative on Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders⁷(AA and NHPI). This new Initiative is charged with driving an ambitious, whole-of-government agenda to advance equity, justice, and opportunity for AA and NHPI communities.

Recommendation

To promote our commitment to equality, honor diversity, and oppose racism, the City of Palo Alto can formally recognize and celebrate the following dates as continuing reminders of hard-fought freedoms and to promote racial reconciliation and that all persons are created equal.

- June 19th as "Juneteenth"
- May 31st as "Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta Day"
- October 11th as "Indigenous People's Day"⁸
- Proclaim May as "Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month"

This memo does not propose new City holidays at this time. Staff advises that designation of City holidays may have fiscal and regulatory effects, as described below under "Resource Impact." In order to allow staff to develop recommendations for how best to address these issues, we recommend that Council take the following actions:

⁶ [A Proclamation on Indigenous Peoples' Day, 2021 | The White House](#)

⁷ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/05/28/fact-sheet-president-biden-establishes-the-white-house-initiative-on-asian-americans-native-hawaiians-and-pacific-islanders/>

- Direct staff to return with a Resolution recognizing Juneteenth, Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta Day, and Indigenous People's Day as dates of historic significance, and May as Asian American Pacific Islander Native Hawaiian Heritage Month.
- Direct staff to explore with the City's labor groups to agree upon appropriate means of recognition for these dates.

Resource Impact

There is no significant resource impact for renaming an existing City holiday or through observation of a commemorative month (besides any planned events within that month). Designation by Ordinance or Resolution would be appropriate and will be prepared for subsequent Council action.

While this memorandum does not recommend determination of an additional holiday, the below information is provided for Council context and consideration.

City holidays are designated in the Palo Alto Municipal Code Sections 2.08.100, and a designation as a City holiday determines whether "municipal business" is to be suspended. Staff estimates that total payroll on a holiday at current compensation structure and staffing level is approximately \$635,000; it would be approximately \$735,000 if fully staffed in all funds (approximately 67 percent of this would be General Fund). However, the actual impact of an additional holiday is the loss of a municipal business day plus the incremental financial cost of approximately \$100,000 to \$120,000 for holiday-specific compensation. In addition, City holidays typically suspend some on-street parking regulations as well as permitted construction and other noise-generating activities. Staff would meet and confer with the City's employee bargaining units to determine effects on work schedules and employee benefits.