

City of East Lansing, Michigan

RESOLUTION CELEBRATING WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH

March 8, 2022

WHEREAS, women in the United States once were considered property or chattel of their husbands and were subjected to second class citizenship; and,

WHEREAS, through tireless and unrelenting opposition to this circumstance, women nonetheless persisted and gained freedom and independence; and,

WHEREAS, National Women’s History Month recognizes and spreads awareness of the importance of women in the history of the United States; and,

WHEREAS, since its founding, the City of East Lansing has relied upon the women in our community to shape the civic, cultural and educational experiences of all residents; and,

WHEREAS, in its 114-year history, fifteen women have served on the East Lansing City Council; and,

WHEREAS, throughout the history of the United States, whether in the home, the workplace, school, the courts, in peace or in wartime, women have fought for themselves, their families and all people of our country; and,

WHEREAS, women led the efforts to secure suffrage and equal opportunity for women and served in the abolitionist movement, the emancipation movement, labor movements, civil rights movements and other causes to create a more fair and just society for all; and,

WHEREAS, suffragists wrote, marched, were arrested and ultimately succeeded in achieving the enactment of the following:

(1) the 19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, section 1 of which provides that “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex;” and,

(2) the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which extended the protection of the right to vote to women of color and language minorities; and,

WHEREAS, in 2019, the United States celebrated the 100th anniversary of Congress proposing the 19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which guarantees women the constitutional right to vote; and,

WHEREAS, women have been and continue to be leaders in the forefront of social change efforts and are particularly important in the establishment of charitable, philanthropic and cultural institutions; and,

WHEREAS, women were previously barred from attending medical schools in this country and now make up the majority of enrollments in medical schools; and,

WHEREAS, women were previously turned away from law school, but now represent approximately half of law students in the United States; and,

WHEREAS, women have served in the United States Armed Forces since the American Revolution and the Civil War, noting one woman in particular, Harriet Tubman, who was enslaved but took her freedom, brought others to freedom and served as a spy and a commander in the Civil War; and,

WHEREAS, women serve in volunteer and enlisted positions, with more than 200,000 active-duty servicewomen and 2,000,000 veterans representing every branch of service; and,

WHEREAS, until 2019, women represented approximately half of the workforce of the United States, but this number has decreased since the COVID-19 pandemic as many women were driven from the workforce to care for their families; and,

WHEREAS, more than 10,000,000 women own businesses in the United States; and,

WHEREAS, Jeannette Rankin of Montana was the first woman elected to the House of Representatives in 1916 and Hattie Wyatt Caraway of Arkansas was the first woman elected to the United States Senate in 1932; and,

WHEREAS, 106 years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, Shirley Chisholm was the first Black woman elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1969; and,

WHEREAS, in 1993, Carol Moseley Braun was the first Black woman to serve in the United States Senate; and,

WHEREAS, Nan Darling was the first woman elected to the East Lansing City Council in 1959; and,

WHEREAS, Mary P Sharpe was appointed to serve in 1965 and went on to serve 10 years as a Councilmember and the first woman mayor pro tem from 1968-1971 and 1973-1975; and,

WHEREAS, Thelma Evans was the first Black woman to serve on the East Lansing City Council after she was appointed to fill the remaining term left by the resignation of George Colburn; and,

WHEREAS, by unanimous vote, Joan Hunault was the first woman to be elected mayor in 1987; and,

WHEREAS, Liz Schweitzer was elected in 1981 and served as mayor pro tem from 1983-1985; and,

WHEREAS, she would go on to be elected as the second woman to serve as mayor from 1989- 1993; and,

WHEREAS, following these trailblazing women public servants, others have answered the call, including Elizabeth (Beth) Schwarze, Beverly Baten, Dianne Goddeeris and Ruth Beier (who both served as mayor and mayor pro tem), Shanna Drahiem Kathleen Boyle and Susan Woods; and,

WHEREAS, on November 3, 2020, Kamala Harris was elected as the first woman and first Black, South Asian Vice President of the United States; and,

WHEREAS, on November 3, 2022, Dana Watson became the first Black woman to be elected to the East Lansing City Council; and,

WHEREAS, on June 14, 2021, Nicole McPherson became the first woman (acting) director of the East Lansing Department of Public Works; and,

WHEREAS, Elaine Hardy was promoted to be the first woman director of the East Lansing Department of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion on July 1, 2021; and,

WHEREAS, Catherine DeShambo was selected to become the first woman director of the East Lansing Department of Parks, Recreation and Arts on August 23, 2021; and,

WHEREAS, on September 20, 2021, Dawn Carson became the first woman fire chief of the East Lansing Fire Department; and,

WHEREAS, President Jimmy Carter issued the first Presidential Proclamation designating March 2-8, 1980 as National Women's History Week; and,

WHEREAS, in 1987, a bipartisan group of Senators introduced the first joint resolution to pass through Congress, which designated Women's History Month; and,

WHEREAS, President Ronald Reagan issued the first Women's History Month Presidential Proclamation in 1987; and,

WHEREAS, despite the advancements of women in the United States, much remains to be done to ensure that women, particularly women of color, realize their full potential as equal members of society; and,

WHEREAS, the women of the East Lansing City Council who will approve this resolution stand as sentinels for a new generation of women who have committed themselves to ending systemic structures that harm, offend and weaken the human spirit and will be remembered for their contributions, including Mayor Pro Tem Jessy Gregg, Councilmember Dana Watson (the first Black woman elected and the second to serve on City Council) and Councilmember Lisa Babcock; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS RESOLVED that the East Lansing City Council recognizes National Women's History Month and the contributions of all women in their fight for racial, gender and social justice and encourages all residents to find ways to celebrate the vast contributions women have made to the betterment of this world.

Ron Bacon, Mayor

Jennifer Shuster, Clerk