

**CHAIR**  
MAYOR SUMBUL SIDDIQUI

**VICE CHAIR**  
RACHEL B. WEINSTEIN

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
459 BROADWAY  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138

**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY**  
Ariel B. Kennebrew  
TEL: 617-349-6620 • FAX: 617-349-6624  
akennebrew@cpsd.us

**MEMBERS**  
ALFRED B. FANTINI  
CAROLINE HUNTER  
JOSÉ LUIS ROJAS  
DAVID J. WEINSTEIN  
AYESHA M. WILSON

--IN SCHOOL COMMITTEE--

November 21, 2023

ORDERED:

That the Committee withdraw the following Motion:

WHEREAS: Last year the [School Committee decided to rename](#) the Vassal Lane Upper School to honor Black Cantabridgian(s) rather than someone who enslaved others; and

WHEREAS: The Superintendent and Principal engaged the staff, students, and families at VLUS in a process to suggest potential names; and

WHEREAS: [Students shared their thoughts](#) about the qualities they wanted in an honoree, including someone who was a local leader, made a positive change, is a person of color, is inclusive, and humble; and

WHEREAS: Students presented numerous possibilities for school names without a specific recommendation; and

WHEREAS: Community members, particularly representatives from the Slave Legacy History Coalition and Cambridge Black History Project, reached out to the School Committee to suggest renaming the school after Darby Vassall; and

WHEREAS: After securing his liberty from enslavement with the Vassall family, Darby Vassall went on to be a civil rights and educational justice leader, petitioning the state legislature for funding to educate Black children; and

WHEREAS: Darby Vassall was outspoken about human rights his entire life, including as a six-year-old declining unpaid work for General George Washington and through his work founding the African Society and with the New England Anti-Slavery Society; and

WHEREAS: Students and staff at VLUS have been offended by attending and working in a school with the enslaver's name (Vassall); and

WHEREAS: Roughly a century after Darby Vassall's death, Dr. Carolyn L. Turk grew up close to Vassal Lane in Cambridge, in a predominantly Black neighborhood; and

WHEREAS: Dr. Carolyn L. Turk was in the first cohort of Cambridge Public School students to be educated in the building that became the Tobin Montessori/Vassal Lane Upper School; and

WHEREAS: Dr. Carolyn L. Turk went on to [dedicate her career](#) to students in Cambridge Public Schools, including as a teacher and Vice Principal at the Tobin School, and ultimately Deputy Superintendent of the district; and

WHEREAS: Cambridge has previously named schools after two civil rights leaders, namely Saundra Graham and Rosa Parks; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That the Vassal Lane Upper School be renamed the Darby Turk Upper School; and be it further

RESOLVED: That students at the school will learn about the history behind their school's name; and be it further

RESOLVED: That formal copies of this resolution be prepared by the Executive Secretary to the School Committee to be presented to the Slave Legacy History Coalition and Dr. Carolyn L. Turk.

A true copy:



Attest:

Ariel B. Kennebrew  
Executive Secretary to the Cambridge School Committee

Motion #23-279

cc:

Vice-Chair Rachel

Member Wilson

Member Fantini

Member Hunter

Member Rojas

Mayor Siddiqui

Member Weinstein

Superintendent