



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

100 East Erie Street
Chicago, IL 60611

Legislation Text

File #: 17-0244, **Version:** 1

RESOLUTION FOR BOARD MEETING OF MARCH 16, 2017

RESOLUTION sponsored by the Board of Commissioners honoring Bernarda Wong

WHEREAS, Bernarda "Bernie" Wong was born and raised in Hong Kong, and her early life experiences set the stage for her mission-driven approach to serving others with dignity and respect; and

WHEREAS, at eighteen, Bernie left Hong Kong alone for Sioux City, Iowa, where she earned a B.A. in Sociology from Briar Cliff College. This was followed by a Master's Degree in Social Work from Washington University in St. Louis; and

WHEREAS, Bernie truly understood what poor new immigrants face when confronted by a completely different culture and language, which gave her the courage to gather a few friends and begin the difficult task of building the Chinese American Service League (CASL) from the ground up in 1978; and

WHEREAS, the CASL provides social support services from early childhood development through elder care, including housing, job training, cooking classes, financial education and a daycare for both children and the elderly; and

WHEREAS, Bernie served as the first President of the CASL, and under her leadership, the organization has grown from a one-person shop with an annual budget of \$30,000 to Chinatown's largest employer, serving over 17,000 Chicagoans annually with a budget of \$13 million; and

WHEREAS, Bernie led CASL for 38 years, from the organization's first year of operation until her retirement in December of last year; and

WHEREAS, in addition to her work with the CASL, Bernie chaired the Chicago Mayor's Advisory Council on Asian Affairs and was the first Asian appointed to the Boards of United Way of Chicago and the Chicago Public Library. She also served on the Governor's Asian Advisory Council, the Leadership of Greater Chicago Board, and the Chicago Commission on Human Relations. Currently, Bernie serves on several committees, including the National Asian Pacific Center on Aging Board, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights Board, and the Council for the Illinois Department on Aging. Bernie is also a founding member of the Chinese Immigrant Service Agencies Network International, and served as an adviser on the Obama Foundation Inclusion Council; and

WHEREAS, Bernie has earned several honors and distinctions for her work, including the 2016 and 2015 Distinguished Alumni Award from Briar Cliff College in Iowa and Washington University in St. Louis, respectively. In June 2013, she received the Jane Addams Making History Award for Distinction in Social Service, given by the Chicago History Museum. Then in July of 2013, Bernie was honored by the Chicago Tribune as a "Remarkable Woman," and by Today's Chicago Woman as one of "100 Women of Influence." In 2012, Bernie received the prestigious "Champion of Change" award from President Obama, the Association of Fundraising Professionals' Outstanding Community Leader Award for the Chicago Chapter, and the YWCA Outstanding Leaders - Racial Justice Award. In 2010, Harris Bank presented Bernie with the Edward J. Williams Community Leadership Award. Bernie received the Rainbow/Push Coalition's Community Organizer Trailblazer Award in 2004, as well as the Distinguished Community Leader award from Mayor

Richard Daley in 1990; 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, hereby honor Bernarda Wong for her years of dedicated service to the Chinese American community in Chicago and the greater community at large; 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 a copy of same, suitably engrossed, be presented to Bernarda Wong.

Dated: March 16, 2017

Approved: MARIYANA T. SPYROPOULOS, President; BARBARA J. MCGOWAN, Vice President; FRANK AVILA, Chairman, Committee on Finance; TIMOTHY BRADFORD; MARTIN J. DURKAN; JOSINA MORITA; DEBRA SHORE; KARI K. STEELE; DAVID J. WALSH; Commissioners of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

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