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**CITY COUNCIL**  
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TO: COUNCIL MEMBERS

FROM: David Whitaker, Director   
Legislative Policy Division Staff

DATE: July 10, 2024

RE: **Request for feasibility and process for recognizing Juneteenth**

Council President Mary Sheffield requested that the Legislative Policy Division (LPD) provide an assessment of the feasibility and process for raising the Juneteenth flag on the grounds of a city government building. This report includes:

- historical context of Juneteenth.
- process for raising the flag.
- alternative commemoration methods.
- relevant Supreme Court cases regarding flag policies.
- examples of how other local and state governments commemorate Juneteenth.

### **Raising the Juneteenth Flag at CAYMC**

Upon checking with the Detroit Joint Building Authority, the management of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center (CAYMC) we learned the process for raising a flag at the CAYMC would and in the past has involved the City Council requesting that the Board of Commissioners of the Joint Wayne County building Authority approve it.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The previous resolutions are attached.

## Historical Context

**Juneteenth:** Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, and Liberation Day, commemorates the end of slavery in the United States. It marks June 19, 1865, when Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, and announced the end of the Civil War and the emancipation of enslaved African Americans. Although the Emancipation Proclamation had been signed by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, it took over two years for the news to reach Texas.

**Juneteenth in Michigan:** In Michigan, Juneteenth was officially recognized as a state holiday in 2005, when Governor Jennifer Granholm signed the legislation into law. The recognition of Juneteenth as a federal holiday came much later, on June 17, 2021, when President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act into law.

## Feasibility and Process of Raising the Juneteenth Flag

### Feasibility

Raising the Juneteenth flag on city government grounds is feasible and aligns with the broader recognition of Juneteenth as a significant holiday. It is a powerful symbol of the city's commitment to acknowledging and celebrating African American history and culture.

### Process

The process for raising a flag at the CAYMC would and in the past has involved the City Council requesting that the Board of Commissioners of the Joint Wayne County building Authority approve it.

### Alternative Commemorations

If raising the Juneteenth flag is not feasible, the city can explore other ways to commemorate the holiday:

1. **Public Events and Celebrations:** Host parades, festivals, and community gatherings featuring local artists, musicians, and speakers. Organize historical reenactments and educational programs about Juneteenth.
2. **Official Proclamations:** Issue a city proclamation recognizing Juneteenth and its importance. Encourage local businesses and institutions to observe the holiday.
3. **Public Art and Memorials:** Commission murals, statues, or other public art installations celebrating African American history and culture. Establish a Juneteenth memorial site in a public park or plaza.
4. **Educational Initiatives:** Partner with schools and libraries to provide educational resources and programs about Juneteenth. Promote reading lists, film screenings, and discussion groups focused on African American history and civil rights.

### Origin of the Pan-African Red Black and Green Flag

The Pan-African flag, (also called the Marcus Garvey, UNIA, Afro-American or Black Liberation flag,) was designed to represent people of the African Diaspora, and, as one scholar put it, to symbolize "black freedom, simple." The banner, with its horizontal red, black and green stripes, was adopted by the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) at a conference in New York City in 1920.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> [On Flag Day, Remembering The Red, Black And Green : Code Switch : NPR](#)

## Origin of the Juneteenth Flag

The first flag that represented the holiday was created in 1997 by Ben Haith, the founder of the National Juneteenth Celebration Foundation (NJCF). Three years later, artist Lisa Jeanne Graf explained on her website that she "fine tuned" the original version, resulting in the flag we see today. This was the same year that Haith led the holiday's initial flag raising ceremony in Boston's Roxbury Heritage Park, according to the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation (NJO). Even though the red, white, and blue flag is closely associated with Juneteenth, you'll still see some celebrating with the red, green, and black Pan-African flag, which was created in 1920, after Jamaican activist Marcus Garvey called for a Black liberation flag. Though both the Pan-African and Juneteenth Flags serve as symbols of pride and freedom for Black people, the Juneteenth flag was intentionally created to honor a single holiday, whereas the Pan-African flag represents all of the African diaspora.<sup>3</sup>

## Sources and References

- [State and Local Governments Prepare to Celebrate Juneteenth](#)
- [More than Half of States Now Recognize Juneteenth as an Official Holiday](#)
- [Federal Observances of Juneteenth](#)

**Attachment** Prior Flag Raising Approvals by the Detroit-Wayne Joint Building Authority

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<sup>3</sup> [What the Juneteenth Flag Means - the Colors, Symbols, and History \(oprahdaily.com\)](#)



June 15, 2023

To: Commissioners: Detroit-Wayne Joint Building Authority (Authority)

From: Gregory R. McDuffee, Executive Director

Re: Amended Resolution - Flag Raising: 

Dear Commissioners,

Please see attached the original Resolution dated April 13, 2016, and a proposed Amended Resolution that includes the flags of Space Force, the Michigan National Guard and Raise-the-Blue honoring our law enforcement first responders.



**DETROIT-WAYNE JOINT BUILDING AUTHORITY**  
(Referred to herein as DWJBA)

**RESOLUTION**

**Date: June 15, 2022**

**AMENDMENT TO THE ORIGINAL RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE DATES TO  
FLY THE PURPLE HEART FLAG AND  
THE FLAGS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED SERVICES AND HONORING LAW  
ENFORCEMENT  
IN FRONT OF THE COLEMAN A. YOUNG MUNICIPAL CENTER**

**WHEREAS,** The City of Detroit recognizes its sons and daughters who have spilt their blood in the name of freedom and democracy, in a collaborative effort between the City Council and City Administration became a “Purple Heart City” on May 19, 2015; and

**WHEREAS,** The Detroit City Council by resolution on September 22, 2015 commemorated the reputation of the city as “The Arsenal of Democracy” and;

**WHEREAS,** It is the desire of the Detroit City Council Military and Veterans Affairs Taskforce to fly the Purple Heart Flag on specific dates and fly each Armed Service’s flag on its anniversary below our nation’s flag on the flagpole located in front of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center near the corner of Jefferson Ave. and Woodward Ave. and;

**WHEREAS,** The City of Detroit City Council recognizes the responsibility and authority of the Detroit-Wayne Joint Building Authority (DWJBA) to oversee the welfare of the CAYMC and all its assets.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED**, That the Detroit City Council on behalf of its Military and Veterans Affairs Taskforce approves the annual flying of the Purple Heart flag on Memorial Day- (last Monday of May), Independence Day- July 4<sup>th</sup>, National Purple Heart Day- August 7<sup>th</sup> and Veterans Day- Nov 11<sup>th</sup>, and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Detroit City Council on behalf of its Military and Veterans Affairs Taskforce approves the flying of each Military Service flag on its anniversary: United States Army established June 14, 1775 to be flown annually on June 14<sup>th</sup>, United States Navy established October 13<sup>th</sup> 1775 to be flown annually on October 13<sup>th</sup>, United States Marine Corps established November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1775 to be flown annually on November 10<sup>th</sup>, United States Coast Guard established August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1790 to be flown annually on August 4<sup>th</sup>, and the United States Air Force established September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1947 to be flown annually on September 18<sup>th</sup>; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Commissioners of the Detroit-Wayne Joint Building desire to add flag raisings for Space Force to be flown December 20<sup>th</sup>; the Michigan National Guard to be flown on December 13<sup>th</sup>; the Raise the Blue annually on a date to be determined annually in May of each year, and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Detroit City Council's Military and Veterans Affairs Taskforce will provide and will be responsible for the continued provision of the Purple Heart Flag and all Armed Services flags to the Detroit Wayne Joint Building Authority; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, Detroit City Council on behalf of its Military and Veterans Affairs Taskforce requests the support of the DWJBA to fly the Purple Heart Flag and all military service flags as stated above.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT**, the DWJBA hereby approves the request to fly the Purple Heart Flag and United States Armed Service Flags on the main flagpole at the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center on the date stipulated above, unless such a date falls upon a weekend, provided that the City Council at their expense provide all the required and appropriated sized flags and furthermore provides replacement flags upon the request of the DWJBA.

**APPROVED:** June 15, 2022

**Detroit-Wayne Joint Building Authority**

**By: Sharon Madison, Chairperson**

I hereby certify that the foregoing constitutes a true and complete copy of a resolution adopted by the Detroit-Wayne Joint Building Authority, Detroit, State of Michigan, at a regular meeting held on June 15, 2022, and that the meeting was conducted and public notice of the meeting was given pursuant to and in full compliance with the Open Meetings Act, being Act 267, Public Acts of 1976, and that minutes of said meeting were kept and will be or have been made available as required by said Act.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary: Nicole Carter



**DETROIT-WAYNE JOINT BUILDING AUTHORITY**  
(Referred to herein as DWJBA)

**RESOLUTION**

**Date: April 13, 2016**

**RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE DATES TO FLY THE PURPLE HEART FLAG  
AND  
THE FLAGS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED SERVICES  
IN FRONT OF THE COLEMAN A. YOUNG MUNICIPAL CENTER**

**WHEREAS,** The City of Detroit recognizes its sons and daughters who have spilt their blood in the name of freedom and democracy, in a collaborative effort between the City Council and City Administration became a “Purple Heart City” on May 19, 2015; and

**WHEREAS,** The Detroit City Council by resolution on September 22, 2015 commemorated the reputation of the city as “The Arsenal of Democracy” and;

**WHEREAS,** It is the desire of the Detroit City Council Military and Veterans Affairs Taskforce to fly the Purple Heart Flag on specific dates and fly each Armed Service’s flag on its anniversary below our nation’s flag on the flagpole located in front of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center near the corner of Jefferson Ave. and Woodward Ave. and;

**WHEREAS,** The City of Detroit City Council recognizes the responsibility and authority of the Detroit-Wayne Joint Building Authority (DWJBA) to oversee the welfare of the CAYMC and all its assets.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED**, That the Detroit City Council on behalf of its Military and Veterans Affairs Taskforce approves the annual flying of the Purple Heart flag on Memorial Day- (last Monday of May), Independence Day- July 4<sup>th</sup>, National Purple Heart Day- August 7<sup>th</sup> and Veterans Day- Nov 11<sup>th</sup>; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, that the Detroit City Council on behalf of its Military and Veterans Affairs Taskforce approves the flying of each Military Service flag on its anniversary: United States Army established June 14, 1775 to be flown annually on June 14<sup>th</sup>, United States Navy established October 13<sup>th</sup> 1775 to be flown annually on October 13<sup>th</sup>, United States Marine Corps established November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1775 to be flown annually on November 10<sup>th</sup>, United States Coast Guard established August 4<sup>th</sup> 1790 to be flown annually on August 4<sup>th</sup>, and the United States Air Force established September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1947 to be flown annually on September 18<sup>th</sup>; and be it further

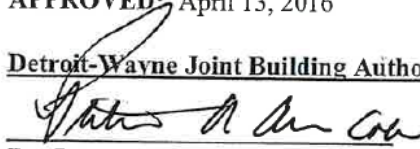
**RESOLVED**, that the Detroit City Council's Military and Veterans Affairs Taskforce will provide and will be responsible for the continued provision of the Purple Heart Flag and all Armed Services flags to the Detroit Wayne Joint Building Authority; and be it further

**RESOLVED**, Detroit City Council on behalf of its Military and Veterans Affairs Taskforce requests the support of the DWJBA to fly the Purple Heart Flag and all military service flags as stated above.

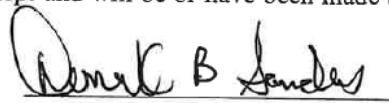
**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT**, the DWJBA hereby approves the request to fly the Purple Heart Flag and United States Armed Service Flags on the main flag pole at the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center on the date stipulated above, unless such a date falls upon a weekend, provided that the City Council at their expense provide all the required and appropriated sized flags and furthermore provides replacement flags upon the request of the DWJBA.

**APPROVED:** April 13, 2016

Detroit-Wayne Joint Building Authority

  
By: Patricia A. Cole, Chairperson

I hereby certify that the foregoing constitutes a true and complete copy of a resolution adopted by the Detroit-Wayne Joint Building Authority, Detroit, State of Michigan, at a regular meeting held on March 16, 2016, and that the meeting was conducted and public notice of the meeting was given pursuant to and in full compliance with the Open Meetings Act, being Act 267, Public Acts of 1976, and that minutes of said meeting were kept and will be or have been made available as required by said Act.

  
Secretary: Derrick B. Sanders



**RESOLUTION BY COUNCIL PRESIDENT JONES AND COUNCIL MEMBER BENSON  
CO-CHAIRS OF THE DETROIT CITY COUNCIL MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS  
TASKFORCE:**

**RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE DATES TO FLY THE PURPLE HEART FLAG AND  
THE FLAGS OF THE UNITED STATES ARMED SERVICES  
IN FRONT OF THE COLEMAN A. YOUNG MUNICIPAL CENTER**

**WHEREAS,** The City of Detroit recognizes its sons and daughters who have spilt their blood in the name of freedom and democracy, in a collaborative effort between the City Council and City Administration became a “Purple Heart City” on May 19, 2015; **and**

**WHEREAS,** The Detroit City Council by resolution on September 22, 2015 commemorated the reputation of the city as “The Arsenal of Democracy” **and;**

**WHEREAS,** It is the desire of the Detroit City Council Military and Veterans Affairs Taskforce to fly the Purple Heart Flag on specific dates and fly each Armed Service’s flag on its anniversary below our nation’s flag on the flagpole located in front of the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center near the corner of Jefferson Ave. and Woodward Ave. **and;**

**WHEREAS,** The City of Detroit City Council recognizes the responsibility and authority of the Detroit-Wayne Joint Building Authority to oversee the welfare of the CAYMC and all its assets. **NOW,  
THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED,** That the Detroit City Council on behalf of its Military and Veterans Affairs Taskforce approves the annual flying of the Purple Heart flag on Memorial Day- (last Monday of May), Independence Day- July 4<sup>th</sup>, National Purple Heart Day- August 7<sup>th</sup> and Veterans Day- Nov 11<sup>th</sup>; **and be it further**

**RESOLVED,** that the Detroit City Council on behalf of its Military and Veterans Affairs Taskforce approves the flying of each Military Serviceflag on its anniversary: United States Army established June 14, 1775 to be flown annually on June 14<sup>th</sup>, United States Navy established October 13<sup>th</sup> 1775 to be flown annually on October 13<sup>th</sup>, United States Marine Corps established November 10<sup>th</sup>, 1775 to be flown annually on November 10<sup>th</sup>, United States Coast Guard established August 4<sup>th</sup> 1790 to be flown annually on August 4<sup>th</sup>, and the United States Air Force established September 18<sup>th</sup>, 1947 to be flown annually on September 18<sup>th</sup>; **and be it further**

**RESOLVED,** that the Detroit City Council’s Military and Veterans Affairs Taskforce will provide and will be responsible for the continued provision of the Purple Heart Flag and all Armed Services flags to the Detroit Wayne Joint Building Authority; **and be it further**

**RESOLVED,** Detroit City Council on behalf of its Military and Veterans Affairs Taskforce requests the support of the Detroit –Wayne Joint Building Authority Board of Commissioners **to enter into a Memorandum of understanding so these recognitions continue in perpetuity.**