

H2E

F2. Sarah Stanley Weed, 23 Bridge Street, Warren- request for support of the Bristol Middle Passage Port Markers Project

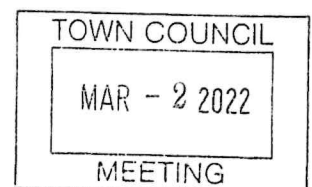
Sweeney/Parella- Voted
unanimously to receive and file

Prior to the vote being taken, Chairman Calouro that he was frustrated with the petition before him as the site suggested had already been dedicated to a fallen soldier. He noted that there was value in the request; however, the petition was not fully formed to include verbiage, style, and the details of the project.

Sarah Weed of 23 Bridge Street, Warren addressed the council to inform them that the location of the site at the State Street dock was being withdrawn.

Catherine Zipf of 32 Greylock Rd., Bristol, a member of the Bristol Middle Passage Ceremonies & Port Marker Project, addressed the council and presented documents, and explained the contents of the document. The document included:

- Slaveholders among Bristol's founding families
- Enslaved soldiers in the Revolutionary War
- Bristol points of disembarkation
- Bristol houses were built using money from the slave trade
- Local industries dependent on slave labor
- Tourist destination with connections to the slave trade
- The Middle Passage ceremonies and port marker project noting that project was established in 2011 to honor the two million captive Africans who perished during the transatlantic crossing known as middle passage and the ten million who survived to build the Americas.
- A timeline that outlined all the enslaved African and indigenous people that were trafficked throughout Bristol from 1680 to 1080 when the transatlantic slave trade was outlawed.



Ms. Zipf explained that the project was to provide a memorial marker for the many voices to be heard. She stated that there were 55 ports of disembarkation that have been recognized in the United States. She stated that the goal was to have a port marker in Bristol to provide space for contemplation and healing and to provide a focus for those travelers and residents seeking to know the story of Bristol. She stated she was hoping that this would be something that Bristol can be proud of.

Ms. Zipf stated that the first step was to acknowledge what happened in the past and that this project was the first step.

Vice Chairwoman Parella asked how this benefited the descendants and that she was concerned that there were no descendants involved in the project. She questioned the group's role in the project and asked them to get the descendant's point of view. She stated that with all the talk of the DEI in town if the descendants aren't included from the ground up then why even talk about a committee when it's not being shown here.

Ms. Zipf stated that descendants and other African American voices in the group. She explained that the Descendant's Voices in Action were part of the initial process however, they had not been part of the process since the new leadership. She stated that everyone is invited to participate and encouraged people to be involved.

Vice Chairwoman Parella noted that she was not opposed to the project but that the proposal was not complete and that a lot of work needed to be done.

Vice Chairwoman Parella noted that there was a commonality in the letters of support that were presented to the council. Many of them referenced the "first step in acknowledgment" she asked what that meant by the first step.

Ms. Zipf responded that the first step would refer to the acknowledgment of what happened in the past and that the marker would create a place where this information was put into the world; the marker would be used by people and the community for their benefit, whether it be school programs or to write better interpretive programs.

Councilman Sweeney stated that "we can't change Bristol's history but we can acknowledge and learn from it".

Councilman Sweeney stated that it seemed that the project was still in its concept stage and he didn't agree with the location

requested. He further asked what the requirements were to be part of the UNESCO Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Markers Project connection.

Ms. Zipf states that the only requirement would be to have the site's memory logo displayed somewhere on it. She stated that this was a "messy" process and it was going to take time. She explained that this was a new process and some of the steps are unclear.

Chairman Calouro recommended that the group work on finding a new location for the project. He further suggested tabling the petition until a much more comprehensive plan is presented. He stated it was critical to know the concept first.

Councilman Ley stated that he also agreed that the site was not appropriate for the location of the marker. He asked if the group has reviewed what other towns are doing and what can we learn from local towns such as Warren and Newport.

Ms. Zipf stated that Ms. Victoria Jonson of the Newport Middle Passage Port marker project sits on the committee and has been very helpful throughout the initial steps.

Councilman Ley stated that he had done research on other monuments erected in the town and that he had come across a Heritage and Discovery Committee and the committee was open to the public and dialog lasted for close to three years. He stated that he would like to see the same efforts made by this group/committee. He further stated that there was more work that needed to be done.

Ms. Zipf noted that a much greater effort would be made to reach out to the community to encourage a much larger dialogue in a public format.

Councilman Teixeira thanked people for the letters submitted to the council; however, not all of the verbiage was appreciated. He explained that when using the word "acknowledged" it had the definition of owning or admitting knowledge of. And that it was very difficult for any of us to own or admit knowledge of any of this. He noted that he was aware of the history and what had happened long before. He explained that as a former teacher, he was very cognizant of the history of this town. He explained that places, such as Linden Place, do address and educate the community of the history of the town and that we don't declare to hide it.

Councilman Teixeira stated that when he is hearing that the "community needs to listen" he doesn't believe that we can force anyone to listen. We hope that they will listen but we can't force the community to do so. He further explained that he didn't believe the process had to be "messy" as described by Ms. Zipf.

Councilman Texeira stated that he was not opposed to the recognition of the project but he was concerned about the approach. He stated that he didn't believe there was enough research in the project and what was presented to the council, especially in regards to the site. He further stated that he was insulted by some of the letters received.

Discussion ensued about who or how many people are informed about Bristol's History.

Vice Chairwoman stated that she believes people will be open to recognizing Bristol's slave history and that the subject did not need to be controversial.

Vice Chairwoman stated that more detailed information on the project would need to be presented to the council before any decisions are made. She stated that there should have been more research and consideration of the proposed location.

Vice Chairwoman Parella explained that although Ms. Zipf thought the increased "chatter" of the project over the last couple of weeks was due to interest, it was also unnecessary for members of the Andrade family and members of the fire department, to be in attendance, to defend the already dedicated memorial of Bristol's fallen soldier Michael Andrade.

Vice Chairwoman Parella stated that Bristol has high regard for our Veterans and the memorials presented in their honor; and that the group should have done their due diligence to recognize that before they suggested that site.

Vice Chairwoman Parella stated that proposing the site "leaves a bad taste in peoples' mouth" and it starts the process with a fight over the location, and that is where the controversy may come in. She didn't believe that there would be much controversy, if any, over the actual topic.

Ms. Zipf apologized to the Michael Andrade family and stated that it was not intended to be in the spirit of the project.

Council Chairman Calouro noted that with all the research that the group provided and a 55-foot time scroll, he was disappointed that the same amount of research wasn't done on the site.

Council Chairman Calouro noted that what frustrated him was that many people present at the meeting came here to protect the dedication site and not necessarily support the project's intentions.

Council Chairman Calouro opened the meeting for members of the public.

Michael Byrnes of 49 Wall St., Bristol stated that he applauds the committee for realizing the State Street dock was not the correct location. He recognized all the research and work that had been done on the particular issue. However, he did not think another monument was needed as there were already two markers, one at DeWolf Tavern and one at Linden Place.

Joseph Dnia of Warren, a member of the Veterans Council. His initial objection was to the location proposed. He also spoke to oppose the project.

Dave Scarpino of 932 Hope Street, Bristol explained that he was not against the project but not in favor of the site.

Fatima Andrade Milhomens of 670 Wood Street, Michael Andrade's sister, addressed the council. She stated that it was wrong to assume that the individuals defending the site are against the project. She stated that she was not against the project but rather the way it was proposed. She explained that the Michael Andrade Memorial was a place where she would go to remember her brother. She further thanked the council for recognizing the significance of the site and suggested that thoughtful consideration is taken into account before causing undue distress to the people affected by it.

Thomas Camara of 6 Brooks Farm Drive, Bristol stated that he would like to assist in the efforts of the project but was not in support of the location.

Richard Falcone of 10 Wendy Drive, Bristol spoke in opposition to the project because there were already two markers.

Isaac Gilliard of 385 High Street, Chair of the Descendant Voices of Action noted that he placed a letter in the Bristol

Phoenix, two weeks prior. He stated that he had concerns about the project.

Mr. Gilliard stated that it was disheartening and a little heartbreaking and that is why it's hard to get descendants to come forward; because there's an appearance that the project is to make people feel bad, and it's not. Mr. Gilliard Stated, "We are doing this so we can talk about ourselves, so we can make note of ourselves, we don't have a space here." The marker project presented, done by well-meaning people, does not provide a voice to us. He explained that he left the project because he didn't see that it provided the descendant's voice. He stated that it was just about Bristol, it was about slavery and It's about being able to look at ourselves in the eye and tell our children and generations after that, that we left something for them to look at that is representative of them.

Mr. Gilliard stated that the problem now is that the project now is in a bad light, and that is why African Americans and indigenous people don't want to get involved and that is why their story is not being told. And he feels that there are a ton of bricks on him now and they are starting at minus after hearing all the comments. He stated that the approach was wrong and they are not ready to ask for anything. He recognized all the efforts made by Ms. Zipf and the people who spent hours on research and thought they were not treated fairly in this.

Aires Medeiros of Bristol spoke in support of the project, not the location.

Brian Travers of 474 Hope Street, Bristol stated that he was not in favor of the location but support of the marker and the benefits of the project.

Loraine Russell of 34 Riley Drive, Riverside, a board member of the Descendants Voices in Action, stated that she was a descendant of the enslaved in Bristol. She stated that she was not involved in this marker project. She stated that it was hard to find a descendant linked to a specific person that was enslaved. She stated she was not against the project but there needed to be more thoughtful about the whole process.

Stephan Brigidi of 93 Highland Road, Bristol addressed the council and offered his sincerest apology to the Andrade family and the Andrade Fire department brothers. He stated it was very presumptuous of the committee to propose the location; and that if at any point they thought it was going to be offensive they would have never taken it any further. He stated it was a

mistake. The intention is to celebrate people of African descent and indigenous people who are part of our culture.

Linda Arruda of 159 High Street, Bristol spoke about an organization that existed called "Voices of Bristol" and about the way it was organized. And that she hoped that this organization would come together and the community's voices would be present, heard, understood.

Councilman Ley asked if there should be a little more direction given to the committee such as involving more public discussion and coming back with a resolution for a historical marker

Vice Chairwoman Parella stated that the project needed to be clear and should include the voices of the descendants or be driven by the descendants, and to come back with a plan that encompasses everything. She further stated that she didn't think the resolution was fitting at this time.

Councilman Sweeney stated that it was clear that the Michael Andrade Memorial location was not acceptable. He recommended that the group revisit the concept state and come back with clear milestones and clear communication of the steps to be taken.

Chairman Calouro stated that in addition to vetting the site a clear idea of where and what is to be erected should be presented.

Councilman Ley stated that he wanted to go on record that he would prefer to have the group identify a site for a historical marker that was thoroughly researched and developed.