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CORRECTED

TO: The Honorable City Council

FROM: David Whitaker, Director 
Legislative Policy Division Staff

DATE: September 25, 2018

RE: **RESOLUTION ENDORSING THE RETENTION AND
IMPROVEMENT OF THE ARETHA LOUISE FRANKLIN
AMPHITHEATER FORMERLY NAMED THE CHENE PARK
AMPHITHEATRE.**

On July 30, 2018 the Council President Pro Tem Mary Sheffield requested that the Legislative Policy Division draft a resolution to support the efforts to retain and to improve operation of the Aretha Louise Franklin Amphitheater formerly named the Chene Park Amphitheatre.

Attached, please find our draft of the resolution.

Please contact us if we can be of any further assistance.

BY COUNCIL PRESIDENT PRO TEM MARY SHEFFIELD

**RESOLUTION ENDORSING THE RETENTION AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE
ARETHA LOUISE FRANKLIN AMPHITHEATER FORMERLY NAMED THE
CHENE PARK AMPHITHEATRE**

WHEREAS, In the mid-1970s under then Mayor Coleman A. Young, the City of Detroit developed a vision for a system of three linked riverfront parks providing public access to Detroit's near east riverfront between Downtown and Belle Isle; and

WHEREAS, The first of these parks was conceived as an urban amphitheater celebrating the arts and providing a concert venue and unique setting throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, On June 16, 1982, the City held a groundbreaking ceremony for that first park, which was to complement the private sector investment in mixed use residential developments undertaken by Stroh Brewery, American Natural Resources and Michigan Consolidated Gas, in the near east riverfront; and

WHEREAS, On August 10, 1984, following a soft opening on July 23rd, the City dedicated the open air stage, promenade and bike path, supportive pavilion, 25 foot tall hillside and pond including the fountain that comprised the newly constructed Chene Park; and

WHEREAS, Chene Park became an instant success providing the venue for many concerts, civic events and an artist in residence program, as well as a passive place to view vessels navigating the international water way; and

WHEREAS, Over the succeeding years, Chene Park would undergo various phases of improvement, including the addition of a canopy for the stage and later the seating area, fixed seating for 5000 patrons, an expanded pavilion, offices and support facilities for staff and performers and more landscaping for the grounds; and

WHEREAS, Chene Park has entertained more than 800 events over the course of its 34 year history, hosting concerts, high school graduations, Youth Day with the Detroit Police Department, Senior Day, health fairs, comedy shows, live theater, film screenings, live broadcasts of the Detroit Pistons, festivals and many private events; and

WHEREAS, Notable among these events is the jazz series which has offered low cost entertainment to Metropolitan Detroit for over 30 years, the Concert of Colors, the US premiere for Techno Music with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and the Aretha Franklin Tribute Concert; and

WHEREAS, In 2005, the stage of the Chene Park Amphitheatre was dedicated to the memory of playwright Ron Milner; and

WHEREAS, The list of performers to have graced the Chene Park stage is a Who's Who of entertainment, including Aretha Franklin, Diana Ross, Smokey Robinson, Fela, James Brown, Ray Charles, Miles Davis, The White Stripes, Wynton Marsalis, Brandford Marsalis, Earth Wind and Fire, Deepak Chopra and India Arie; and

WHEREAS, Pollstar, an entertainment industry publication, currently rates the venue 63rd highest in worldwide amphitheater ticket sales; and

WHEREAS, On August 31, 2018, during the funeral for Ms. Aretha Louise Franklin, Mayor Duggan, and City Council President Brenda Jones acknowledged a proposal to permanently change the name of Chene Park to the Aretha Louise Franklin Amphitheater (ALFA) in honor of Aretha Franklin; the internationally acclaimed vocalist known the world over as the "Queen of Soul"; and

WHEREAS, On September 4, 2018, during City Council Formal Session, the entire City Council, unanimously approved a resolution to permanently change the name of Chene Park, to the Aretha Louise Franklin Amphitheater; and

WHEREAS, Also on September 4, 2018, Council President Pro Tem Mary Sheffield inquired about the future of the amphitheater, amidst reports that the amphitheater could possibly be closed and/or moved downtown to Hart Plaza. Mayor Duggan responded to Council President Pro Tem Mary Sheffield and enthusiastically stated, "*that the Aretha Franklin Amphitheater is not moving as long as I'm the mayor*"; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Duggan acknowledged that physical improvements are needed to the 34-year-old park. Entertainers as well as patrons have strongly suggested improvements in acoustics, parking and infrastructure, in addition to addressing a number of deferred maintenance items; and

WHEREAS, The ALFA has new and unrealized potential to be the jewel that it was originally envisioned to be and more. The City must promptly pursue sufficient capital improvements to the facility in order to improve the overall physical condition and address functional and operational needs in order to encourage related investment and to increase stakeholder satisfaction before the proposed renaming and dedication ceremony tentatively scheduled for late spring of 2019; and

WHEREAS, The opportunity is before us to revisit past proposals and explore new options for expanded programs and activities at the ALFA, including those that could be done on a year round basis; and

WHEREAS, The City's east riverfront is dotted with proposed development projects to address the increase in demand for residential and commercial land uses in this area. It only stands to reason that the appropriate alterations and improvement to the Aretha Louise

Franklin Amphitheater and its host community, would complement existing and future development plans and enhance the aesthetics, mobility and livability in this area; and

WHEREAS, There are a number of examples around the world where sports, entertainment and recreational facilities are fostered along with residential development. We are pursuing it here in Detroit with The District development being pursued around Little Caesars Arena. The same can be done intentionally around the ALFA, to ensure the peaceful coexistence of mixed uses in a vibrant and diverse setting; and

WHEREAS, The mission of the Detroit City Council is to promote the economic, cultural and physical welfare of Detroit's citizens through Charter-mandated legislative functions;
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT

RESOLVED, That Detroit City Council hereby concurs with the strong commitment that the Mayor has expressed in maintaining the ALFA in its present location and strongly encourages the City to fund all the necessary improvements to the facility in order to ensure its status as a treasured institution within our community and as a dynamic driver of economic development and improved quality of life for residents on the lower east side of the City of Detroit as well as the greater metropolitan area; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ALSO**

RESOLVED, That the Detroit City Council urges the City to adopt an approach to the east riverfront visioning that is supportive of the ALFA in both short and longer term planning projections, seeks to expand upon the venues utilization throughout the year by exploring options such as ice skating in the pond, and considers the creation of node around the ALFA by encouraging the establishment of complementary entertainment and commercial recreation uses, with appropriate parking and other supportive infrastructure; **NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY**

RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution shall be delivered to the Mayor's Offices, the Recreation Department, the management of the Aretha Franklin Foundation, Ms. Shahida Mausi, president of The Right Productions and to applicable community stakeholders and various media outlets.