



COMMISSION FOR WOMEN RECOMMENDATION 20170831-002A

Date: August 31, 2017

Subject: Renaming of Robert E Lee Road

Motioned By: Commissioner Flannery Bope

Seconded By: Commissioner Amanda Lewis

Recommendation

The Commission for Women recommends renaming of Robert E Lee Road to honor, instead, Austin Women's Hall of Fame member Bertha Means.

Description of Recommendation to Council

Full recommendation is attached.

Rationale:

Resolution No. 20170323-054 has tasked the Commission for Women with taking steps to study disparities between naming of streets and take appropriate measures to eliminate disparities. This recommendation supports that task.

Vote

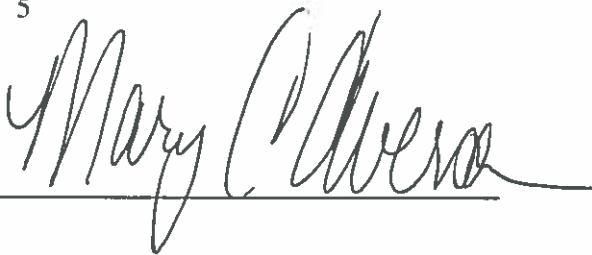
For: 6

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

Absent: 5

Attest:



Whereas the Austin Commission for Women serves as an advisory body to the city council and city manager concerning the needs and problems of women in the Austin area and shall recommend programs designed to alleviate any inequities that may confront women in social, economic and vocational pursuits. The Commission shall develop goals and coordinate research for planning, programming, and action relating to opportunities, needs, problems, and contributions of women in the city.

Whereas Resolution No. 20170323-054 has tasked the Commission to take steps to study disparities in Austin between streets named after men and those named after women, and appropriate measures to eliminate those disparities.

Whereas Austin has a street honoring confederate leader Robert E Lee in South Austin in District 5 and this road borders Zilker Metropolitan Park and Barton Springs Pool, the latter which the Austin Parks and Recreation Department calls "one of the crown jewels of Austin."

Whereas Robert E. Lee does not represent the current values of the City of Austin and its citizens as evidenced in August 2017 by the call by Council Member Ann Kitchen , whose district includes the road, to ask the community to suggest alternative names; the changing of the name of Robert E. Lee Elementary by Austin Independent School District in May 2016; and the University of Texas' decision in August 2015 to remove a statue honoring Jefferson Davis and the school's further decision in August 2017 to remove statues honoring Robert E. Lee, Albert Sidney Johnston, John H. Reagan and James Stephen Hogg from its campus.

Whereas the Commission has sought public input since 2010 to honor women who have broken barriers for women and girls in Austin and has inducted 26 women into the Austin Women's Hall of Fame, including Robbie Ausley, Olga Campos Benz, Colette Pierce Burnette, Nora Comstock, Jody Conratt, Shudde Fath, Maria Luisa "Lulu" Flores, Montserrat Garibay, Jackie Goodman, Jane Claire Hervey, Ann Howard, Willie Mae Kirk, Carole Keeton, Patsy Woods Martin, Bertha Means, Harriet Murphy, Bettie Naylor, Janis Pinnelli, Jill Ramirez, MariBen Ramsey, Dorothy Richter and Kelly White; and none of these women have streets named for them.

Whereas Women's Hall of Fame inductee Bertha Means helped integrate many Austin educational and public facilities, including St. Stephen's Episcopal School and UT's athletic department. Most important, along with her daughter Joan Means Khabele, she worked in 1960 to integrate Barton Springs Pool and Zilker Park.

Whereas Austin does not currently have a formal public process in place for renaming streets, and the current call by Council Member Ann Kitchen could take months to review the costs of the name change, the public safety implications and the opinions of the community.

Be it resolved that the Commission for Women recommends that the City of Austin and the City Council use this as a chance to address equity in street names and rename Robert E. Lee Road in honor of Bertha Means, or her daughter Joan Means Khabele, who both worked to open Barton Springs and Zilker Park to all of Austin's citizenry.

Be it further resolved that the Commission recommends the City Council begin to identify other streets named for confederates, such as Beauregard Circle in District 5 and Jeff Davis Avenue in District 7; that the City develops a plan to cover costs of these changes and any public safety issues that may rise from

these changes; and that the Commission for Women will continue investigating the equity of street names and the names of other city entities and facilities.

Finally, the Commission highly recommends that the City of Austin and the City Council use these additional opportunities to address equity in street names and continue to honor women or minorities of importance to Austin and its citizens.