



CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH CITY HALL

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TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Bruce Moe, City Manager

MEETING: City Council Study Session – Bruce’s Beach Park Plaque Language, March 10, 2022

SUBJECT: Agenda Item No.1 – Consideration of the Language for and Placement of Plaques at Bruce’s Beach.

DATE: March 8, 2022

SUPPLEMENTAL ATTACHMENT

- Proposed Language – Mayor Pro Tem Napolitano

Below is a draft alternative for consideration by the public and my colleagues. It is based almost entirely on the language used in Councilmember Franklin's statement of Acknowledgment and Condemnation that was previously approved by Council. This is on purpose.

1. The language used and spirit of the statement is consistent with what Council has already approved.
2. It provides context and contrition while also being forward looking.
3. It gives the City's Acknowledgement new life as a public statement in a public park that the public will see—it won't just be another resolution that nobody reads.
4. A QR code can be added to direct folks to the detailed information on our website.
5. It is designed for placement on the City's property, Bruce's Beach Park—it is by the City and for the City, separate from any County efforts.

Proposed Language (325 words):

After being turned away from other coastal cities, Willa and Charles Bruce purchased property along the Strand in Manhattan Beach to create a beach resort for the area's Black community on February 19, 1912. By 1916, the resort known as "Bruce's Beach" was a thriving fixture for visiting Blacks, with a restaurant, dancehall, changing rooms and showers.

Soon after, several other Black families purchased property and built homes where this park is now, including Major George Prioleau and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, Milton and Anna Johnson, John McCaskill and Elisa L. Irvin, and James and Lulu Slaughter.

Sadly, not everyone in Manhattan Beach welcomed the Bruce's enterprise and its crowds of Black patrons in that era of Jim Crow laws and racial segregation.

The Bruce's, their patrons, and the other Black property owners in the area faced harassment, intimidation and discrimination by some, including City Hall. The ostensible purpose of these actions was to make Manhattan Beach inhospitable to Black residents and visitors.

Ultimately, enough White residents pressured the City Council to pretextually exercise its power of eminent domain to acquire the land for use as a public park. The City condemned the properties of Willa and Charles A. Bruce, Major George Prioleau and Mrs. Ethel Prioleau, Elizabeth Patterson, Mary R. Sanders, Milton and Anna Johnson. Twenty-five other White investor-owned properties that sat undeveloped between the Black owned properties were condemned as well.

The City's action at the time was racially motivated and wrong. Today, the City acknowledges, empathizes and condemns those past actions. We are not the Manhattan Beach of one hundred years ago. We reject racism, hate, intolerance and exclusion.

We offer this Acknowledgment, this plaque, and this park named in memory of Bruce's Beach, in recognition of Manhattan Beach's next one hundred years as a city of love, respect and inclusion.