

**RESOLUTION R08-03 CMS**

**A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF ACTIVITIES  
UNDERTAKEN IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 150th ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE OBERLIN-WELLINGTON RESCUE**

**WHEREAS**, both the colony and the educational enterprise which became the City of Oberlin and Oberlin College were founded in 1833; and

**WHEREAS**, the earliest residents of this intentional community expressed their commitment to the ideals of freedom and equality for all by such policies as the education of men and women together and admission without respect to color at Oberlin College; the education of black and white children together in the early Oberlin common schools; and the abolition of slavery, the latter as expressed eloquently in the Constitution of the Oberlin Anti-Slavery Society, founded in June 1835, a mere two years after the establishment of the town and the college:

“Our object is the immediate emancipation of the whole colored race within the United States: The emancipation of the slave from the oppression of the master, the emancipation of the free colored man from the oppression of public sentiment, and the elevation of both to an intellectual, moral, and political equality with whites”; and,

**WHEREAS**, on September 13, 1858, some 300 Oberlinians, black and white, town and college, rushed to Wellington to attempt to rescue John Price, a resident of Oberlin who had escaped from slavery in 1856, from the slave-catchers who had caught him laboring in nearby Russia Township northeast of town, and were holding him in Wadsworth’s Hotel in Wellington en route to returning him to Kentucky; and,

**WHEREAS**, their attempt was successful, as well as virtually without violence, and John Price was hidden temporarily in the home of Oberlin College professor (later President) James Harris Fairchild, and after several days is presumed to have gone on to the safety and freedom of Canada; and

**WHEREAS**, thirty-seven citizens of Oberlin and Wellington, both white and black, were indicted for their participation in the rescue, refused to post bond in order to remain a visible and prominent reproach to the public and governmental conscience, were held in the Cuyahoga County Jail, and upon their release several months later confirmed their commitment to their principles, stating:

**“RESOLVED:** That after all the pains and penalties inflicted upon us by Government Officials in the attempt to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act, we feel it to be our duty to say, that our hatred and opposition to that unjust and unconstitutional law is more intense than ever before.

No fine or imprisonment however enforced by whatever court can induce us to yield in obedience. We will hereafter, as we have heretofore, help the panting fugitive to escape from those who would enslave him, whatever may be the authority under which they may act.”; and,

**WHEREAS**, this incident and the subsequent legal proceedings in Cleveland perhaps more than any other earned Oberlin its title as “The Town That Started the Civil War”; and,

**WHEREAS**, an Oberlin-Wellington Rescue Coalition has been formed, and includes representatives from area churches and cultural organizations, Oberlin College, Oberlin Heritage Center, Oberlin African-American Genealogy and History Group, Juneteenth Oberlin, Inc., Friends of Oberlin Underground Railroad Center, Inc., and others; and,

**WHEREAS**, the following Mission Statement has been adopted by the Coalition for the Public Celebration on Saturday, September 13, 2008:

“The rescue of freedom seeker John Price from slave catchers on September 13, 1858, was arguably the most important town-gown collaboration on behalf of social justice in Oberlin’s 175-year history. We wish to commemorate this event by holding a public celebration on Tappan Square on September 13, 2008. This celebration will testify to our great pride in our interracial antislavery heritage while recognizing that our community—like the nation at large—suffers from troubling racial divisions and racism in the present day. We anticipate a festive town-gown gathering will provide both a joyful opportunity to renew our commitment to social justice and an opening for fresh dialogue among ourselves about how better to put progressive ideals into practice on a daily basis. We welcome residents of Wellington and other communities to join us on this occasion.”

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of Oberlin, County of Lorain, State of Ohio, a majority of all members elected thereto concurring:

**SECTION 1.** That the City of Oberlin hereby affirms its support for the efforts of community, educational, and cultural organizations and citizen groups to promote understanding of the 1858 rescue of John Price from slave-catchers as a seminal event in the “usable past” of Oberlin’s history;

**SECTION 2.** That the City of Oberlin calls the attention of Oberlin citizens to the events planned in commemoration and celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the rescue, including those coordinated by the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue Coalition next week, continuing on through Juneteenth, the actual anniversary day in September, and the Oberlin College Symposium on “Race and Resistance, 1858 & 2008” in November; pledges the City’s continued cooperation with and in-kind support of these efforts; and encourages the widest participation possible in them by all citizens and organizations of the Oberlin community.

**SECTION 3.** That the Clerk of the Council of the City of Oberlin is directed to provide copies of this Resolution to the boards of trustees of New Russia, Pittsfield, and Wellington townships; to the mayor and council of the Village of Wellington; to the Board of Commissioners of Lorain County; to the City of Oberlin's representatives in both houses of the Ohio State Legislature and both houses of the United States Congress, by way of inviting their recognition of this anniversary and participation in and coordination with these commemorative events.


**SECTION 4.** It is hereby found and determined that all formal actions of this Council concerning or relating to the adoption of this ordinance were adopted in an open meeting of this Council and that all deliberations of this Council and of any of its committees that resulted in such formal action, were in meetings open to the public in compliance with all legal requirements, including Section 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code.

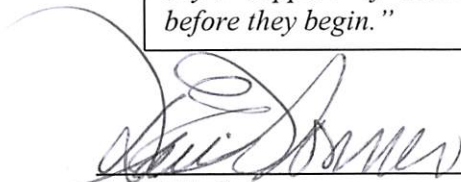
**SECTION 5.** That this resolution shall take effect at the earliest date allowed by law.

**PASSED:** 1<sup>st</sup> Reading – April 7, 2008 (E)  
2<sup>nd</sup> Reading –  
3<sup>rd</sup> Reading –

Waived the rules requiring three readings and elevated to an emergency "...to indicate the city's support of these events before they begin."

**ATTEST:**

  
**Belinda B. Anderson**  
CLERK OF COUNCIL

  
**David E. Sonner**  
PRESIDENT OF COUNCIL

**POSTED: 4/08/08**

**EFFECTIVE DATE: 4/07/08**