



Legislation Text

File #: 68960, **Version:** 1

Fiscal Note

No City appropriation required.

Title

Recognizing, honoring and commemorating the exemplary life and public service of R. Richard "Dick" Wagner.

Body

WHEREAS, Roland Richard "Dick" Wagner was born in Dayton, Ohio on September 29, 1943, and passed away on December 13, 2021, at the age of 78 in Madison, Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, Dick moved to Wisconsin in 1965 to pursue and earn Master's and Doctorate degrees in American History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and subsequently decided to make Madison his home; and

WHEREAS, Dick was employed in State of Wisconsin civil service for 33 years, including joining the Wisconsin Department of Administration as a budget and policy analyst from 1979 until his retirement in 2005; and

WHEREAS, Dick chaired the Madison Landmarks Commission and headed up the Historic Park Fund which created the Period Garden Park in Mansion Hill. He lived in several Madison landmark homes and was a founding member of Historic Madison, Inc. and the Madison Trust for Historic Preservation; and

WHEREAS, Dick was appointed by Madison Mayors Paul Soglin, Joel Skornicka, Joe Sensenbrenner, Sue Bauman, and Dave Cieslewicz to numerous City boards, committees and commissions. His service included chairing several City bodies, including the Plan Commission and the Urban Design Commission; and

WHEREAS, in 1980, Dick was elected to the Dane County Board of Supervisors where he served 14 years including four years as Chairperson. County service included the Dane County Regional Planning Commission where he championed the first Starkweather Water Quality Plan and on the Airport Commission where he championed noise abatement efforts. He was instrumental in securing Dane County's participation in the construction of Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center; and

WHEREAS, Dick was the first openly gay member of the Dane County Board of Supervisors, including four years as the first openly gay county board chair in Wisconsin, paving the way for generations of LGBTQ politicians, activists and public figures in Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, as one of the first dozen openly LGBTQ officials in the nation, in 1985 Dick was a founding member of the National Association and Conference of Gay and Lesbian Public Officials (now the Victory Institute) and co-hosted with now Senator Tammy Baldwin the fifth conference in Madison; and

WHEREAS, Dick was instrumental in enacting the City of Madison's gay rights ordinance in 1974 and Dane County's nondiscrimination ordinance in 1980, which paved the way for Wisconsin's statewide nondiscrimination law in 1982; and

WHEREAS, Dick's commitment to leadership extended far beyond his own political career through mentorship, advocacy and in a variety of important positions under several different governors' administrations. Governor Martin Schreiber appointed him to the Wisconsin Arts Board, where he served as

Chairperson, and the Wisconsin Humanities Council. Governor Tony Earl appointed him as Co-Chair of the historic Governor's Council on Lesbian and Gay Issues; and

WHEREAS, Dick served on countless state and local community organization boards, including Olbrich Botanical Society for three decades; AIDS Network; Downtown Madison, Inc.; Fair Wisconsin; and Friends of UW Libraries; and

WHEREAS, Dick was one of the co-founders of the UW-Madison's LGBTQ Alumni Association, and he was a founding member and first co-chair of the New Harvest Foundation for LGBTQ charitable causes in the region; and

WHEREAS, Dick authored two groundbreaking books, which together are widely understood to be the definitive history of Wisconsin's LGBTQ community: 2019's *"We've Been Here All Along: Wisconsin's Early Gay History,"* which documented Wisconsin's gay history from 1895 through the 1969 Stonewall riots, and 2020's *"Coming Out, Moving Forward: Wisconsin's Recent Gay History";* and

WHEREAS, Dick was recognized for his public service as the first recipient of Madison's Jeffrey Clay Erlanger Civility in Public Discourse Award in 2007. On the occasion of the publication of his first volume, Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway declared June 25, 2019, as R. Richard Wagner Day in the city of Madison; and

WHEREAS, Dick will be remembered as a gentleman and a scholar; public servant; activist; leader and trailblazer in Wisconsin's LGBTQ community; valued mentor and friend; chef, gardener and gracious host; and as a kind, generous and compassionate person who always treated others with dignity and respect; and

WHEREAS, Dick's life and influence will continue to be an inspiration through his books, his work, his courage and the work of those whom he mentored;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Mayor and Common Council recognize, honor and commemorate the exemplary life and public service of R. Richard "Dick" Wagner.