

Nathan Giacalone

From: David A. Olson
Sent: Thursday, October 8, 2020 12:21 PM
To: Nathan Giacalone
Subject: FW: Memo regarding Columbus Day change.

From: Maria Scibelli Greenberg <msgreenberg@newtonma.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 8, 2020 12:19 PM
To: City Council <citycouncil@newtonma.gov>; David A. Olson <dolson@newtonma.gov>
Subject: Memo regarding Columbus Day change.

We wanted to let the full City Council know that in the intervening time since the full Council voted to recommit the Indigenous Peoples' Day Item to the Programs & Services Committee for a public hearing, we had undertaken an effort to identify a date in some other part of the year that could serve as an Italian-American Heritage Day on the Newton calendar.

The objective of this effort was to honor the contributions of Italian-Americans to our community, recognizing that there was some frustration that the resolution removing Columbus Day was being viewed in some circles as a criticism of Italian-American heritage instead of its intended criticism of Columbus and his treatment of indigenous peoples. While we do not believe the intent of the resolution was anti-Italian-American, we sought to address that concern in some way, if possible, during this process.

It also appeared to us from discussions in the full Council on the motion to recommit that the overwhelming, though not unanimous, consensus of Council members is that Christopher Columbus specifically should no longer be honored and that he should not be conflated with Italian-American Heritage on the whole, although the modern holiday marking his landing in the Caribbean in October 1492 has roots in promoting the latter.

We had hoped to docket a separate item on Italian-American Heritage in parallel to the Indigenous Peoples' Day item before we arrived at the scheduled hearing this week, so that we could defuse some tension ahead of that hearing. We explored various dates and suggested various options that could be meaningful to the Italian-American community in Newton and especially Nonantum.

Unfortunately, the two of us were unable to find a date that was satisfactory to community members leading the opposition and no agreement was reached in time, so it will not affect the discussion of the Indigenous Peoples' Day item either way and we hope that the public discussion will instead focus on the indigenous peoples of the Americas. But we wanted to make sure that other Councilors were aware that a good faith effort had been attempted to address this point.

We certainly remain open to introducing a separate docket item on Italian-American Heritage at another time if an agreement were to be reached with community members later.

Sincerely,
Maria Scibelli Greenberg
Ward 1 Councilor
and
Bill Humphrey
Ward 5 Councilor