



City of Cambridge

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IN CITY COUNCIL
May 13, 2019

MAYOR MCGOVERN
COUNCILLOR SIDDIQUI
COUNCILLOR CARLONE

WHEREAS: The history of the State of Massachusetts is replete with instances of conflict between the European Colonists and the Native Nations of the region, who first extended the hand of friendship to the Colonists on their shores in 1620, and helped them to survive starvation during the settlers' first winters on their land; and

WHEREAS: Members of the Native Nation for whom the State of Massachusetts is named were ambushed and killed by Myles Standish, first commander of the Plymouth Colony, in April of 1623, barely two years after the Pilgrims arrived on their shores; and

WHEREAS: The naked Colonial broadsword brandished above the head of the Native man on the Massachusetts State Flag and Seal is modeled over Myles Standish's own broadsword, borrowed from the Pilgrim Hall in Plymouth by the illustrator Edmund Garrett in 1884; and

WHEREAS: The belt binding the Native's cloak on the Flag and Seal is modeled after a belt worn by Metacomet, known to the English as King Philip, who was among the Wampanoag leaders who resorted to a mutually destructive war in 1675-76 in defense of Native lands against Euro-Colonial encroachment; and

WHEREAS: The proportions of the body of the Native man in the Flag and Seal were taken from a Native skeleton kept in Winthrop, the bow modeled after a bow taken from a Native man shot and killed by a colonist in Sudbury in 1665, and his features taken from a photograph of an Ojibwe chief from Great Falls, Montana, considered by the illustrator to be a "fine specimen of an Indian," though not from Massachusetts; and

WHEREAS: The history of relations between Massachusetts since Colonial times and the Native Nations who continue to live within its borders includes the forced internment of thousands of so-called "praying Indians" on Deer Island, in Boston Harbor, where they died by the hundreds of exposure in 1675, their subsequent enslavement in Boston, Bermuda, and the Caribbean Islands, the offering of 40 pounds sterling as bounty for the scalps of Native men, women and children in Massachusetts beginning in 1686, increased to 100 pounds sterling for the scalps of Native adult males by 1722, half that amount for Native women and children; and

- WHEREAS: Native Nations within the boundaries of Massachusetts were kept in a state of serfdom, and their members legally considered incompetent wards of the state until the nonviolent action of the so-called Mashpee Rebellion of 1833 led to the granting of Native self-rule by the Massachusetts legislature in 1834, as if the sovereign right of Native self-government was the Massachusetts legislature's to confer; and
- WHEREASA: Native Americans were legally prohibited from even stepping foot into Boston from 1675 until 2004, when that law was finally repealed; and
- WHEREAS: The 400th anniversary of the landing of the Euro-Colonists at Plymouth Plantation, which gave rise to the long chain of genocidal wars and deliberate policies of cultural destruction against Native Nations of this continent, is approaching in the year 2020, affording every citizen of the Commonwealth a chance to reflect upon this history and come to a new awareness of a better relationship between the descendants of the Euro-Colonial immigrants and the Native Nations of the Commonwealth; and
- WHEREAS: Native Americans have long suffered the many abuses of racism, the appropriation of their symbols for public schools and sports teams, the diminution and pollution of their ancestral lands and the encroachment of their cultural lifeways; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED: That the City Council go on record in support of the resolution H.2776 [RESOLVE PROVIDING FOR THE CREATION OF A SPECIAL COMMISSION RELATIVE TO THE SEAL AND MOTTO OF THE COMMONWEALTH](#), including members of the legislature and representatives of Native Nations of Massachusetts, to recommend changes to the State Flag and Seal of the Commonwealth; and be it further
- RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to the chairpersons of the Massachusetts House Ways and Means Committee, to the chairpersons of the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight, and to Executive Director Geoffrey Beckwith of the Massachusetts Municipal Association.