



Office of the City Clerk

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Legislation Text

File #: O2019-7918, Version: 1

Committee on Transportation
and Public Way

ORDINANCE

WHEREAS, the members of the City Council of Chicago wish to recognize, honor, and commemorate Jean Baptiste Point du Sable as the "Founder of Chicago"; and

WHEREAS, Jean Baptiste Point du Sable (also spelled Point de Sable, Point au Sable, Point Sable, and Pointe DuSable); is regarded as the first permanent non-Indigenous settler of what would later become Chicago, Illinois. A school, museum, harbor, park, and bridge have been named in his honor. The site where he settled near the mouth of the Chicago River around the 1780s is identified as a National Historic Landmark, now located in Pioneer Court; and

WHEREAS, Point du Sable was of African descent, but little else is known of his life prior to the 1770s. During his career, the areas where he settled and traded around the Great Lakes and in the Illinois Country changed hands several times among France, Britain, Spain and the new United States. Described as handsome and well educated, Point du Sable married a Native American woman, Kitiwaha, and they had two children; and

WHEREAS, In 1779, during the American Revolutionary War, Point du Sable was arrested by the British military on suspicion of being an American rebel sympathizer. In the early 1780s he worked for the British lieutenant-governor of Michilimackinac on an estate at what is now the city of St. Clair, Michigan north of Detroit; and

WHEREAS, Point du Sable is first recorded as living at the mouth of the Chicago River in a trader's journal of early 1790. By then he had established an extensive and prosperous trading settlement in what later became the City of Chicago. He sold his Chicago River property in 1800 and moved to the port of St. Charles, where he was licensed to run a Missouri River ferry. Point du Sable's successful role in developing the Chicago River settlement was little recognized until the mid-20th century; and

WHEREAS, With the exception of the Du Sable Museum and the little known recognition on the Chicago River, very few people, especially tourists and new Chicagoans, know Du Sable as the founder of Chicago. While we are excited about the renaming of Congress Parkway to Ida B Wells Street, it is shameful that there is no major street or drive named after an African American male coming through the central business district; and

WHEREAS, In addition, it is more appalling that the founder of this great city has no major street named after him in Chicago. It is my hope that this city can right a wrong that is 230 years in the making; now, therefore,

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BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHICAGO:

Section 1. Lake Shore Drive from Hollywood Boulevard to the point where Lake Shore Drive merges into South Shore Drive, which occurs just south of 71st Street, shall be renamed as Jean Baptiste Point Du Sable Drive.

Section 2. The Commissioner of Transportation shall notify, in writing, the local election authorities and the post office serving the area affected by the name change, of such change in the street name authorized by this ordinance not less than 30 days prior to such change.

Section 3. The Commissioner of Transportation is authorized and directed to do all such acts and things, including without limitation the placement of street name signs with the new street name, and to execute and deliver any and all agreements, documents, instruments or certificates as the Commissioner deems necessary, advisable, or appropriate, to effectuate this ordinance. All of the acts which are in conformity with the intent and purposes of this ordinance, whether heretofore or hereafter taken or done shall be and the same are in all respects ratified, confirmed, authorized, and approved hereby in all respects.

Section 4. This ordinance shall be in effect 30 days after its passage and publication.

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