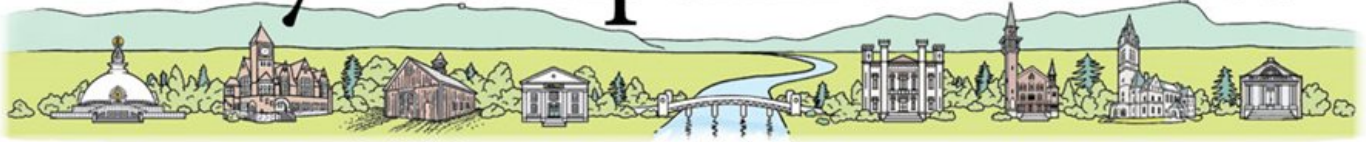


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Amherst council establishes reparations fund



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By [SCOTT MERZBACH \(/byline?byline=By SCOTT MERZBACH\)](#)

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AMHERST — Amherst is establishing a reparations fund that will be used for making restitution to Black residents for past harms against them and leading to a process of reconciliation.

The Town Council Monday voted 12-1 in favor of setting up a special purpose stabilization fund for reparations. No money is yet in the account, though a plan was recently presented by town finance officials that would put \$210,000 into the account later this year when free cash is certified.

In quickly approving the fund, District 3 Councilor Dorothy Pam said she anticipates this will be a positive for the community as a whole.

Only At-Large Councilor Mandi Jo Hanneke voted against creating the fund, but her vote was entirely for technical reasons, including that it was premature to establish a fund before forming the African Heritage Reparations Assembly, the committee that will develop a plan that might use the fund for a reparations program, but also could create some other option.

Michèle Miller, who co-founded the Reparations for Amherst group, said the reparations fund sets the foundation for equity in Amherst.

Any appropriations from it would be made by a two-thirds vote of the Town Council for lawful repair purposes. Those purposes will be determined by attorneys with KP Law.

Town Manager Paul Bockelman said having the fund means the town can begin accepting contributions to it and the Town Council can discuss and plan for orders that would place money into the fund.

The council also approved the charge for the African Heritage Reparations Assembly, to be made up of six Black residents, two of whom are current or former members of elected bodies in Amherst, and one representative of Reparations For Amherst.

The assembly's charge includes developing and recommending to the Town Council a municipal reparations plan by Oct. 31 and engaging local organizations to complement this plan.

The process for appointing residents to this panel remains uncertain.

Amherst is modeling its reparations after Evanston, Illinois, which this year has qualifying households receive up to \$25,000 for down payments or home repairs.

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