

# Ordinance of the City of Jersey City, N.J.

File No.           Ord. 23-028  
Agenda No.     3.4 (1st Reading)  
Agenda No.     4.6 (2nd Reading and Final Passage)



**AN ORDINANCE NAMING THE BERRY LANE PARK AMPHITHEATRE THE “HARRIET TUBMAN AMPHITHEATRE” IN HONOR OF HARRIET TUBMAN.**

**COUNCIL AS A WHOLE offered and moved adoption of the following ordinance:**

**WHEREAS**, Harriet Tubman was an African-descent anti-slavery activist and lead conductor of the Underground Railroad who escaped her plantation on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, traveling over 90 miles to Philadelphia only to later return 19 times to help lead other slaves to freedom; and

**WHEREAS**, born Araminta “Minty” Ross, after marrying her first husband, she became Harriet Tubman; and

**WHEREAS**, despite suffering a life-changing traumatic brain injury at the age of 12, and after escaping to freedom by herself, Harriet worked as a housekeeper before deciding to return to Maryland to rescue her relatives and others; and

**WHEREAS**, armed with a gun and under threat of bounty hunters acting in accordance with the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act authorizing the capture of runaway and freed slaves, over the next ten years, Harriet Tubman created a network of allies and safe havens within the Underground Railroad, helping to liberate over 300 enslaved persons; and


**WHEREAS**, the City of Jersey City (City) is proud of its historical significance as one of the last stops used in the Underground Railroad, which ran from Delaware, through New Jersey, into Pennsylvania and New York helping to provide refuge and safe travel; and


**WHEREAS**, the City would like to pay tribute to Harriet Tubman for her heroic efforts in combating a longstanding injustice that remains a stain on the legacy of America.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF JERSEY CITY AS FOLLOWS:**

- A. That the amphitheater located in Berry Lane Park shall be known as the “Harriet Tubman Amphitheatre” in honor of Harriet Tubman.
- B. This ordinance shall be a part of Jersey City Code as though codified and fully set forth therein. The City Clerk shall have it codified and incorporated in the official copies of the Jersey City Code.
- C. If any part of this ordinance is to any extent invalid or unenforceable for any reason, all other parts shall remain in full force and effect.
- D. This ordinance shall take effect at the earliest possible time and manner provided by law.

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL FORM

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Business Administrator

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Corporation Counsel

An Ordinance naming the Berry Lane Park Amphitheatre the “Harriet Tubman Amphitheatre” in honor of Harriet Tubman.

RECORD OF COUNCIL VOTE ON INTRODUCTION – Mar 23 2023						
RIDLEY	AYE	SALEH	AYE	DEGISE	AYE	8-0
PRINZ-AREY	AYE	SOLOMON	ABSENT	RIVERA	AYE	
BOGGIANO	AYE	GILMORE	AYE	WATTERMAN, PRES	AYE	

RECORD OF COUNCIL VOTE TO CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING – Apr 12 2023						
RIDLEY		SALEH	AYE	DEGISE	AYE	8-0
PRINZ-AREY	AYE	SOLOMON	AYE	RIVERA	ABSENT	
BOGGIANO	AYE	GILMORE	AYE	WATTERMAN, PRES.	AYE	


**SPEAKERS:**  
Patrice Jackson, Carol Tyler, Philip Carrington, June Jones, LaVerne Webb Washington


RECORD OF COUNCIL VOTE ON AMENDMENTS, IF ANY –						
RIDLEY		SALEH		DEGISE		
PRINZ-AREY		SOLOMON		RIVERA		
BOGGIANO		GILMORE		WATTERMAN, PRES.		


RECORD OF FINAL COUNCIL VOTE – Apr 12 2023						
RIDLEY	AYE	SALEH	AYE	DEGISE	AYE	8-0
PRINZ-AREY	AYE	SOLOMON	AYE	RIVERA	ABSENT	
BOGGIANO	AYE	GILMORE	AYE	WATTERMAN, PRES.	AYE	

Adopted on first reading of the Council of Jersey City, N.J. on **Mar 23 2023**  
Adopted on second and final reading after hearing on **Apr 12 2023**

This is to certify that the foregoing Ordinance was adopted by the Municipal Council at its meeting on Apr 12 2023

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joyce E. Watterman, President of Council  
Approved: Apr 12 2023

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Steven M. Fulop, Mayor  
Date to Mayor: Apr 13 2023  
Approved: Apr 13 2023

An Ordinance naming the Berry Lane Park Amphitheatre the “Harriet Tubman Amphitheatre” in honor of Harriet Tubman.

FACT SHEET -

This summary sheet is to be attached to the front of any ordinance that is submitted for Council consideration. Incomplete or vague fact sheets will be returned with the ordinance.

**Project Manager**

Denise Ridley, Councilperson		x5204	DRidley@jcnj.org
Department	Municipal Council		
Division	Municipal Council		

Note: Project Manager must be available by phone during agenda meeting (Wednesday prior to council meeting @ 1:00 p.m.)

Meeting	Regular Meeting of Municipal Council - Mar 23 2023
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**Purpose**

To rename the Berry Lane Park Amphitheatre, which is located next to the mural of Harriet to the “Harriet Tubman Amphitheatre” in Honor of Harriet Tubman
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**Cost (Identify all sources and amounts)**

N/A
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**Contract term (include all)**

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**ATTACHMENTS:**

<a href="#">Jersey City was the last stop on the Underground Railroad - nj</a> <a href="#">Underground Railroad Map JC</a>
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Approved by  
John McKinney, Attorney  
John Metro, Business Administrator

Status:  
Approved - Mar 16 2023  
Approved - Apr 05 2023

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# Jersey City was the last stop on the Underground Railroad

Updated: Feb. 23, 2022, 1:09 p.m. | Published: Feb. 15, 2022, 7:00 a.m.

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By [Stephen McMillian | For The Jersey Journal](#)

Everyone's heard of the Underground Railroad, but not everyone is familiar with the role Jersey City played in helping enslaved people find freedom in the North.

Jersey City was one of the last stops on the Underground Railroad, a network of escape routes and passageways that started in the states the enslaved people and wound its way north.

The Underground Railroad, which operated from the late 18th century to the Civil War, was not actually a railroad, but a route that thousands of fugitive enslaved people used to travel through barns, churches, businesses and homes to escape from states such as Maryland, North Carolina and South Carolina for more promising life in the North. Indeed, the North was referred to as "the promised land."

Jersey City's Underground Railroad was located in the same area that was the former colonial Dutch settlement of New Netherlands of Harsimus. From the 1840's, traders brought Africans to the area to be sold. Some were either enslaved or became indentured servants, working to earn their freedom.

Settlers, whose names are well-known in Jersey City, bought the Africans to work on their properties. The local families included the Newkirks, Tuers, Brinkerhoffs, Van Reypens, Van Horns, Van Vorsts, Vreelands and Van Winkles, according to an article in “NJCU: Jersey City Past and Present.” One of the very first slaveholders was Jacob Staffelsen, who was married to Vrouwtie Ides Van Vorst, of the family for whom a street and a park in Downtown Jersey City are named.

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The late mayor Glenn D. Cunningham, who researched the history of African-Americans in Jersey City culminating in a documentary on local cable television entitled “Hidden Footprints,” said that prior to 1709, there were reported to be over 11,000 enslaved in New Jersey. He said Hudson County held 2,300 enslaved people, which made it one of the largest slave-holding counties in the state.

New Jersey was the last Northern state to free its enslaved and was known by many people as the slave state of the North. On the day the Civil War ended, there were still 18 enslaved people in various parts of the state. The last enslaved people in the state were freed in 1865 by the Thirteenth Amendment.

During the antebellum period, an estimated fifty to seventy thousand enslaved people passed through Jersey City on their way to freedom. They traveled in darkness for 10 to 20 miles a night. The four escape routes, starting from Camden, Salem, Greenwich and Trenton, converged at areas like Bordentown and Burlington and led to Jersey City, making the city “the last stop” on the Underground Railroad. Many of the them continued on to New York or Canada. Some of them exited Jersey City from Harsimus Cove near the foot of Washington Street or Montgomery Street, now Exchange Place.

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Freed enslaved brothers Thomas and John Vreeland Jackson, owned property that became a safe house for slaves and served as one of the main links in the Underground Railroad in Jersey City.

The home of local Jersey City abolitionist Dr. Henry D. Holt, which was located at 134 Washington St., was a “depot” on the Underground Railroad. The home of Jersey City abolitionist, David L. Holden, at 79 Clifton Place, was used as a “safe house” for fugitive enslaved people to hide as temporary occupants.

An 1841 map of Jersey City marks an early African burial ground on the estate of Cornelius Garrabrant, a slave owner. Funerals for the enslaved people were held at his Communipaw Avenue stone house and they were then buried behind his home at the intersection of Johnston Avenue and Pine Street (now currently in the Bergen-Lafayette section of Jersey City). Enslaved people continued to be buried there through the end of the Underground Railroad.

In 2002, there was a statewide Underground Railroad in New Jersey -- the Harriet Tubman-William Still Underground Railroad Walk -- that ended at the area where many of those enslaved had entered Jersey City.

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