



Office of the City Clerk

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Legislation Text

File #: R2022-675, **Version:** 1

RESOLUTION HONORING THE RETIREMENT OF DEB LAHEY

WHEREAS, Deb Lahey has retired following 12 years of service as the President and CEO of the Chicago Academy of Sciences and the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum; and

WHEREAS, The Chicago City Council has been informed of this milestone by the Honorable Michele Smith, Alderman of the 43rd Ward; and

WHEREAS, The Chicago Academy of Sciences and Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum is Chicago's oldest museum founded in 1857 and is the 6th most visited museum in the City; and

WHEREAS, Deb was a long-time member of the Nature Museum's Board when she was asked to join the staff in 2009 as Chief Operating Officer and immediately helped create a strategic and financial roadmap for the future growth of the institution; after she was named President and CEO in 2010, Deb used the same plan as her guide and the museum flourished; and

WHEREAS, Deb identified and leveraged the organization's key assets: the Chicago Academy of Sciences with its 165-year history, prestige, regionally focused collection, and legacy of education and the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum with its accessibility, unique combination of natural history museum, nature center, and outdoor space; and

WHEREAS, Under Deb's leadership, the Academy reached over 50,000 students, 1,700 teachers, and 500 schools annually, expanded community-based science programs, was reaccredited, created a Public Engagement department, and did more hands-on teaching than any other museum in Chicago; the Nature Museum was reorganized to create a Guest Experience & Engagement Department, implemented the Wonder is in our Nature digital and traditional marketing campaigns, recorded new attendance and membership records, and developed award winning exhibits; and

WHEREAS, The Institution strengthened its financial position and built its financial reserves; most notably the largest fundraising event, the Butterfly Ball, grew from a \$1.3 million to a \$2.3 million event showcasing the amazing ways the museum's educational outreach reaches every ward in the city; and

WHEREAS, Deb also deepened partnerships throughout the city, with universities, with organizations that care deeply about nature and science, and via grassroots outreach through the Museum's Chicago Conservation Corps (C3); in the last 10 years, more than 800 C3 sustainability community projects have been initiated, representing all 50 Chicago wards; and

WHEREAS, During the Museum's building closure due to the pandemic, when people's perception of the need for nature was heightened, Deb focused the Museum staff and resources on continuing to serve and connect the community with critical science and nature content, the Museum engaged audiences, both near and far, with daily educational newsletters; provided instruction in virtual classrooms; and created a video series - Curious by Nature - to deliver weekly engaging features from Nature Walks to interviews with Museum scientists, and as a result, the Nature Museum has been providing more digital engagement than any other museum in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, Deb is the daughter of a Chicago police officer and was raised in the city and suburbs of Chicago, Deb and her husband John Lahey, raised their three children - Jack, Mary and Frank - in the city; and

WHEREAS, Through her passionate leadership, Deb has championed the Nature Museum's mission to create a positive relationship between people and nature through collaborations, education, research and collections, exhibitions, and public forums to grow our region's urban connection to the world of nature and science, and Deb's impact on the Nature Museum will benefit Chicago well into the future; now, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED That we, the Mayor and members of the City Council of the City of Chicago, gathered here this twenty-second day of June, 2022 do hereby congratulate Deb Lahey on her retirement, and wish her well on her future endeavors; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be prepared and presented

MICHELE SMITH Alderman, 43rd Ward
to Deb Lahey.