



City of Chicago



R2015-634

Office of the City Clerk

Document Tracking Sheet

Meeting Date:	7/29/2015
Sponsor(s):	Burke (14)
Type:	Resolution
Title:	Commemoration of Honorable James A. Kearns on 100th anniversary of creation of Municipal Flag Commission
Committee(s) Assignment:	

WHEREAS, Recognizing the necessity for a symbolic representation of the City of Chicago in the form of a municipal flag, Alderman James A. Kearns of the 31st Ward introduced a resolution in 1915 to the City Council to appoint a Municipal Flag Commission to conceive and submit an appropriate design for review and approval by the Mayor and members of the Council; and

WHEREAS, For several years prior to 1915, Alderman James A. Kearns had studied and monitored the development, progress, and formal introduction of flags bearing municipal emblems in other domestic and international cities; and

WHEREAS, Working closely with Frederic Rex of the Chicago Municipal Library in City Hall, Alderman James A. Kearns and Frederic Rex entered into a correspondence with officials in Boston, New York, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Richmond, Virginia and Baltimore to ascertain the procedural steps they had taken to design and unveil their local flag; and

WHEREAS, The Chicago City Council approved the resolution to establish the Municipal Flag Commission on July 12, 1915; and

WHEREAS, Upon passage of the resolution, Mayor William Hale Thompson appointed Alderman James A. Kearns to serve as Chairman of the Municipal Flag Commission; and

WHEREAS, Other distinguished Chicagoans named to the Commission by Mayor Thompson included Frederic Rex appointed as secretary, Alderman John A. Richert of the 4th Ward, Alderman Herman E. Miller of the 20th Ward, Mary E. McDowell of the Chicago Women's Club, Lawton Parker of the Chicago Art Commission, author-lecturer Wallace Rice, Charles L. Dering and William H. Harper of the Chicago Association of Commerce, landscape artist Charles Francis Browne, architect Henry K. Holsman, Clarence A. Burley of the Chicago Historical Society, John Fitzpatrick of the Chicago Federation of Labor, and Mrs. Lewis K. Torbet of the Daughters of the American Revolution; and

WHEREAS, In November 1915, Alderman James A. Kearns authorized Frederic Rex to prepare and distribute Municipal Reference Bulletin Number 5 to the membership of the City Council in order to apprise and inform them of actions taken by civic agencies in forty other cities to design and enact flag heraldry; and

WHEREAS, Alderman James A. Kearns and Lawton Parker prevailed upon Wallace Rice, whose many public lectures at the Art Institute concerned the history of flag heraldry, to draw up a set of twenty rules and regulations governing a design competition open to the public; and

WHEREAS, Chicago residents, local artists, historians and individuals from all walks of life submitted over a thousand conceptual designs to Frederic Rex; and

WHEREAS, Of the many designs under review, only a small percentage warranted further consideration; and

WHEREAS, Common depictions of the Fort Dearborn blockhouse positioned at the center of the flag were rejected because other cities had already adapted similar images of military fortifications in their own designs; and

WHEREAS, Wallace Rice spent six weeks preparing 300 different renderings utilizing various shapes and colors submitted by contestants before designing his own version representing a hybrid of ideas for consideration; and

WHEREAS, The new municipal flag design by Wallace Rice features a white stripe, eight inches broad across the top of the flag, symbolizing the North Side of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, The upper blue band, nine inches broad, represents Lake Michigan and the North Branch of the Chicago River; and

WHEREAS, The eighteen-inch white center band symbolizes the West Side of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, The lower blue band represents the South Branch of the Chicago River and the Drainage Canal; and

WHEREAS, The bottom white band symbolizes the South Side of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, The first two stars represent the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 and the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893; and

WHEREAS, Wallace Rice positioned the first two stars to the left of the banner intentionally so that additional six-pointed stars could be added to mark future notable and epic events at the discretion of the City Council; and

WHEREAS, A third star symbolizing the 1933 Century of Progress World's Fair was added in 1933, with a fourth star representing Fort Dearborn was added in 1939; and

WHEREAS, With nearly unanimous consensus of opinion, this design was accepted by the Municipal Flag Commission and submitted to the full Chicago City Council on March 28, 1917 for review and approval; and

WHEREAS, On April 4, 1917, the day that the United States Senate voted support for America's entry into World War I, the Chicago City Council, meeting in session, accepted the report of the Municipal Flag Commission and adapted the Wallace Rice design to serve as the official Flag of Chicago; and

WHEREAS, The City of Chicago flag is displayed on all municipal buildings where the American flag is positioned, and on police and fire stations, public schools and libraries; and

WHEREAS, The inspired design is honored and recognized as the symbol of Chicago across the United States and around the world; and

WHEREAS, The Chicago City Council has been informed of the milestone 100th anniversary of the formation of the Municipal Flag Commission by Alderman Edward M. Burke; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and the members of the Chicago City Council assembled this twenty-ninth day of July, 2015, recognize and thank the late Alderman James A. Kearns for his dedication and commitment to championing the creation of the municipal flag; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to Ms. Mary Patricia Michel, great-grand-niece of Alderman James A. Kearns.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Burke', is positioned above a horizontal line.

Alderman Edward M. Burke
Alderman, 14th Ward