## STAFF REPORT

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| **Agenda Item:** | 7 | **Name:** | Mike Reed |
| **Proposed No**.: | 2020-0224 | **Date:** | July 28, 2020 |

**SUBJECT**

Establishing June 19th of each year, designated as “Juneteenth”, as a paid county holiday.

**SUMMARY**

Proposed Ordinance 2020-0224 would establish June 19th of each year, designated as “Juneteenth”, as a paid holiday for King County employees. Juneteenth has been embraced by many in the African American community as the date for celebration of the end of enslavement in the United States. That acknowledgement has historically been celebrated in the absence of formal status as a paid holiday.

Noting that modification of paid holiday provisions are required to be bargained for represented employees, language is included in the measure authorizing the Executive to enter into or extend agreements with labor organizations to provide the same additional paid leave benefits as provided for non-represented employees in Proposed Ordinance 2020-0224.

Executive staff estimate that establishing Juneteenth as an additional County holiday would yield costs of approximately $4.8 million, mostly as a result of overtime; approximately half of that amount would be incurred by Metro Transit.

**BACKGROUND**

On June 19, 1865, General Gordon Granger, with 2000 federal troops at his command, arrived at Galveston, Texas, to establish a federal presence in the state at the end of the Civil War. Though Robert E. Lee had surrendered Confederate troops at Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia two months earlier, enslavement continued in Texas, where many slaveholders had moved. They considered Texas a safe haven from federal enforcement of the January 1, 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, because of that state’s remoteness from the primary theater of the war.[[1]](#footnote-1)

On that date, General Granger read General Order Number 3, as follows:

*“The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property, between former masters and slaves and the connection heretofore existing between them, becomes that between employer and hired labor. The Freedmen are advised to remain at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts; and they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere”.[[2]](#footnote-2)*

African Americans greeted the announcement of General Order Number 3 with spontaneous celebration, which began a tradition in Texas of marking the anniversary of freedom on Juneteenth. That anniversary date took root in many African American communities in the late 19th century and continued as a grass-roots annual celebration. During the Reconstruction and Jim Crow eras, however, Juneteenth was not accorded official respect or recognition.[[3]](#footnote-3)

More recently, however, states have undertaken acknowledgements or observations of the date in different forms, particularly over the last two decades. In Washington, for instance, RCW 1.16.050 (7) references Juneteenth as “recognized”, “but not considered a legal holiday for any purpose.” According to the Congressional Research Service, forty-six states and the District of Columbia have commemorated or recognized the day in some form.[[4]](#footnote-4)

King County does not currently recognize Juneteenth as an official holiday. King County Code 3.12.230 recognizes the following days as paid county holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents’ Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans’ Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

**ANALYSIS**

Proposed Ordinance 2020-0224 would establish June 19th of each year as Juneteenth, a paid holiday for King County employees eligible for leave benefits. The holiday would join New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Presidents’ Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and two personal holidays as designated holidays with pay for eligible county employees. Noting that modification of paid holiday provisions are required to be bargained for represented employees, language is included in the measure authorizing the Executive to enter into or extend agreements with labor organizations to provide the same additional paid leave benefits as provided for non-represented employees in Proposed Ordinance 2020-0224.

Executive staff was asked to provide a summary of likely costs associated with this measure. Key elements of that cost estimate are highlighted below:

* Costs that would not be experienced in the absence of the paid holiday: Approximately $4.8 million
  + These are primarily costs for overtime pay for those employees supporting services required to be performed even on county holidays. Transit costs represent about half of those costs; cost to the general fund, approximately $1 million.
* Productivity Loss: Approximately $6.3 million.
  + These are costs associated with services that are performed by county government, but would not be performed on a paid holiday.

For more specifics on these costs, Attachment 2 to the staff report is a discussion from Executive Staff of this cost estimate, from which the above summary is drawn.

**INVITED**

* Richard Hayes, Human Resources Policy Advisor, Department of Human Resources
* Matthew McCoy, Labor Relations Negotiator, Office of Labor Relations, King County Executive’s Office

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Proposed Ordinance 2020-0224
2. June 21, 2020 Email summarizing Fiscal Impact from Matthew McCoy, Office of Labor Relations

1. “What is Juneteenth?” <https://www.history.com/news/what-is-juneteenth> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Congressional Research Service Juneteenth Fact Sheet <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R44865.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Juneteenth: Our Other Independence Day Smithsonian Magazine <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/juneteenth-our-other-independence-day-16340952/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Table 1, States that Commemorate or Observe Juneteenth

   <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R44865.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)