



# City of Chicago



R2019-469

Office of the City Clerk

## Document Tracking Sheet

<b>Meeting Date:</b>	7/24/2019
<b>Sponsor(s):</b>	Sawyer (6)
<b>Type:</b>	Resolution
<b>Title:</b>	Tribute to late William Bonaparte, Jr.
<b>Committee(s) Assignment:</b>	

**TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE OF WILLIAM “BILLY” BONAPARTE, JR.**

WHEREAS, in His infinite wisdom, God has called William Bonaparte, Jr., a loving father, grandfather and great-grandfather as well as an outstanding and enterprising business leader, to his eternal rest on May 25, 2019, and

WHEREAS, on December 11, 1942, Billy Bonaparte started his journey on Chicago's South Side neighborhood of Princeton Park as the second eldest of 6 children. In his earliest days, his father instilled a strong work ethic and, at the age of 12, he began his first career delivering newspapers every morning before he started school. He attended Gillespie Elementary, a Chicago Public School where he was fortunate enough to have as his seventh-grade teacher the legendary African-American educator Dr. Barbara Sizemore, who recognized and encouraged his potential. Billy began his exploration of the world through books and spent many evenings curled up in a closet with any book he could find; and

WHEREAS, in 1961, William Bonaparte, Jr. joined the United States Army where he served as a Field Engineer. After his discharge, he went to work for Illinois Bell Telephone Company in 1963 as the African American PBX (Private Business Exchange) installer ever hired by the company. Five years later he was promoted to foreman of operations in the Loop. By 1971, Bonaparte was working in a management role and attending the Milwaukee School of Engineering where he graduated with a degree in electrical engineering in 1976. In 1984, Bonaparte left Illinois Bell for AT&T, where he became area manager of Chicago south services and, in 1985, won the corporation's Keystone Award for Excellence, the highest honor bestowed upon a management employee; and

WHEREAS, sensing the business opportunities created by the anti-trust court-ordered breakup of the Bell System, Billy retired from AT&T in 1986 and formed Bonaparte Connection, supplying communication connectivity services to the business community. In 1991, he founded Bonaparte Corporation, an electrical contracting firm. By 1996, his company was grossing more than \$8.5 million annually. Under Billy Bonaparte's leadership, Bonaparte Corporation became the largest African-American owned electrical contractor in Chicago and created hundreds of full-time jobs. In 1999, Bonaparte founded Bonaparte Properties, a restoration contracting firm; and

WHEREAS, William Bonaparte, Jr. was a very active member of his community, Bonaparte was active in the community as well, serving on the executive board of the Electrical Contractors Association, the board of the Cosmopolitan Chamber of Commerce, and as chairman of Rotary/One Chicago. He also served as a member of the Chicago Minority Business Development Council, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, and the Executives Club of Chicago. Billy was the recipient of many honors in addition to the Keystone Award for Excellence, including Cosmopolitan Chamber of Commerce and Kennedy-King College Small Business of the Year Award, and was a finalist for the Ernst & Young LLP Entrepreneur of the Year Award for High Technology; and

WHEREAS, Billy Bonaparte leaves behind to mourn his loss and cherish his memory his three sons; William Bonaparte III, A. Jason Bonaparte and Romero Brown; one daughter, Lolita Bonaparte Brown; former wife Dr. Helena Bonaparte; 13 grandchildren and one great-grandson; brothers Matthew Bonaparte (who preceded him in death) and Gerald M. Bonaparte; sisters Mettie B. Ward, Bennie M. Callahan, Jacqueline Williamson, and a host of nieces, nephews, in-laws, other relatives, and friends; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable Roderick T. Sawyer, Alderman of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ward, has apprised this august body of the passing of one of this cities African American titans of industry; now therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that we, the mayor and members of the City of Chicago City Council gathered here this 12<sup>th</sup> Day of June, 2019 A.D., do hereby wish to express our sincerest sorrow upon learning of the passing of William "Billy" Bonaparte, Jr. and extend our deepest condolences to his family, friends and the many people whose lives he has touched.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that suitable copies of this resolution be prepared and presented to the family of William Bonaparte, Jr.



Roderick T. Sawyer  
Alderman – 6<sup>th</sup> Ward

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