

Statement:

By his own admission, Councilman Arthur Dowdell entered Pine Hill Cemetery on April 23rd and removed confederate flags from private burial plots. He was quoted as saying "This will never happen again **as long as I'm on city council.**"

This is a passionate issue. There is no doubt that Mr. Dowdell is offended by the battle flag of the confederacy, and the appropriateness of its use is open to debate. The way councilman Dowdell chose to enter the debate is inappropriate and beneath the office of city councilman. His actions were inexcusable and have done nothing to help people on either side of this issue find common ground. They have stirred up old hatreds and created embarrassment and controversy for the city he represents.

The bottom line is that those graves are private property, the placing of flags as memorials are expressions of free speech and Mr. Dowdell had no right to remove them. The fact that Mr. Dowdell invoked his position as a city councilman demands that the city council speak to the issue.

Therefore, the following is offered as a resolution by the Auburn city council: *see Resolution*

RESOLUTION NO. _____

WHEREAS, by his own admission, Councilman Arthur Dowdell entered Pine Hill Cemetery on April 23rd and removed confederate flags from private burial plots; and

WHEREAS, Councilman Dowdell invoked his position as a city councilman by saying "This will never happen again as long as I'm on city council;" and

WHEREAS, the foregoing action was inappropriate and beneath the office of a city councilman;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Auburn City Council condemns the actions taken by Councilman Dowdell, and urges him to make a public apology to the citizens of Auburn, and to pledge that henceforth he will respect the private property and free speech rights of all citizens.

Bill Ham, Jr., Mayor

ATTEST:

Charles M. Duggan, Jr., City Manager