

# Y A W K E Y F O U N D A T I O N S

## **Yawkey Foundations Respond to John Henry's Petition to Rename Yawkey Way** *Boston business, religious and nonprofit leaders oppose name change in letter submitted by Foundations to Public Improvement Commission*

BOSTON – March 15, 2018 – In response to Red Sox owner John Henry's submission of a petition to rename Yawkey Way at a hearing today of the Public Improvement Commission (PIC), the Yawkey Foundations filed a letter opposing the name change signed by a range of Boston business and nonprofit leaders as well as Cardinal Sean O'Malley.

Rev. Ray Hammond, pastor of Bethel AME Church and a Yawkey Foundation board member, submitted the letter during a brief appearance at the hearing. "The signers of this letter, who represent some of Boston's leading institutions and non-profits, many of which support underserved communities, are united in opposing the petition," Hammond said.

Hammond added that while petitions to rename streets are usually routine procedural matters, the Red Sox's petition "goes far beyond" the usual procedure. "They have framed their petition not as a mere street name change – they have made it about race. The Red Sox have created a false narrative about Tom Yawkey and his record as owner to paint him as a racist whose name must be expunged forever from Yawkey Way at Fenway Park."

Hammond said that under these circumstances the PIC commissioners should not approve the petition merely because the Red Sox have met the technical requirements for changing a street name. Instead, he urged the commissioners to use the power they have under their rules to examine "legitimate concerns" raised by the proposed name change, including how it would affect the other institutions in Boston named in honor of Tom and Jean Yawkey as well as Fenway Park's historic designation.

"Yawkey Way is a city-owned street, but it is arguably as much a part of Fenway Park as the Green Monster and Pesky's Pole," Hammond said. "We believe that if you consider the historical aspect of the street and the concerns raised by the Yawkey Foundations, as well as by the signers of the letter we are submitting to you today, you will reject the petition to rename the street."

Among the signers of the letter are Jack Connors, board chair emeritus of Partners HealthCare; Josh Kraft, Nicholas President and CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of Boston; Darnell Williams, president and CEO of the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts; Don Rodman, president of Rodman for Kids; Bob Scannell, president and CEO of the Boys and Clubs of Dorchester; Sister Janet Eisner, president of Emmanuel College; and Andrea Swain, executive director, Boys & Girls Club of Boston's Yawkey Club of Roxbury.

The letter states in part: "We do not question [Henry's] motives, but we respectfully disagree with renaming Yawkey Way. While there will always be questions about why the Red Sox could not integrate sooner, we believe it is unfair to paint Tom Yawkey as racially divisive and take the drastic action of striking his name from the street that has borne his name for more than 40 years.

"During a recent broadcast interview, a Red Sox representative took pains to praise the Yawkey Foundations and said their good works should be considered apart from the issue of removing the

Yawkey name from Fenway Park. But this is asking the impossible. The name on the street that honors Tom Yawkey's long and successful ownership – not to mention his philanthropy – is synonymous with the name of the Foundations. They are inseparable.”

Connors said that Yawkey Way stands as a testament to both Tom Yawkey's historic 43-year ownership of the team and his unparalleled record of giving, which during his lifetime included his unique contributions to the Jimmy Fund, efforts that resulted in saving a generation of children. “I think it's important to note that the generosity of Tom and Jean Yawkey and the Yawkey Foundations has contributed greatly to the fabric of this city," Connors said. "Gifts from the Yawkeys and their foundations have made possible enormous advances in medicine, education and human services, and Boston is a better city because of their support."

The Public Improvements Commission will hold a public hearing on the petition on March 29, at which time the Foundations and their supporters will make a formal presentation opposing the petition.

### **About the Yawkey Foundations**

The Yawkey Foundations trace their origins back over eight decades to the philanthropic commitments of Tom and Jean Yawkey. With great concern for the forgotten and underserved, Tom and Jean Yawkey took careful steps to ensure that their legacy would live on through the work of the Yawkey Foundations. They were particularly interested in supporting organizations that encouraged educational opportunities, improved health care, enhanced human service programs, provided youth and amateur athletic opportunities, celebrated arts and cultural endeavors for families, and valued conservation efforts. Since 1977, the Yawkey Foundations have donated more than \$450 million to hundreds of nonprofit organizations.

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