

Resolution Honoring Police Commissioner Willie E. Bell

Whereas, Mississippi native Willie E. Bell always had a fire for fairness, equality, and justice for all. Those values served as cornerstones throughout his military service in Vietnam, his 32-year career as a Detroit Police Officer, his decades of advocacy for police accountability, and most recently, his three terms as the Police Commissioner for District 4, as well as terms as Board Chair and Vice Chair; and

Whereas, Police Commissioner Bell often stood at the forefront of battles to stop racism and brutality by the police. At a time when Blacks in uniforms faced personal and professional threats from other officers, he helped form Concerned Police Officers for Equal Justice. He also served as President of the Guardians Police Association for 10 years and led the legal fight for affirmative action at the Police Department. He pushed lasting U.S. reforms as Chair of the National Black Police Officers Association and as a Board Member of the Detroit Chapter of the NAACP. In the landmark Malice Green case, he provided testimony that helped result in the historic conviction of two white police officers in the murder of a Black victim. Before retiring at the rank of Lieutenant in 2003, he served on the team of police officers in the Board's Office of the Chief Investigator, where he supervised citizen complaints and investigations about police misconduct; and

Whereas, When Detroiters strengthened civilian oversight in the 2012 Charter, District 4 residents elected Police Commissioner Bell - a proud father, grandfather and Eastsider - in 2013. However, state emergency management stopped the new Board from functioning during the City's bankruptcy. When the state manager restored all the City's powers except for the Board, Commissioner Bell relentlessly built coalitions and lobbied lawmakers until the Board had its powers restored in December 2015, and Detroit's new era for civilian oversight truly began; and

Whereas, He served on the Board for the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement and was key to Detroit's selection as the 2019 host of NACOLE's 25th annual conference, which set fundraising and attendance records. His many achievements include starting a training module at the Police Academy on the vital roles of the Board, community-led oversight, and police professionalism. As he completes 12 years as a Police Commissioner, he continues to train every class, including current cadets who will graduate in June 2026, and to work with the community for Detroit's progress.

Therefore, be it

Resolved, The Board of Police Commissioners awards this resolution in recognition of the dedicated and diligent service by Police Commissioner Willie E. Bell, whose dedication and commitment to civilian oversight, the City of Detroit, and residents merit our highest regards.

We salute you Commissioner Bell for a job well done and wish you continued success in the future.