

City of East Lansing, Michigan

RESOLUTION CELEBRATING WOMEN’S HISTORY MONTH

March 21, 2023

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, since its incorporation, 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; 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 who had been barred from attending medical schools in this country now make up the majority of enrollments in medical schools; and,

WHEREAS, women previously were 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 231,741 active-duty servicewomen and 2,000,000 veterans representing every branch of service; 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 Mosley 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 she went on to serve 10 years as a councilperson and first woman mayor pro tem from 1968-1971, and she served in the capacity again from 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. Her appointment had one dissenting vote; and,

WHEREAS, Joan Hunault, by unanimous vote, 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 in 1989-1993; and,

WHEREAS, following these trail blazing women public servants, others have answered the call, including Elisabeth (Beth) Schwarze, Beverly Baten, Dianne Goddeeris and Ruth Beier (who both served as Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem), Shanna Draheim, 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 United States; and,

WHEREAS, on November 3, 2022 Dana Watson was the first Black Woman to be elected to the East Lansing City Council; 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 and Councilmember Dana Watson (the first Black woman elected and the second to serve on City Council); and,

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS RESOLVED that the East Lansing City Council recognizes National Women's History Month and the contribution 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

Marie Wicks, Interim City Clerk