



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

100 East Erie Street
Chicago, IL 60611

Legislation Text

File #: 15-0338, **Version:** 1

RESOLUTION FOR BOARD MEETING OF APRIL 9, 2015

RESOLUTION sponsored by the Board of Commissioners celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Belgian American Club of Chicago

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago welcomes his Excellency Ambassador Johan Verbeke of the Kingdom of Belgium on his first visit to Illinois and congratulates Honorary Consul Paul M. Van Halteren of the Kingdom of Belgium of Chicago celebrating the 10th year anniversary of the Honorary Consulate of the Kingdom of Belgium and Louis J. Dries, President, Belgian American Club of Chicago (BACC) celebrating its 100th Anniversary; and,

WHEREAS, the Kingdom of Belgium has had a long tradition in Chicago since 1854 when it was the first country to open a consulate in Chicago located in "Old Town"; and,

WHEREAS, the Kingdom of Belgium opened the Honorary Consulate of Paul M. Van Halteren in March 2005 to reflect the Belgian American community; and,

WHEREAS, Belgium communities were established in the 19th century in Chicago, Illinois; Detroit, Michigan; Door County, Wisconsin; and Moline, Illinois; and

WHEREAS, the Belgian Club of Chicago has a long history in the city of Chicago; and,

WHEREAS, the Belgians in Chicago first organized around 1904/1905 to help raise funds to build the Belgian Church, St. John Berchmans, at Logan Boulevard and Maplewood Avenue completed in 1907; and,

WHEREAS, the President was Charles F. Strubbe whose family originated from Bruges and was active in the city's public affairs, in labor circles and became a trustee of the new Belgian Church, St. John Berchmans; and,

WHEREAS, in 1915, the "Belgian Janitors Association" was established under the leadership of Gus Van Heck for several decades and then succeeded by his son Ray Van Heck, and,

WHEREAS, in 1921, they built a clubhouse for dances and social events at 2625 W. Fullerton Avenue with "All Belgians Are Equal" carved into a stone plaque on the corner of the building, and at the top of the façade are the initials "ABE," which stand for the same phrase; and,

WHEREAS, Gus Van Heck was also instrumental in the growth and development of Janitors' Union Local 1, a union that organized the janitors in Chicago today represented by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and eventually he became Vice-President of the Union and served until 1955; and,

WHEREAS, many new Belgian immigrants who arrived in Chicago would become janitors and join the union as well as the club; and,

WHEREAS, the club was renamed the "Belgian American Club of Chicago" in 1948; and,

WHEREAS, from the 1960s through the 1980s, the Belgian American Club of Chicago was led by Arnold Van Puymbroeck, and currently the President of the BACC is Louis J. Dries; and,

WHEREAS, the BACC serves a diverse community of individuals and families who have an interest in Belgian culture; and

WHEREAS, the BACC is a non-profit, non-political and non-religious group, promoting the image of Belgium and its peoples and encouraging social relations among Belgians, as well as non-Belgians, living within the Chicago metropolitan area; and

WHEREAS, a Belgian missionary, Father Arnold Damien, a Jesuit Priest, played an important role in Chicago by expanding Catholic educational opportunities in founding Saint Ignatius College Prep, a private, coeducational Jesuit High School located in the near West Side neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois; and,

WHEREAS, Belgian missionary, Father Damien, was chosen as the greatest Belgian of all time by the Flemish Public Broadcasting Service, VRT; and, Damen Avenue in Chicago is named after him; and,

WHEREAS, Belgian, James Oliver Van De Velde, served as the second Roman Catholic Bishop of Chicago between 1849 and 1853; and,

WHEREAS, Belgian, Charles Henrotin, founded the Chicago Stock Exchange in a formal meeting on March 21, 1882, and was the principal organizer and promoter and was elected the Chairman and President for two other terms, as well as member of the New York Stock Exchange and connected to the Chicago Board of Trade; and,

WHEREAS, in 1892, Belgian, Charles Henrotin was chosen a Director on the World's Columbian Exposition also know as the Chicago's World's Fair; and,

WHEREAS, the former Memorial Hospital of the North Side of Chicago was named Henrotin Hospital after Ferdinand Henrotin; and,

WHEREAS, World War I (1914-1918) had a profound impact on the history of the Kingdom of Belgium and of the whole world, and it played an important role in the conflict, not least through the courageous resistance shown by the Belgians during the German invasion; and,

WHEREAS, the Kingdom of Belgium is playing a central part in the 100th anniversary of World War I with a number of national commemorative ceremonies with international scope throughout the period 2014-2018, including Flanders Fields Battlefield Tours in Ypres Salient, part of the Western Front; and,

WHEREAS, the Kingdom of Belgium served as the battleground between many European powers, causing it to be dubbed the "Battlefield of Europe", a reputation strengthened by both World Wars; and,

WHEREAS, Belgian-Americans continue to contribute to the growth of the Midwest where greater Chicago is and has been a focus for Belgian immigrants coming to America, and excelling in many fields including religion, labor, economics, science, medicine, education and business; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the Board of Commissioners of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, on behalf of ourselves and staff, welcome his Excellency Ambassador Johan Verbeke of the Kingdom of Belgium on his first visit to Illinois and congratulate Honorary Consul Paul M. Van Halteren of the Kingdom of Belgium of Chicago for celebrating the 10th year anniversary of the Honorary Consulate and President Louis J. Dries, Belgian American Club of Chicago (BACC) for celebrating its 100th Anniversary; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution be spread upon the permanent Record of Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, and that copies of same, suitably engrossed, be presented to His Excellency Ambassador Johan Verbeke of the Kingdom of Belgium, Honorary Consul Paul M. Van Halteren of the Kingdom of Belgium of Chicago and Louis Dries, President of the Belgian American Club of Chicago (BACC).

Dated: April 9, 2015

Approved: MARIYANA T. SPYROPOULOS, President; BARBARA J. MCGOWAN, Vice President; FRANK AVILA, Chairman, Committee on Finance; MICHAEL A. ALVAREZ; TIMOTHY BRADFORD; CYNTHIA M. SANTOS; DEBRA SHORE; KARI K. STEELE; PATRICK D. THOMPSON; Commissioners of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Approved as to Form and Legality: Ronald M. Hill, General Counsel