



Town of Clifton, Virginia  
P.O. Box 309  
Clifton, VA 20124

**PRESENTED:** November 4, 2020

**ADOPTED:** November 4, 2020

**A RESOLUTION: RENAMING THE PLAYGROUND PARK TO “HARRIET AND WILLIAM HARRIS PARK”**

**WHEREAS**, the Clifton Historic Preservation Committee has long been interested in commemorating in some way the legacy of the African American Harris family in the Town of Clifton; and

**WHEREAS**, historically, one William E. Beckwith in the 1800s resided on a 1200 acre plantation, on the land where Clifton would be founded, with an African American slave partner named Sophie Ellzey, and between them they had a family consisting of seven children; and

**WHEREAS**, one of those children was a daughter named Harriet Ellzey, born to Sophie Ellzey about 1827; and

**WHEREAS**, Harriet Ellzey, slave of William and daughter of Sophie, went on to “marry” and begin a family with William Harris sometime in the late 1840s; and

**WHEREAS**, upon the death of William E. Beckwith in 1863, Harriet Ellzey Harris and her children inherited land from William’s estate adjacent to property where Harrison G. Otis was establishing a railroad station, hotel and post office that would be named Clifton Station; and

**WHEREAS**, Harriet and William Harris built a house on their land and were living there with their children sometime around 1868, thus being the first family to reside in the newly forming village; and

**WHEREAS**, Harriet and William significantly contributed to the formation of the town of Clifton by subdividing some of their property and selling lots, and by providing land for and helping to establish the Primitive Baptist Church, which still stands today, and which also served as the first schoolhouse for the African American children of the neighborhood;

**WHEREAS**, there is currently a movement to recognize the efforts and contributions of ex-slaves and African Americans to society, exemplified in Clifton by the actions of Harriet and William Harris; and

**WHEREAS**, numerous community groups including homeowners surrounding the playground park, homeowners on Chapel Street (which was previously known as Harris Street), the newly-formed Racial Justice Committee, and many others advocated for and supported renaming the park to Harriet and William Harris Park;

**NOW THEREFORE**, Be it resolved by the Town Council of the Town of Clifton that the Town of Clifton's playground park shall henceforth be known as Harriet and William Harris Park.

**ADOPTED THIS 4<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF NOVEMBER 2020.**



William R. Hollaway, Mayor

ATTEST:



Amanda Christman, Town Clerk