WHEREAS, on September 22, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, officially ending slavery in the United States; and

WHEREAS, since 1866, African Americans have celebrated Juneteenth to commemorate the day freedom was proclaimed to all enslaved people in the South, and only reaching Texas, one of the last states to allow ownership of people, two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed; and

WHEREAS, this historic moment would not have been possible without the courage and sacrifice of the nearly 200,000 formerly enslaved and free African Americans who fought for freedom and liberty alongside more than two million Union service members; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth commemorates the strength and determination of African Americans who were first brought to the stolen lands of America in the hulls of slave ships traveling the trade route known as the “Middle Passage” and celebrates the rich heritage and accomplishments of African Americans in our country.

NOW, THEREFORE, the South Portland City Council does hereby proclaim June 19 as “Juneteenth Independence Day” in South Portland, beginning in 2021 and continuing on that day each year in perpetuity. The City Council encourages all citizens to recommit themselves to defending the self-evident truth that all people are created equal.

Signed and dated this 10th day of June in the year 2021.