

## RESOLUTION

**To Request the Commissioner of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to reinstall the approved State Highway Historical Marker, #278, the Elizabeth Gurley Flynn marker, to its approved site or, alternatively, to an appropriate site on city property.**

Date: August 11, 2023

To: Mayor and Council

From: Adolphe Bernotas and James McConaha

Re: State Highway Historical Marker #278, Elizabeth Gurley Brown

Mayor Bouley & Members of the Council:

As long-time residents of Concord, we respectfully ask that the city council hold a public hearing on a request to the Commissioner of the Department of Natural & Cultural Resources (DNCR), that State Highway Historical Marker #278, the Elizabeth Gurley Flynn marker, be returned to its approved site or, alternatively, be installed on city property under RSA 236:44, the Cooperative Agreement provision of the Historical Marker program.

Flynn, born in Concord in 1890, was a hero of working people in the early 1900's. She was a founder and leader of the Industrial Workers of the World and organized workers across the country to improve their wages and working conditions. She was a fierce advocate and defender of free speech and of the rights of women to vote and to have access to birth control. She was a founder of the American Civil Liberties Union and was profiled in the Concord Monitor's 2001 publication *The New Hampshire Century*, as one of the state's most interesting historical figures of the twentieth century.

The marker was approved by the Division of Historical Resources in September, 2022. It was reviewed by the Concord Heritage Commission in November, 2022 and recommended for placement at the corner of Montgomery and Court streets, Flynn's birthplace. The city council accepted the Heritage Commission's recommendation at its December 12, 2022 meeting. The marker subsequently was erected by the State at the approved location and a groundbreaking ceremony held on May 1, 2023.

Everyone knows what happened next. Objecting to Flynn being a communist, political figures demanded the marker's removal and, in a letter from DNCR Commissioner Sarah Stewart on May 4, 2023, the city was asked if it would like the marker removed. Since the marker was on State property, the city solicitor was directed by the Council to respond.

On May 10, 2023, in a letter on behalf of the city council to Commissioner Stewart, city attorney James Kennedy wrote that "to the extent that the State seeks removal of Marker #278, a marker that it approved (title and text), created and installed, bearing the State seal and located on State property, **the City takes no position on this issue** (our emphasis)."

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Although no one could have likely anticipated that the marker would be removed almost immediately by state authorities, **this was clearly an opportunity lost** for the city to express its support for the marker. The public outcry was enormous. Letters to the editor, opinion pieces in newspapers and other media, forums and other events revealed the shock and dismay that people felt about what they perceived as an attempt to erase history and mount an assault on the First Amendment and the Rule of Law.

Our petition to the council is simply this – it is time for the Council to give our residents an opportunity to support a request to the Commissioner of DNCR to reinstall the marker in its approved location or on city property as provided under state law.



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