

Legislation Text

File #: 180767, **Version:** 0

Honoring and recognizing Maurice “Mo” Cheeks for his induction to the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame

WHEREAS, Maurice Cheeks was born on September 8, 1956 into a tight-knit family on Chicago’s South Side. During his childhood in the Robert Taylor Homes public housing complex, Maurice’s mother, Marjorie, who he has referred to as his “first coach,” played a particularly important role in Mo’s development as a young man; and

WHEREAS, As Mo was finishing his high school playing career at DuSable High School in Chicago, he was not a heavily recruited prospect for major collegiate basketball programs. Mo credits his high school teammate, William Dice, for the lone scholarship offer that he did receive to play at West Texas State University. Dice, a highly touted prospect, told college coaches that he would only accept a scholarship if one was also offered to Mo; and

WHEREAS, At West Texas State, located in a small town with a population of only 10,000 residents, Mo couldn’t have felt much further from his home on Chicago’s South Side. Telling his mother about how lonely and unhappy he felt, Mo told her that he planned to leave West Texas and return home. She said “Maurice, you quit school and you better not come home”. Cheeks later recalled to the New York Times. Mo obliged and was thankful for the support he received, as he went on to have one of the most outstanding careers in the history of West Texas basketball; and

WHEREAS, Playing at West Texas State from 1974 to 1978, Mo was a four-year starter at point guard and was selected for the all-Missouri Valley Conference team after each of his last three seasons. Mo shot nearly 57% over the course of his collegiate career and averaged 16.8 points per game during his senior season; and

WHEREAS, Cheeks was selected with the 36th pick of the 1978 NBA Draft by the Philadelphia 76ers, where Mo would join perennial all-star Julius Erving. Mo played in all 82 games during his rookie year and earned recognition as a lock-down defender, averaging an NBA playoff record 4.2 steals during the team’s run to the Eastern Conference Semifinals in 1979; and

WHEREAS, Mo Cheeks was an integral part of the remarkably successful 76ers teams of the 1980s, during which the team earned trips to the NBA Finals in 1980, 1982, and 1983. Alongside Erving and fellow superstar Moses Malone, Cheeks and the 76ers dominated the 1983 NBA Playoffs, losing just one game along the way to bringing Philadelphia its second NBA Title. The 76ers avenged the previous year’s Finals loss to the Los Angeles Lakers in a 4-game sweep, earning Cheeks a coveted championship ring and cementing the team’s legacy as one of the most talented of its era; and

WHEREAS, Following an eleven year run with the Philadelphia 76ers, during which Cheeks was named to four consecutive NBA All-Defensive teams, Mo played with the San Antonio Spurs, New York Knicks, Atlanta Hawks, and New Jersey Nets. When Cheeks retired in 1993, after a fifteen year NBA career, he had set an NBA record for the most career steals with 2,310, a mark that still places him fifth all-time. A prolific passer as well,

Cheeks' 7,392 career assists still sits at 13th all-time among NBA players; and

WHEREAS, After his playing days were over, Cheeks was drawn into coaching and was named a 76ers assistant head coach in 1994 after a brief stint coaching in the Continental Basketball Association. Following the team's run to the 2001 NBA Finals, Cheeks was hired as the head coach of the Portland Trail Blazers. He would spend four seasons in Portland before returning to serve as Philadelphia's head coach in 2005; and

WHEREAS, While Mo is beloved by Philadelphia fans for his accomplishments as a 76ers player and as head coach, his character is exemplified by a memorable moment from his time as Portland's head coach. When 13-year-old Natalie Gilbert began to struggle while singing the National Anthem before the team's playoff matchup with the Dallas Mavericks, Cheeks rushed over to assist, just as he had so many times as a point guard for the 76ers. Turning the song into a duet, Cheeks wrapped an arm around Natalie and encouraged the crowd to join them in singing, turning the hiccup into an iconic moment for NBA fans; and

WHEREAS, In recognition of Mo's impact on the organization, both as a player and a coach, the Philadelphia 76ers honored Cheeks in 2017 with a statue located outside of the team's practice facility. At his Hall of Fame induction speech, Cheeks thanked the City he called home for the majority of his NBA career. "Playing for the Sixers and the City of Philadelphia was another moment beyond anything I could have dreamed," he said; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Does hereby, honor and recognize Maurice "Mo" Cheeks for his induction to the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Maurice Cheeks as evidence of the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.