



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

File #: 16-1015, **Version:** 1

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

COMMEMORATING THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE HONORABLE MARJORIE COLLENS

WHEREAS, Marjorie Collens represented some of the best qualities of citizenship and humanity through her life-long work as a supporter of the arts, community leader and elected official. When she died in early December she left behind a family, countless friends and a community enriched for having known her; and

WHEREAS, Marjorie Collens, spent her early years in Albany Park. She graduated from Von Steuben High School and attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she got a bachelor's degree and met her husband, Lewis Collens; and

WHEREAS, Marjorie Collens was a remarkably talented woman whose intelligence and leadership qualities singled her out for distinction. Marjorie Collens was elected by the voters of Evanston's seventh ward to be their alderman. She diligently represented the ward from 1984 to 1991 and will long be remembered for her support of the acquisition of property by the city in what became the Evanston Research Park. Her support promoting new downtown commercial and residential development sparked a renaissance in the city's downtown;

WHEREAS, Marjorie Collens forged strong bonds with her fellow elected officials that outlasted their terms of office and spanned decades. She was warmly received when she returned to the City Council Chambers in 2013 for a reunion of current and former city officials marking the city's 150th anniversary; and

WHEREAS, Marjorie Collens had the unique ability to regularly achieve her goals without rancor and, as a result was genuinely admired and respected by her peers. She formed and nurtured strong relationships and worked to resolve long standing issues between the city and its two largest institutions, Northwestern University and Evanston Hospital, both of which were located in the seventh ward; and

WHEREAS, Marjorie Collens was a longtime admirer and pioneer in the area of arts and education. She recognized the vital role that the arts play in civic life. She played a major role in the effort to start what is now ChiArts, the Chicago High School for the Arts. The idea for the school grew out of the realization that a chief reason for a lack of diversity on Chicago music stages was the lack of a public pre-professional arts high school. The school serves artistically gifted, diverse Chicago high school students, provides intensive pre-professional training in the arts combined with a comprehensive college preparatory curriculum and can be credited with the improvement and enhancement of countless lives; and

WHEREAS, Marjorie Collens later moved to Chicago with her husband when he was selected to lead the Illinois Institute of Technology as its president. She tirelessly supported the university in numerous development activities and brought her leadership skills to the boards of the Chicago Foundation for Women, Chicago's public radio station WBEZ and the Lincoln Park Zoo; and

WHEREAS, Marge Collens encouraged and supported her husband Lewis Collens when he accepted the appointment to join the board of the Cook County Health and Hospital System; and later encouraged him to take on the further responsibilities of chairing the finance committee of that board and graciously accepted the additional loss of his time; and

WHEREAS, Marjorie Collens served as a board member and later chaired the board of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago. Hubbard Street is widely viewed to be one of the most original forces in contemporary dance today and is thriving in its 38th year. While on the board, she championed several groundbreaking initiatives. She promoted a collaboration among architecture students, choreographers and dancers for a performance by the dance company at the Illinois Institute for Technology's S.R. Crown Hall, which was designed by famed architect Mies van der Rohe. She promoted the move to a new location at the corner of Jackson Boulevard and Racine Avenue, and later championed a new design for the façade; and

WHEREAS, the community has lost a great friend in Marjorie Collens. She will also be sorely missed by her friends, neighbors and colleagues. Her loss will be felt most acutely by her husband of over 50 years, Lewis Collens and their son Steven; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of Cook County, on behalf of the 5.2 million residents of Cook County commemorates the extraordinary life of Marjorie Collens and herewith expresses its sincere gratitude for the invaluable contributions she has made to the Citizens of Cook County, Illinois; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a suitable copy of this Resolution be spread upon the official proceedings of this Honorable Body and that an official copy of the same be tendered to the family of Marjorie Collens.