

Article 23-Revised Language

To see if the Town will adopt the following Resolution: RESOLUTION REGARDING RENAMING EDWARD DEVOTION SCHOOL

WHEREAS, slavery as an institution cruelly dehumanized and discriminated against people of African Ancestry in our nation. Slavery was legal in Massachusetts from 1638 until it died out around 1800.

WHEREAS, in 1744 Edward Devotion, resident and slave-owner, bequeathed property to the Town to go toward building or maintaining a school; and

WHEREAS, in 2006 the Hidden Brookline Committee was established by the Town to bring to light the history of slavery and freedom in Brookline; and

WHEREAS, in 2012 the Hidden Brookline Committee put forward a warrant article on slavery acknowledging the history and pledging “vigilance against all practices and institutions that dehumanize and discriminate against people.” It was the first time since the 18th century that slavery in Brookline was discussed in Brookline Town Meeting; and

WHEREAS, on May 24, 2012, the Town passed the resolution called “A Resolution Regarding Slavery in Brookline;” and

WHEREAS, in 2017 the Town entered into a compact with the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), agreeing to implement racial equity, eliminate implicit and explicit bias, and eradicate individual, institutional, and structural racism; and

WHEREAS, in 2018 it is untenable that a Brookline elementary school would continue to be named after a slave-owner, as to do so undermines the core values of equality and mutual respect that our educational system strives to impart to our children, and that forms the foundation of our democracy.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT:

Town Meeting votes to rename and temporarily call the school currently known as the “Edward Devotion School by some other name to be selected by the School Committee, until such time as the Naming Committee has had robust public hearings in order to obtain meaningful public input. Based on said community input, Naming Committee shall produce a report consistent with Town of Brookline By-laws Section 6.8.2(B) and applicable policies recommending a new permanent name for the school no later than February 15, 2019.

EXPLANATION

Since 2006, the Town of Brookline has grappled with how best to acknowledge the history of slavery and racism in Brookline and to understand its impact on the present. Hidden Brookline has provided a great deal of education and advocacy, but many issues remain. This Resolution calls for changing the name of a public school named after a slaveholder, Edward Devotion. Removing Edward Devotion's name from the grade school is the first step. Next, we are advocating for an open, transparent and robust public involvement process. Finally, no later than March 2019, petitioners will submit a warrant article with a new name for the school that Town meeting will vote to approve or not.

The Town will be supported during this process by the School Committee's Ad Hoc Task Force on School Names. The Task Force was formed to review the names of all of the buildings and spaces in the Public Schools of Brookline to ensure that they meet the School Committee and the Town's naming criteria. They will solicit feedback from historians and community members, including students, teachers, alumni and citizens at large. They will also review legal aspects of removing a name from a building. The Task Force will present their findings and recommendations to the School Committee and provide a written report by Labor Day 2018, with an interim update to the School Committee in early May 2018.

This entire process will enable the Town to better uphold its stated values by not only removing the name of a slaveholder, but approving a process and name consistent with our values. Moreover, we can send a message to our students, their parents and the Town's ethnically diverse residents that we are willing to change according to the knowledge we have now. Let us identify the name and values of someone whom all can admire and perhaps even wish to emulate.