



City of Chicago



R2021-646

Office of the City Clerk

Document Tracking Sheet

Meeting Date: 5/26/2021

Sponsor(s): Smith (43)

Type: Resolution

Title: Congratulations extended to Gary T. Johnson on retirement from Chicago History Museum

Committee(s) Assignment:

**CONGRATULATIONS EXTENDED TO GARY T. JOHNSON
ON HIS RETIREMENT AS PRESIDENT OF THE CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM**

WHEREAS, Gary T. Johnson retired as the eighth President of the Chicago History Museum in April 2021; and

WHEREAS, The Chicago City Council has been informed of Gary's retirement by the Honorable Michele Smith, Alderman of the 43rd Ward; and

WHEREAS, Gary was named the eighth President of the Chicago History Museum in August 2005; his leadership has focused on community outreach and building the institution's capacity to serve its mission of sharing Chicago's stories; and

WHEREAS, After 28 years as a lawyer and partner at two global law firms, Gary left the practice of law to become President of the Chicago History Museum in 2005, where he led the reinvention of the Chicago Historical Society into today's Chicago History Museum in 2006; the reinvention included a renovation of 75% of the Museum and the installation of the highly praised Exelon *Crossroads* exhibit, a foundational overview of Chicago history; and

WHEREAS, Gary's vision ensured that the oldest cultural institution in the City was modern and up-to-date; he is proud that the Museum now offers virtual reality and augmented reality platforms, and was also the first museum anywhere to ask the community to assign the topic for a future exhibition, as well as host the first-ever entirely crowd-sourced exhibition, *Chicago Authored*; and

WHEREAS, Under Gary's leadership, the Chicago History Museum increased annual attendance by 89% and received several major awards, including the National Medal from the Institute of Museum and Library Services in 2016, which is the top award in the United States for museums and libraries and was awarded to the Museum at a White House ceremony; and the Social Innovator Award in 2019, presented by Chicago Innovation; and

WHEREAS, Throughout Gary's tenure, he managed the successful installation of numerous widely praised exhibitions, including: *OUT In Chicago*, which won the American Alliance of Museums' Award for Excellence; *The Ebony Fashion Fair*, which won the Costume Society of America's Richard Martin Exhibition Award; *Lincoln and Juarez*; *Shalom Chicago*; and *Catholic Chicago*; and

WHEREAS, Gary has made an impact not only on the Chicago History Museum and its visitors, but also on countless students in the City; providing access to the Museum's offerings is important to Gary, and visiting grade schools in Chicago with artifacts from the Museum's collections is a personal commitment of his; and

WHEREAS, As part of his commitment to merging the Museum with classroom education, Gary has visited over 350 classrooms in neighborhoods throughout Chicago; he also launched an educational program bringing hands-on history learning into 120 Chicagoland schools; trained over 3,000 teachers and 200 principals and assistant principals through a two-year pilot workshop program; and digitized hundreds of thousands of documents, images, and Studs Terkel recordings from Museum archives for use by researchers across the nation; and

WHEREAS, In addition to serving as President of the Chicago History Museum, Gary was also the longest serving President of Museums in the Park, the association of eleven of Chicago's major museums, and led 15 cultural institutions in their "Museums Work for Chicago" legislative

campaigns in Springfield and Chicago; Gary served on a special task force for the American Alliance of Museums to reform the accreditation process, as Presidential Counselor for the National World War II Museum, and, since 2007, has served as chair or as member of the selection committee for the Pritzker Military Museum & Library Literature Award, which annually recognizes an author who has made a significant contribution to the understanding of military history; and

WHEREAS, While Gary's profound influence on the City's cultural life cannot be understated, he is also heavily involved in numerous civic organizations, particularly those with civil rights and justice reform missions, and has served as president of several, including the Chicago Council of Lawyers, and was Co-Chair of the national Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law from 2001-2003, and is currently a lifetime trustee; and

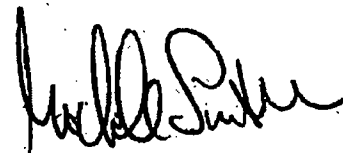
WHEREAS, Gary also served as a board member of the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago; Vice Chair of the Special Commission on the Administration of Justice in Cook County; and as a member of the Illinois Supreme Court Special Commission on the Administration of Justice and the Criminal Justice Project of the Circuit Court of Cook County; he is a current member of the American Bar Association's governing body (the House of Delegates) and the American Law Institute; is a Life Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and the Illinois State Bar Association Foundation; and has been a longtime member of the Radio Committee of WFMT, which oversees Chicago's classical music station; and

WHEREAS, Gary received his J.D. from Harvard Law School; a Master's Degree in Modern History from Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes Scholar; and Bachelor's Degrees in History and Political Science from Yale College; in 2018, Gary was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Humanities degree by Lake Forest College, and he teaches two undergraduate courses at the college as a visiting lecturer: "Nonprofit Leadership and Management" and "Social Innovation in Chicago"; and

WHEREAS, Gary once said, "My desire for Chicagoans is not only for them to access our collections and programs, but also experience their own Chicago stories"; after 15 years of service to the Chicago History Museum, Gary's hard work, sacrifice, and dedication to his community has helped make that a reality for countless visitors and students; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and the members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, gathered here this twenty-first day of April, 2021, do hereby congratulate Gary T. Johnson on his retirement from the Chicago History Museum, and wish him the best of luck in all his future endeavors; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to Gary T. Johnson.



MICHELE SMITH
Alderman, 43rd Ward