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

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.

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

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

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

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

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

Supervisors Melgar; Chan, Peskin, Stefani, Dorsey, Engardio, Mandelman, Safai
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WHEREAS, In his ongoing efforts against Jewish business owners, Stow proposed a
tax on Jews that he claimed "would act as a prohibition to their residence amongst us,"
demonstrating a clear goal of discouraging Jews from moving to California and
disenfranchising the Jewish residents in California; and

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, Records show that then Commissioner William W. Stow significantly led
and fundraised for the development of the lake and the waterfall, known as Huntington Falls
after Collis P. Huntington who Stow convinced to donate $25,000 donation secured by Stow;
WHEREAS, It’s unclear how the decision was made to name the lake after Stow, according to the park department’s historian-in-residence Christopher Pollock, it was common during Golden Gate Park’s early days for landmarks to be named after park commissioners; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the Recreation and Park Commission to remove the name of William W. Stow from the lake and all related locations after conducting a thorough community renaming process; and, be it
FURTHER RESOLVED, Urging these locations will be renamed to recognize the multicultural diversity and the values, as a Sanctuary City, of the City and County of San Francisco.
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.

May 11, 2023 Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee - RECOMMENDED AS COMMITTEE REPORT

May 16, 2023 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED

Ayes: 10 - Chan, Dorsey, Engardio, Mandelman, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai and Walton

Excused: 1 - Stefani

File No. 221088

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on 5/16/2023 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

Unsigned

London N. Breed
Mayor

5/26/2023

Date Approved
I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution, not being signed by the Mayor within the time limit as set forth in Section 3.103 of the Charter, or time waived pursuant to Board Rule 2.14.2, became effective without her approval in accordance with the provision of said Section 3.103 of the Charter or Board Rule 2.14.2.

[Signature]
Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

[Date]
5/26/2023