



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

100 East Erie Street
Chicago, IL 60611

Legislation Text

File #: 15-0378, **Version:** 1

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION FOR BOARD MEETING OF APRIL 9, 2015

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION sponsored by the Board of Commissioners honoring Reverend Willie Taplin Barrow

WHEREAS, Willie Beatrice Taplin was born in Burton, Texas, on Dec. 7, 1924, to Nelson and Octava Taplin, and was raised on their farm with her six siblings; and

WHEREAS, at the age of twelve, Reverend Barrow began her lifelong fight for equality when she demanded to be allowed to ride the whites-only bus to school; and

WHEREAS, at the age of sixteen, Reverend Barrow moved to Portland, Oregon to study ministry, and in the process, organized one of the first African-American Churches of God; and

WHEREAS, while working as a welder in a shipyard during the war, she met Clyde Barrow, who would become her husband; and

WHEREAS, the couple moved to Chicago in 1945, where Reverend Barrow resumed her studies at Moody Bible Institute; and

WHEREAS, as a member of Emerald Avenue Church of God, Reverend Barrow organized a youth choir made up of children from all over the South Side, and when her minister noticed her leadership ability and her energy, he tapped her to help with civil rights demonstrations; and

WHEREAS, by 1950, Reverend Barrow was a field organizer, helping to put together marches and pickets for civil rights all over the United States; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Barrow helped organize sit-ins and boycotts in the South with other civil rights icons including the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks and the Reverend Ralph Abernathy; and

WHEREAS, on September 27, 1954, Reverend Barrow gave birth to son Keith, who, influenced by his mother, sang gospel music, eventually becoming a noted recording artist; and

WHEREAS, in the mid-1960s, Reverend Barrow founded Operation Breadbasket with Reverend Jesse Jackson, leading boycotts of white-owned businesses to bring awareness to the disparity in food pricing and quality between black and white neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, Operation Breadbasket evolved into Operation PUSH, which led campaigns to serve the poor and the most vulnerable communities in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, with Operation PUSH, Reverend Barrow actively participated in the boycott of Chicago Fest, which led to a massive voter registration effort and the election of the late Mayor Harold Washington; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Barrow served as executive director of Operation PUSH for five years, the first woman to lead the organization, and served as chair of the board for over a decade; and

WHEREAS, small in stature but giant in spirit, “The Little Warrior” fought for equality everywhere, joining the fight for women’s rights and labor rights, and in later years, for gay rights; and

WHEREAS, after losing her son to AIDS, Reverend Barrow became active in the AIDS awareness movement and helped launch one of the first AIDS quilts; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Barrow traveled widely on missions of peace and outreach all over the world, including Vietnam, Russia, Nicaragua, Cuba and to South Africa; and

WHEREAS, in her missions of peace and advocacy for human rights, Reverend Barrow met with many foreign and domestic leaders, including Nelson and Willie Mandela; Presidents Carter, Bush, Reagan, Clinton and Obama; and other heads of state; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Barrow wrote “How to Get Married...and Stay Married,” a book offering advice based on her 56 years of marriage to her husband Clyde; the two remained married until his passing; and

WHEREAS, in recent years, Reverend Barrow focused her advocacy on the issues of gun violence in Chicago and concern over the dilution of the Voting Rights Act; and

WHEREAS, Reverend Barrow took many young activists under her wing and served as “godmother” to hundreds, including President Barack Obama; and

WHEREAS, on March 12, 2015, Reverend Barrow passed from this life to rejoin husband Clyde and son Keith; and

WHEREAS, generations of men and women have been inspired by Reverend Willie Barrow’s strength in spirit in her fight to extinguish inequality wherever she found it, and they will continue the fight in her honor; 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, do hereby recognize the passing of Reverend Willie Barrow and honor her lifelong commitment to equality; 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.

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