



Office of the City Clerk

City Hall
121 N. LaSalle St.
Room 107
Chicago, IL 60602
www.chicityclerk.com

Legislation Details (With Text)

File #: R2013-421
Type: Resolution
File created: 4/10/2013
Status: Adopted
In control: City Council
Final action: 4/10/2013
Title: Tribute to Leola Spann
Sponsors: Mitts, Emma
Indexes: TRIBUTES
Attachments: 1. R2013-421.pdf

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
4/10/2013	1	City Council	Introduced (Agreed Calendar)	
4/10/2013		City Council	Adopted	Pass

A Resolution Honoring the Life & Legacy of Leola Spann

ADOPTED by The City Council

***Of the City of Chicago, Illinois Presented by
Alderman Emma Mitts on April 10, 2013***

WHEREAS. There was once a woman named Leola Spann, who was both tender and tough, as well as a grandmotherly yet fiery advocate for the poor and disenfranchised. Mrs. Spann was well-known, revered and respected as a formidable force devoted to improving opportunities in Chicago's Austin neighborhood: and

WHEREAS. Mrs. Leola Spann was the longtime president of the Northwest Austin Council, (NAC); and

WHEREAS, During her 22-year with the Northwest Austin Council. Mrs. Spann launched multi-faceted efforts to introduce after-school programs, scolded slumlords into fixing their buildings and lead the first known lawsuit to use nuisance abatement laws to shut down a drug den. The Northwest Austin Council is located at .5780 W, Division St Chicago, IL 606751; and

WHEREAS, She. fought tirelessly to rid the west side of drug dealers and gangs, while working with elected officials and police to improve the community's overall quality of life; and

WHEREAS, Leola Spann was a community organizer and activist, who stood up to neighborhood

bullies, criminals and other negative forces, helped slow down speeders on the streets of Austin and fought big utility companies as a champion of the poor and elderly; and

WHEREAS, Leola Spann was committed totally to the Austin community and to the people, who lived and worked there, calling them her 'heroes'; and

WHEREAS, -She was considered the surrogate mother of the neighborhood, and throughout, her long her activism career, she developed a well-earned reputation for blunt honesty, steely determination and integrity. The bottom line was that she was deeply respected by everyone who knew her, whether friend or foe; and

1 | Page

WHEREAS, Without Leola Spann, many (if* the things accomplished by Northwest Austin Council and by a diverse array of local clergy, community, business, and religious leaders and public officials out here would not have been accomplished; and

WHEREAS, She had no problem with routing the drug dealers and other negative forces impacting the community. She was also willing to work hard and try to organize people, to help them understand that the drug dealers are no stronger than what the community allows them to be; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Spann, died at age 71 of pulmonary fibrosis on Easter. March 27, 2005 at Joliet Community Hospice, where she had lived for a short time; and

WHEREAS. Born in Natchez, Miss., Mrs. Spann. grew up in the deep South. She migrated up North with her family to Chicago in the late 1950s with her first husband, Edward Williams. They eventually divorced in the late 1960s. In 1968. she took a second turn at matrimony, and married William Spann, who passed away in 1992; and

WHEREAS. Mrs. Spann had a varied work history, having been employed at a foundry and on an airplane parts assembly line while raising three daughters, She returned to Mississippi in the mid-1970s to care for an ailing grandmother until she made her heavenly transition. When she returned to Chicago in 1983, she retired and moved next door to her daughter Anita Brown in the Austin neighborhood: and

WHEREAS, According to her legend, within a short six month period. Mrs. Spann knew everyone who lived on the block. During her arrival in the area;?, it was during a transitional period for the

neighborhood, when white residents were moving out and African-Americans and Hispanics were moving in; and

WHEREAS. Tensions between the races ran high, and as the white flight, continued, Mrs. Spann somewhat angrily noticed that basic services were being ignored. Therefore she immediately mobilized residents to draw the city's attention to community concerns; and

WHEREAS. As a key leader in her community. Leola Spann was always willing to ask the hard but necessary questions - - such as 'Why can't we have this?' and 'Why don't we have this?'; and 2 | Page

WHEREAS, As part of her newfound activism. Mrs. Spann joined the Northwest Austin Council and quickly worked her way up from answering phones to being executive director, then president, a role she held until her death. She had a love for people and she just wanted people to be treated fairly; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Spann's grass-roots methods helped build the Northwest Austin Council into a group that made positive change, in the community. a legacy that lasts even today; and

WHEREAS, Because Mrs. Spann had witnessed firsthand the inequality and racism that existed, she committed her life and service to making sure that future generations didn't suffer like she had; and

WHEREAS, After many years of dedicated service to the Austin community, she continued to give her time to working with local politicians in Chicago, working on whatever issues she could. Her heart was so big it had room for everyone with whom she crossed paths. Her love, and legacy of tremendous work is instilled at the hearts of many and her memory will live forever; and

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That we, the Mayor and Members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, assembled the tenth day of April, 2011 do hereby applaud exceptional efforts on the behalf of the citizens of Chicago; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution will be presented to the family of Leola Spann as a sign of our sympathy and good well wishes.

Emma Mitts, Alderman-87th Ward

3 ! P a . g e