



Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street
Chicago, IL

Legislation Text

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PROPOSED RESOLUTION

HONORING THE REDEDICATION OF EBENEZER PRIMM TOWERS IN EVANSTON, AND HONORING THE LEGACY OF REVEREND JACOB S. BLAKE

WHEREAS, Ebenezer Primm Towers was the first church sponsored federally funded housing project in a major suburban area. It will be rededicated on Sunday, July 30, 2017. At its rededication, the community will honor the Reverend Jacob S. Blake's pivotal role in making Ebenezer Primm Towers a reality and the powerful legacy of Reverend Blake and Ebenezer AME Church; and

WHEREAS, for decades, prior to arriving in Evanston, Reverend Blake was a leader and a major force for good in the region battling profound injustices, such as redlining, housing discrimination, education inequity and busing. In Evanston, in addition to so many other issues, he worked tirelessly to establish affordable housing for the senior citizens in Evanston, where rents were rising rapidly. The result was the establishment of Ebenezer Primm Towers, which has a proud history that is a reflection of Reverend Blake and his intense determination and strong leadership; and

WHEREAS, Ebenezer Primm Towers came about in an unprecedented real estate deal with Northwestern University. Reverend Blake and Ebenezer AME Church purchased land owned by the university at 25% below market value for \$75,000. According to university officials, Northwestern sold the land to the church to foster good community relations and to dispel the notion that the university only expanded in black communities. The Northwestern Black Student Union, the Black Ensemble of Northwestern and the African American Community in Evanston put pressure on the University to sell the land. But there was a catch to the deal, if construction didn't start within 24 months of the sale, Northwestern University could buy the property back. With the clock ticking, funds were raised via several sources. The church got a loan to buy the land and received a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to help finance the \$500,000 construction project. The rest was raised by the community that pulled together to make the dream a reality; and

WHEREAS, Joseph Levy, owner of a Buick car dealership at the time, donated a brand new Buick to be auctioned off to raise money for the project. The church held fundraisers which included selling dinners, hosting basketball tournaments and at the Ebenezer AME Church 90th Anniversary Gala. To ensure that housing for the elderly remained a priority in Evanston, John Young, Urban Planner of Evanston at the time worked with a committee to create a special zoning district for that purpose. Ebenezer Primm Towers was dedicated July 1973 and residents moved in soon after.

WHEREAS, Reverend Blake's widow Patricia G. Blake and sons Justin S. Blake and Jacob S. Blake Jr. will be in attendance at the rededication of Ebenezer Primm Towers along with members of Ebenezer AME Church, other family members and friends; the community will honor Reverend Jacob S. Blake's crucial role in making Ebenezer Primm Towers a reality; 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 takes great pleasure in honoring and celebrating the rededication of Ebenezer Primm Towers and herewith honors the progress and impact that Reverend Blake's work has done bettering the lives of 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 Ebenezer Primm Towers and the family of Reverend

Blake.