



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

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RESOLUTION FOR BOARD MEETING OF FEBRUARY 4, 2021

RESOLUTION sponsored by the Board of Commissioners recognizing February as Black History Month and honoring Dr. Elizabeth Lockhart

WHEREAS, the concept of creating Black History Month can be traced back to the year 1915, when Dr. Carter G. Woodson traveled to Illinois to participate in the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which legally ended slavery in the United States. Dr. Woodson was among many that participated as an exhibitor during the three-week celebration; and

WHEREAS, witnessing the interest, curiosity, and demand for knowledge, Dr. Woodson decided to form an organization whose purpose would be to encourage the study of Black history and life, including the innumerable contributions of Black people to civilization. Thus, on September 9, 1915, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) was founded in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, the first official observance was held in February of 1926 and was known as Negro History Week. The second week of February was chosen, as this week incorporated the birthdays of two notable figures in Black history, Abraham Lincoln who signed the Emancipation Proclamation, and Frederick Douglass who was an escaped slave and devoted abolitionist; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to tailor the focus during Negro History Week, the ASNLH began creating an annual theme, and in 1937 the Negro History Bulletin was established to promote the annual theme and to create a venue for circulating information about Negro History Week on a larger scale; and

WHEREAS, in the 1940's, there were a handful of instances where the observance of Negro History Week slowly began to expand into a month-long commemoration. Then in the 1960's, with the increasing momentum of the Civil Rights Movement, the popularity of Negro History Week exploded. In many places, including college campuses, instead of celebrating Negro History Week, many students began celebrating Black History Month; and

WHEREAS, President Gerald R. Ford became the first president to recognize Black History Week on February 3, 1975. He issued a "Message on the Observance of Black History Week" and encouraged Americans to

“recognize the important contribution made to our nation’s life and culture by black citizens” that “have too long been obscured and unsung”; and

WHEREAS, in 1976, Black History Week was officially converted into Black History Month. On February 10, 1976, in recognition of this milestone, President Ford issued the first “Message on the Observance of Black History Month”. Since 1976, every President has officially designated February as Black History Month; and

WHEREAS, on February 11, 1986, Congress passed Public Law 99-244, designating February 1986 as “National Black (Afro-American) History Month”. While there have been some years in which Presidential Proclamations were not issued, since 1996 Presidential Proclamations have become a standard tradition; and

WHEREAS, the transformation from a weeklong observance to a month was a major accomplishment for the ASNLH (now Association for the Study of African American Life and History). The move to a month-long celebration captured Dr. Woodson’s long held belief that the history, accomplishments, and achievements of Black people were too meaningful to be crowded into a one-week event; and

WHEREAS, the District salutes the infinite, dynamic, and illustrious history of African Americans and affirms that the world in which we live would not exist if not for the plenteous contributions that African Americans have made throughout history and continue to make today; and

WHEREAS, the theme of this year’s celebration of Black History Month by the District is “Persevering in a Time of National Crisis”. This theme was selected to acknowledge the resiliency of people of African descent and their ability to achieve great things in the midst of the struggle of the novel coronavirus global pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the District is honored to recognize Dr. Elizabeth Lockhart; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Elizabeth Lockhart is the Executive Director of the Arthur Lockhart Resource Institute (Resource Institute). Founded by her late father, Pentecostal Pastor Dr. Arthur Lockhart, the Resource Institute is an outreach program that services the needs of thousands annually; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Elizabeth Lockhart was born in Crenshaw, Mississippi and relocated to the west side of Chicago with her family at a young age; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Lockhart obtained her bachelor’s degree in Business Education from Chicago State University, her Certification in Community Leadership from North Park University, and her doctorate degree in Theology from the Tripp Institute; and

WHEREAS, after being employed as an educator at both Percy L. Julian High School and East West University Chicago and as a corporate executive at the National Safety Council (respectively), Dr. Lockhart felt a yearning desire to become more involved with the community; and -

WHEREAS, responding to this urge, Dr. Lockhart resigned from the National Safety Council and began volunteering at her father’s church where her role eventually progressed to her overseeing many of the community outreach programs; and

WHEREAS, upon her father’s death in 1995, Dr. Lockhart became the Executive Director. After assuming this role, Dr. Lockhart began to expand the programs and events offered to further the mission of the Resource Institute; and

WHEREAS, known for her signature program “Standup for Veterans”, Dr. Lockhart has been recognized by Northeastern University and the DePaul University Egan Office for her dedication to providing resources and assistance to veterans and others in need; and

WHEREAS, with her diverse background, Dr. Lockhart has been able to combine her unique skill set to foster an environment of education, patience, and leadership which has facilitated the growth and success of the Arthur Lockhart Resource Institute; 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 month of February as Black History Month and honor Dr. Elizabeth Lockhart; 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 Dr. Elizabeth Lockhart.

Dated: February 4, 2021