



JOHN J. TECKLENBURG
MAYOR

City of Charleston

JENNIFER B. COOK
CLERK OF COUNCIL

South Carolina

Clerk of Council Department

COMMISSION ON HISTORY

Notice of Meeting

A meeting of the History Commission will be held on Wednesday, February 1, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. at City Hall, 80 Broad Street. **Conference Call: +1 929 205 6099 Meeting ID: 831 8167 4008.** The agenda will be as follows:

1. Call to Order
2. 1919 Charleston Riot Marker
3. Adjournment

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, people who need alternative formats, ASL (American Sign Language) Interpretation or other accommodation please contact Janet Schumacher at (843) 577-1389 or email to schumacherj@charleston-sc.gov three business days prior to the meeting.

From: Breedon, Edwin
Sent: Friday, January 13, 2023 12:14 PM
To: Greene, Harlan M <GreeneH@cofc.edu>
Subject: Charleston Riot marker

Hi Harlan,

Thanks again for passing along the Commission's comments on the Charleston Riot of 1919 marker, and for taking the time to speak with me and share more background on the Commission's feedback. I appreciate you all taking the time to review and discuss the proposed text. Attached for the Commission's consideration is a revised draft which includes the following changes:

- Added "U.S." before "Naval Training Center" on side 1
- Reworded beginning of side 2 to note that hundreds of sailors and others "harassed, beat, stabbed, and shot African Americans." Some additional clarification here is fine, but I think the Commission's proposed qualifier that only "some" of the mob engaged in those latter three acts will effectively (though I know unintentionally) minimize the scale of violence, which is well-documented even in white-authored newspaper accounts. Adding "harassed" seems like a fair way of acknowledging that not all those in the mob engaged in the most extreme forms of violence without coming across as absolving them of wrongdoing, which I think would be how many readers would interpret the proposed reference to "some."

There were also several edits proposed by the Commission that this draft does not include, and I would ask that consideration be given again to our original language on these points:

- "Charleston Riot of 1919" – It's my understanding that the Commission's main reasons for changing the title are that the word "Charleston" is unnecessary since it's obvious that the event occurred in Charleston, and also because Charleston was not the only city where rioting occurred in 1919. While a person reading the physical marker will obviously realize that it's located in Charleston, "Charleston Riot of 1919" is one of, if not the most commonly used name by which this event is widely known and recognized (the title of Nic's *Time Machine* article for example). In addition to there being plenty of precedent for this particular styling, including "Charleston" in the title will more clearly identify the event when the marker is referenced in lists, databases, etc. of all state historical markers. There's also a practical consideration for us that shortening the title to a single line as the Commission proposed will require we rewrite the entire marker inscription so that it fills eighteen lines of text on each side. As for the second point, the first two sentences of the marker make it clear that this was not an isolated event. And even though it was part of a broader wave of violence, it was still an individual, discrete event, the scope of which was confined to downtown Charleston. If anything, the fact that other similar riots occurred elsewhere in 1919 is all the more reason to distinguish this one by its location.
- Capitalization of "white" vs. "White" – Our office generally follows the Chicago Manual of Style, which [recommends](#) capitalizing "Black" but only says that "White" "may" be capitalized depending on individual preferences. While there are reasonable arguments to be made either way, to my knowledge "White" has never been capitalized on a state historical marker, and we do not wish to begin doing so at this time.

- Side 2, line 16 - "...and dozens were injured" – It's my understanding that Nic already clarified this point for the Commission, which we appreciate. If further explanation is needed, just let me know.

Please let me know if I've misunderstood anything, or if I may answer any questions for the Commissioners or offer any further clarification. And thanks again for your help.

Best,
Edwin



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CITY-SIZE DRAFT TEXT

TITLE: 18 characters and spaces / TEXT: 18 lines, 27 characters and spaces
Courier New (a True-Type Font) is best for draft text templates
If 2 title lines are required, there are 16 lines of text instead of 18

Side 1

CHARLESTON RIOT |T1
OF 1919 |T2

The "Red Summer" of 1919 was|1
a wave of racist attacks on|2
African American communities|3
across the U.S. One of the |4
first outbreaks of violence|5
began the night of May 10 |6
near the intersection of |7
Archdale and Beaufain Sts. |8
The event likely started |9
when a sidewalk altercation|10
between Black residents and|11
white sailors on leave from|12
the U.S. Naval Training |13
Center became physical and |14
spilled into neighboring |15
streets and buildings. |16
(continued on next side)

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Side 2

CHARLESTON RIOT |T1
OF 1919 |T2
(continued from other side)

For hours, hundreds of white|1
sailors and others moved |2
along King St. and harassed,|3
beat, stabbed, and shot |4
African Americans. One local|5
newspaper described it as a|6
"hunt and chase of negroes."|7
Many defended themselves, |8
including some who took up |9
weapons. The mob overwhelmed|10
City police, and order was |11
restored early May 11 only |12
after Marines and military |13
police intervened. Three |14
Black residents were killed|15
and dozens were injured. |16

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