

BOARD of SUPERVISORS



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MEMORANDUM

TO: Phil Ginsburg, General Manager, Recreation and Parks Department

FROM: Stephanie Cabrera, Assistant Clerk, Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee, Board of Supervisors

DATE: October 26, 2022

SUBJECT: LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

The Board of Supervisors' Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee has received the following proposed legislation, introduced by Supervisor Melgar on October 18, 2022:

File No. 221088

Resolution urging the Recreation and Park Commission to remove the name Stow from the Lake at John F. Kennedy Drive and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, the Boathouse located in Golden Gate Park surrounding Strawberry Hill, and the Drive circling Strawberry Hill; and to rename the Lake, Boathouse, and Drive to a name that reflects San Francisco's expressed values of celebrating diversity.

If you have any additional comments or reports to be included with the file, please forward them to me at the Board of Supervisors, City Hall, Room 244, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco, CA 94102 or by email at: Stephanie.Cabrera@sfgov.org.

cc: Sarah Madland, Recreation and Parks Department
Ashley Summers, Recreation and Parks Commission

1 [Urging the Recreation and Park Commission to Remove the Name Stow from the Lake in
2 Golden Gate Park, the Boathouse Located at the Lake, and the Drive Circling Strawberry Hill]

3 **Resolution urging the Recreation and Park Commission to remove the name Stow from**
4 **the Lake at John F. Kennedy Drive and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive, the Boathouse**
5 **located in Golden Gate Park surrounding Strawberry Hill, and the Drive circling**
6 **Strawberry Hill; and to rename the Lake, Boathouse, and Drive to a name that reflects**
7 **San Francisco’s expressed values of celebrating diversity.**

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9 WHEREAS, In 1893, Stow Lake was completed in Golden Gate Park and named after
10 former California State Assembly Speaker, William W. Stow; and

11 WHEREAS, In 1854 William W. Stow ran for California Assembly and served two terms
12 representing the County of Santa Cruz, becoming Speaker of the California Assembly in
13 1855; and

14 WHEREAS, During his time as Assembly Speaker, William W. Stow made headlines
15 for his anti-Semitism, speaking against Jewish people directly from the Assembly floor; and

16 WHEREAS, Stow tried to pass a Sunday “closing law” for businesses in Santa Clara
17 and Santa Cruz, which he represented at the time, receiving pushback and scrutiny from
18 Jewish tradesman Louis Schwartz, a constituent of Stow, and the larger Jewish community
19 across the State; and

20 WHEREAS, In 1855, Assemblymember Stow declared during session: “I have no
21 sympathy with the Jews and would it were in my power to enforce a regulation that would
22 eliminate them from not only our county but from the entire state! I am for a Jew tax that is so
23 high that [Jews] would not be able to operate any more shops. They are a class of people
24 here only to make money and who leave the country as soon as they make money;” and
25

1 WHEREAS, In his ongoing efforts against Jewish business owners, Stow proposed a
2 tax on Jews that he claimed "would act as a prohibition to their residence amongst us,"
3 demonstrating a clear goal of discouraging Jews from moving to California and
4 disenfranchising the Jewish residents in California; and

5 WHEREAS, In 1856, Assemblymember Stow ran an unsuccessful campaign for
6 Governor of California on the Know-Nothing political party ticket; and

7 WHEREAS, The Know-Nothing party stemmed from a secret society known as the
8 Order of the Star Spangled Banner (OSSB) that was notorious for its xenophobia, whose
9 members, sworn to secrecy, when asked anything by outsiders would respond with "I know
10 nothing;" and

11 WHEREAS, It is well recorded that Know-Nothing Party members supported
12 deportation of foreign "beggars" and "criminals", a 21-year naturalization period for
13 immigrants; mandatory Bible reading in schools; and the elimination of all Catholics from
14 public office; and

15 WHEREAS, Around 1856, he quit his political career and moved to San Francisco.
16 Stow became a partner in the law firm Patterson, Wallace & Stow, which handled primarily
17 land use issues; and

18 WHEREAS, In 1889, he was appointed to the San Francisco Park Commission and
19 immediately began complaining about the lack of funds for Golden Gate Park, which,
20 ironically, funding he himself cut by half during his tenure as Assembly Speaker; and

21 WHEREAS, Records show that then Commissioner William W. Stow significantly led
22 and fundraised for the development of the lake and the waterfall, known as Huntington Falls
23 after Collis P. Huntington who Stow convinced to donate \$25,000 donation secured by Stow;
24 and

25

1 WHEREAS, It's unclear how the decision was made to name the lake after Stow,
2 according to the park department's historian-in-residence Christopher Pollock, it was common
3 during Golden Gate Park's early days for landmarks to be named after park commissioners;
4 and

5 WHEREAS, It is evidently recorded that William W. Stow promoted racist and
6 exclusionary sentiments and policies; and

7 WHEREAS, A study commissioned by the Jewish Community Federation and
8 Endowment Fund reports that the Bay Area has the fourth largest Jewish population in the
9 country; and

10 WHEREAS, Stow Lake is the biggest lake in Golden Gate Park and attracts many
11 tourists and residents as a prominent site for outdoor enjoyment and activities, making it a
12 landmark representing San Francisco and our values; and

13 WHEREAS, The City's parks and outdoor spaces are for everyone in this diverse
14 community and should not enshrine names of persons who utilize their positions of power to
15 promote hatred or exclusion; and

16 WHEREAS, There is broad community support for the removal of William W. Stow from
17 the lake, boathouse, and drive; now, therefore, be it

18 RESOLVED, That the City and County of San Francisco urges the Recreation and
19 Park Commission to remove William W. Stow from the name of "Stow Lake", "Stow Lake
20 Boathouse", and "Stow Lake Drive;" and, be it

21 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the Recreation and Park
22 Commission to remove the name of William W. Stow from the lake and all related locations
23 after conducting a thorough community renaming process; and, be it

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1 FURTHER RESOLVED, Urging these locations will be renamed to recognize the
2 multicultural diversity and the values, as a Sanctuary City, of the City and County of San
3 Francisco.

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Introduction Form

By a Member of the Board of Supervisors or Mayor

Time stamp
or meeting date

I hereby submit the following item for introduction (select only one):

- 1. For reference to Committee. (An Ordinance, Resolution, Motion or Charter Amendment).
- 2. Request for next printed agenda Without Reference to Committee.
- 3. Request for hearing on a subject matter at Committee.
- 4. Request for letter beginning : "Supervisor inquiries"
- 5. City Attorney Request.
- 6. Call File No. from Committee.
- 7. Budget Analyst request (attached written motion).
- 8. Substitute Legislation File No.
- 9. Reactivate File No.
- 10. Topic submitted for Mayoral Appearance before the BOS on

Please check the appropriate boxes. The proposed legislation should be forwarded to the following:

- Small Business Commission
- Youth Commission
- Ethics Commission
- Planning Commission
- Building Inspection Commission

Note: For the Imperative Agenda (a resolution not on the printed agenda), use the Imperative Form.

Sponsor(s):

Subject:

The text is listed:

Signature of Sponsoring Supervisor:

For Clerk's Use Only