



**CITY OF SALISBURY
SPECIAL WORK SESSION AGENDA**

NOVEMBER 27, 2023

6:35 p.m.

Salisbury Headquarters at 115 S Division Street and Zoom Video Conferencing

Times shown for agenda items are estimates only.

- 6:35 p.m. Discussion of resolution concerning an apology for the racial terror lynching of three black citizens of Salisbury, MD
- 6:55 p.m. Public Comments (on above topic)
- 7:00 p.m. Adjournment

Copies of the agenda items are available for review in the City Clerk's Office, 115 S. Division Street, Salisbury Headquarters Building, 410-548-3140 or on the City's website at www.salisbury.md. City Council meetings are conducted in Open session unless otherwise indicated. All or part of the Council's meetings can be held in Closed Session under the authority of the Maryland Open Meetings Law, Annotated Code of Maryland General Provisions Article § 3-305(b), by vote of the City Council.

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88163253286?pwd=K3RtZUhUMHNucDRPU2IHbnROQzZVUT09>
Meeting ID: 881 6325 3286
Passcode: 812389
Phone: 1.301.715.8592

*Times shown are approximate. Council reserves the right to adjust the agenda as circumstances warrant.
The Council reserves the right to convene in Closed Session as permitted under the Annotated Code of Maryland 3-305(b).*



City of Salisbury

TO: City Council
FROM: Kim Nichols, City Clerk
SUBJECT: Request to adopt resolution
DATE: November 21, 2023

The Wicomico County NAACP Branch 7028b and the Wicomico Truth and Reconciliation Initiative have issued a Press Release requesting a formal apology for the City's historical role in the lynching of three Black men from 1898 to 1931.

The attached draft resolution has been reviewed by Legal.



For Immediate Release

The **Wicomico NAACP Branch 7028b** and the **Wicomico Truth and Reconciliation Initiative** call on the Salisbury city council to adopt the following resolution, which encompasses a formal apology for the city's historical role in the lynchings of three Black men from 1898 to 1931.

In addition to the duty of city officials to act in the best interests of all its citizens and to protect the most vulnerable, some ***city officials have recently been identified as having been directly involved in the lynching of Matthew Williams*** on December 4th, 1931. Specifically police chief Nicholas Holland, who helped lead the mob that kidnapped Williams; and fire chief Frederick Grier Jr., who provided the rope used to hang Williams.

It is felt that an honest reckoning with our shared history will help to rebuild a trust that has been repeatedly broken, and allow a ***true chance for healing***.

For more information, please contact:

Monica Brooks/ Wicomico NAACP
443-415-5642

James Yamakawa/ Wicomico Truth and Reconciliation Initiative
443-235-4608

Our draft resolution is as follows:

A RESOLUTION CONCERNING AN APOLOGY FOR THE RACIAL TERROR LYNCHING OF THREE BLACK CITIZENS OF SALISBURY, MD.

WHEREAS the term "racial terror lynching", according to the Equal Justice Initiative, means the

intentional inflicting of lethal violence at people because of their race, as an effort to terrorize the entire community and reinforce an existing racial ~~heirarchy~~ hierarchy.

WHEREAS on May 31st, 1898, a white mob numbering over a hundred broke into the County Jail in Salisbury MD and kidnapped an 18 year old Black male named Garfield King, accused of murdering a white man. He was taken to the Wicomico County courthouse lawn, hung from a tree, and reportedly his body was shot 50 times. No one was ever officially identified as being a part of the mob.

WHEREAS on ~~on~~ December 4th, 1931, a white mob numbering several hundred to upwards of a thousand individuals kidnapped a 23 year old Black male named Matthew Williams from the negro ward at Peninsula General Hospital. Williams was accused of the murder of his employer, a white man named Daniel Elliot. After being tortured and hung on the Wicomico County courthouse lawn, his body was dragged through the nearby Black neighborhood and then set on fire in a vacant lot. Though a grand jury investigation led to no one being officially identified as being part of the mob that lynched Williams, a secret investigation authorized by then governor Albert Ritchie was undertaken by an undercover Pinkerton detective named Patsy Johnson. Throughout the course of this investigation, the names of several prominent white community members were identified as being involved in the conspiracy to lynch Matthew Williams and enforce community silence. Most relevant to the City of Salisbury, two members of the City Administration were **directly** involved. Salisbury Police Chief Nicholas H. Holland helped lead the mob from the hospital to the courthouse, and Salisbury Fire Chief Frederick Grier Jr. provided the mob with the rope used to hang Williams.

WHEREAS in the hours following the racial terror lynching of Matthew Williams, an unknown middle-aged Black male (hereafter referenced as "Unknown") was found beaten to death, presumably by either members of the same white mob that had just lynched Williams or from a similar one. This third person was acknowledged finally as a racial terror lynching victim by the Equal Justice ~~Initiative~~ Initiative in 2017.

THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SALISBURY that it formally apologizes to the known descendants of the victims, Ms. LaTanya Christopher, descendant of Garfield King, and Ms. Jeannie Jones, descendant of Matthew Williams, and to the Black community at large for the city's ~~historical~~ role in ~~committing~~ these acts of racial terrorism, and for the intervening years of silence.

~~**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF SALISBURY** that it formally apologizes for its historical role in targeting the larger Black community of Salisbury during and after these acts of racial terrorism, and for its negligence in not protecting its own citizens.~~

~~**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF SALISBURY** that although those that committed the aforementioned crimes are no longer alive, the institutions that they represented still exist. That as institutions that are supposed to serve and protect all of the community (regardless of race) that they bear a responsibility towards this legacy and towards telling the truth.~~

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SALISBURY that though many years have passed since these crimes were committed, the community-wide trauma of racial terror lynchings and their attendant effects are long-lasting and pervasive and therefore must also be acknowledged.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SALISBURY that it will formally commit itself to justice and the repair of the community's trust, and ~~therefore will~~ continue to work with leaders and organizations within the Black community of Salisbury ~~to whatever extent is deemed necessary by said community.~~

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SALISBURY that, with the city's relocation into the historic Salisbury Fire Headquarters, this space which was used in the terror, will be hereby reclaimed as a place of inclusion, fairness and healing.

~~**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF SALISBURY** that it will make this resolution publicly available in the spirit of transparency and accountability.~~

~~**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF SALISBURY** that this resolution will take effect from the date of its passage.~~

Formatted: Font color: Auto

Formatted: Font color: Accent 1