



WHEREAS, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, declaring the enslaved people in Confederate territory free, paving the way for the passage of the 13th Amendment, which formally abolished slavery in the United States of America; and,

WHEREAS, word about the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation was delayed some two and one-half years, until June 19, 1865, in reaching authorities and African-Americans in the Southern United States; and,

WHEREAS, the celebration of the end of slavery, which became known as Juneteenth, is the oldest known public celebration of the end of slavery in the United States and has been celebrated by the African-American community for over 150 years; and,

WHEREAS, Juneteenth commemorates African-American freedom and celebrates the achievements gained through education, perseverance, and greater opportunities, while reminding each of us of the precious promises of freedom, equality, and opportunity which are at the core of the American Dream; and,

WHEREAS, the first Juneteenth celebrations were a time for reassurance, prayer, and the gathering of family members and neighbors, and today continue as a time of remembrance and celebration within communities across the country, promoting knowledge, appreciation of African American history and culture, and respect for all people; and,

WHEREAS, the United States of America commemorates its 250th anniversary in 2026, and this milestone invites all Americans to reflect on the full and unvarnished story of our nation's journey toward freedom, justice, and equality for all people – a story in which Juneteenth stands as a profound and essential chapter; and,

WHEREAS, Gaston County is proud to support the Eighth Annual Gastonia EbonyFest Juneteenth Festival, organized by HELP Carolina, Inc., in partnership with the African American Museum of History & Culture, Gastonia, led by Dr. Dorothy Guthrie, with activities including the Juneteenth Kickoff Festival on Saturday, June 13, 2026; the Teen Summit on Sunday, June 14; the Ancestry Research Presentation on Monday, June 15, hosted by Gaston County Public Library; the Teen Farm to Table Experience on Tuesday, June 16, sponsored by Keep Gastonia Beautiful; and the Juneteenth Festival, Parade, and Fireworks Finale on Friday, June 19, 2026, at the Rotary Centennial Pavilion, under the theme "Rooted in Resilience".

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Gaston County Board of Commissioners proclaims June 19, 2026, as

Juneteenth

in Gaston County, and urges all citizens to honor local trailblazers, who represent enduring symbols of resilience and hope for future generations, such as Prince Holland of Gastonia, owner of the first business not connected to the railroad – a blacksmith shop near South South Street and South York Street; and Dr. Dorothy Guthrie, founding Curator and Director of the African American Museum of History & Culture in Gastonia, which celebrates seven years as a living legacy, dedicated to preserving the stories and cultural roots of our community.

Chad Brown, Chairman

Jim Bailey

Bob Hovis, Vice-Chairman

Cathy Cloninger

Tom Keigher

Allen R. Fraley

Scott Shehan