



# City of Chicago



**R2021-1079**

Office of the City Clerk

## Document Tracking Sheet

<b>Meeting Date:</b>	10/14/2021
<b>Sponsor(s):</b>	Hopkins (2)
<b>Type:</b>	Resolution
<b>Title:</b>	Commemoration of 150th anniversary of Great Chicago Fire
<b>Committee(s) Assignment:</b>	

**RESOLUTION HONORING THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GREAT CHICAGO FIRE OF  
1871**

**WHEREAS**, in this month of October, 150 years ago, the *Great Chicago Fire of 1871* consumed numerous Chicago neighborhoods from the near West side to the near North side, forever changing the landscape of the city; and

**WHEREAS**, the inferno was exacerbated by a long summer drought and the fact that most of the city's buildings were constructed from mainly wood with little to none of the fire safety standards we have today; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1917, recognizing the incredible impact of the event, the City Council of Chicago designated the first "six-point star" on the city's flag in honor of the *Great Chicago Fire*, and today, the Quinn Chicago Fire Academy sits on their same site as the fire's origin, training new generations of Chicago Fire Department professionals; and

**WHEREAS**, while the events' occurrence is indisputable, its' legend origin story is far from fact. Now a largely comical and light-hearted part of Chicago folklore, the *tale of Mrs. O'Leary and her cow* was once a heavily circulated rumor that transformed from gossip, gaining traction, and fueling anti-immigrant sentiment in the city; and

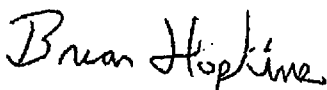
**WHEREAS**, years later, reporter Michael Ahern admitted that his widely publicized story of Mrs. O'Leary's cow "kicking over a lantern" as the catalyst of the *Great Chicago Fire* was nothing more than embellishment; and

**WHEREAS**, despite editorials from local papers claiming the fire was spread by "Irish Catholic immigrants" acting with "sinister intentions", the reports were later dismissed as falsehoods, and the working class immigrants of 19th Century Chicago rose to rebuild the city and forever cemented their place as the foundation of the city they called their new home; and, therefore

**BE IT RESOLVED**, That we, the Mayor and members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, gathered here this 14th day of October, 2021, do hereby renew this body's resolution made in 1997, to exonerate Mrs. Catherine O'Leary and her cow from all blame in regard to the *Great Chicago Fire of 1871*, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, on the 150th anniversary of the *Great Chicago Fire of 1871*, we honor the collective sacrifice and efforts of Chicago's Immigrant population in helping to build our city better and stronger than before, highlighting the traits of *transportation, trade, finance, labor and industry, populousness, and healthfulness*: six concepts signified on the first star of our City's flag, and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that suitable copies of this resolution be presented to Donald Lassere, President of the Chicago History Museum as well as Rose G. Doherty, Chairwoman of the Irish Fellowship Club of Chicago.



BRIAN HOPKINS  
ALDERMAN, 2ND WARD