

CITY OF KINSTON

Office of the Mayor



Proclamation

WHEREAS, Black Music Month—celebrated annually in June—was established to recognize and celebrate the profound contributions of African American artists, composers, vocalists, producers, and innovators to music and culture in the United States and around the world; and

WHEREAS, Black music has served as the soundtrack to struggle and triumph, pain and joy, protest and praise—expressing the full depth and resilience of the African American experience; and

WHEREAS, legendary artists such as Huddie “Lead Belly” Ledbetter, a Mooringsport native and iconic folk and blues pioneer, are noted as some of the foundational influences on American musical tradition, and

WHEREAS, this level of influence would carry on through 60's soul legends like Brenton Wood, whose songs have found renewed viral success on social media, soul artist Margie Evans, and Estelle Brown of the Sweet Inspirations who has been inducted into the Graceland Hall of Fame for her legendary accompaniment of Elvis Presley carry on a musical legacy alongside modern artists like drummer/producer/manager Brady Blade, electronic trailblazer DJ Yoshi, rapper Hurricane Chris, country artist and Beyoncé collaborator Willie Jones, indie rock's genre defying AJ Haynes & the Seratones, and the living legend, Grammy awarded Jazz drummer Brian Blade.

WHEREAS, "Losing Boy," Eddy Giles and Reuben Bell were among the artists to define and give birth to Southern Soul, a sound that would evolve in the hands of Quenn Echols, Crystal Thomas, Tanji Jefferson, Jeter Jones, P2k Dadiddy, Ronald Slack Jefferson, Ron Johnson, Sweet Nay, and many more Southern Soul artists who continue to make our community the heartbeat of this musical style.

WHEREAS, influence on black music isn't limited to recording artists, with modern tastemakers like founder, President and CEO of the National Association of Gospel Radio Charles Edward "CeJay" Johnson, Grammy nominated music video director for artists like Doja Cat and H.E.R., child., and cultural significance that ranges from rebellious movement like Ratchet City or the viral I.S.A. dance “Movin Like Bernie” to a strong musical culture that stands on a professional foundation of radio personalities from Gay Poppa to Marvin “Jabber Jaws” Williams.

WHEREAS, deeply connected to Gospel and contemporary Christian music from classic acts like the Progressive Smith Brothers and Bettye Nelson to recent Grammy-winning contemporary Christian singer songwriter Doe Jones and the Grammy-awarded band that launched her musical journey, Forever Jones.

WHEREAS, generations of musicians nurtured churches, school bands, street corners, and clubs continue to innovate, inspire, and lead, sustaining Black musical creativity and excellence;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Kinston City Council, that it does hereby recognize June as

Black Music Month

in Kinston and join the nation in honoring the legacy, talent, and enduring influence of Black musicians, particularly those from our communities, who have made lasting contributions to music and culture and encourages all citizens to celebrate and support Black music and musicians, and to reflect upon the vital role that music plays in the cultural and civic life of our city.

I hereby set my hand and have caused the Seal of the City of Kinston, North Carolina, to be affixed this the 17th day of June 2025.



A blue ink signature of Mayor Don Hardy, written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the name "Mayor Don Hardy".

Mayor Don Hardy