



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 53798, **Version:** 1

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### **Fiscal Note**

No additional City appropriation required.

### **Title**

Celebrating the life of Mildred Elizabeth Fish Harnack, accepting ownership of the sculpture *Mildred* located in Marshall Park, and authorizing the City Attorney to sign a donation agreement with the Artist John Durbrow.

### **Body**

WHEREAS, Mildred Elizabeth Fish Harnack, born in Wisconsin in 1902, was a woman of intellect, moral strength, and political conviction; and

WHEREAS, she lived in Madison for many years, earning both her Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Arts in English at UW-Madison, where she met her husband, Arvid Harnack; and

WHEREAS, after moving to Germany in 1929, Mildred Fish Harnack completed a doctorate in Literature at Justus Liebig University in Giessen, in Hessen, Germany; and

WHEREAS, after the National Socialists came to power, Mildred Fish Harnack, her husband, and their friends formed a resistance group described by some as "The Harnack/Schulze-Boysen group" or "Circle of Friends" and they lead the underground resistance against the Nazis in Berlin for nine years, taking great risks to pass along information to both the Americans and Russian; and

WHEREAS, survivors of the resistance movement and the Harnack's relatives reject the group's well-known moniker, the "Red Orchestra," because it was a name the Gestapo dubbed the group in an effort to reduce their efforts to fight fascism and discredit them as solely motivated by communist allegiances to "Red" Russia; and

WHEREAS, in 1942 Mildred Fish Harnack was arrested, tried, and in 1943 she was executed by the Nazis and was the only American woman personally ordered executed by Hitler; and

WHEREAS in his last letter to Mildred from prison, Arvid wrote nostalgically about the importance of special places in Madison to their lives, especially Picnic Point, State Street, and the University Club; and

WHEREAS, the University of Wisconsin, with its Wisconsin Idea, and the City of Madison, with its proud progressive history, have cultivated critical, independent thinkers, and been home to individuals who have dedicated their lives to racial equity, social justice, and tolerance; and

WHEREAS, the life of Mildred Harnack has been celebrated as the subject of books, documentaries, and has been memorialized in the naming of schools and civic institutions; and

WHEREAS, administrators and faculty at Justus Liebig University in Giessen, in Wisconsin's Sister State of Hessen, Germany have expressed interest in placing a duplicate, or sister sculpture of *Mildred* on their campus as a tribute to Mildred Fish Harnack and values she lived and died for; and

WHEREAS, the City of Madison aspires to see the ideas fostered in this City become part of a worldwide effort to promote peace and justice; and

WHEREAS, on October 27, 2018, days before the sculpture, *Mildred*, was installed, worshipers at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania were assaulted by a gunman who killed eleven people, including a 97 year-old Holocaust survivor, reminding us that anti-Semitism, one of the oldest forms of hatred and intolerance, still needs to be combatted; and

WHEREAS, the artist John Durbrow will transfer ownership of the sculpture, *Mildred*, to the City of Madison upon acceptance of the artwork by the City; and

WHEREAS, Arts Wisconsin, Inc. served as the fiscal receiver for volunteer community members to fund and move this effort forward; and

WHEREAS, the Madison Arts Commission supported this project for many years and ultimately funded its installation through their Art in Public Places grant program, as was approved by the Madison Common Council on July 17, 2018 (Resolution ID 30476); and

WHEREAS, City Parks staff identified the appropriate placement and approved of the installation of the sculpture in a quiet, contemplative setting in Marshall Park, where there is already a memorial to six million Jews and other victims of the Holocaust, and where the sculpture is directed toward UW-Madison, where Mildred and Arvid fell in love; and

WHEREAS, at their July 11, 2018 meeting, the Board of Parks Commissioners approved the installation and location of the sculpture, *Mildred*, in Marshall Park;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Common Council of the City of Madison wishes to honor Mildred Elizabeth Fish Harnack and to remember her brave compassion.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Common Council authorizes City Attorney Michael May to sign an art donation agreement with the artist, accepting *Mildred* from John Durbrow as the artist's personal gift to the City.

BE IT STILL FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Common Council of the City of Madison accepts ownership of *Mildred*, by John Durbrow, in Marshall Park.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Common Council of the City of Madison chooses, through the acceptance and placement of this sculpture, to celebrate the life of Mildred Elizabeth Fish Harnack and by extension, all those who in spite of their fears have the courage to act righteously against racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and intolerance wherever such hatred exists.