



City of Philadelphia

City Council
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Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Commemorating the life and legacy of community activist Russell Meddin, whose tireless advocacy for vibrant public space and public bike share led to millions of Philadelphians enjoying and celebrating the City of Philadelphia's public trails and provided a powerful model of civic engagement for the nation and the world.

WHEREAS, Russell Meddin was a longtime Logan Square resident, known for his infectious laugh and his involvement in and passion for neighborhood civic engagement issues that ranged from clean-ups and children's events at his local park to local ward politics to the founding of the Schuylkill River Park Alliance and Bike Share Philadelphia. Russell was the first to welcome new residents. He gardened abandoned dirt plots to bring them to floral glory and celebrated all things Philadelphia. No job was too big or too small if it meant improving the quality of life of his neighbors; and

WHEREAS, In 2004, Russell along with neighborhood leaders, took on CSX Transportation when CSX threatened to close off access to Schuylkill River Park, which community organizations had been laboring to improve for years. Russell's tireless leadership and the coalition's work eventually led to a legal settlement which resulted in a historic bicycle/pedestrian walkway on Spruce Street and the construction of crossing gates at the Race and Locust Street entrances to provide safe pedestrian access to the park. These were the first of their kind in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The success of that campaign led to a \$23 million grant that established and expanded the Circuit Trails network for the region. Today, thanks to the vision and persistence of Russell and neighborhood leaders, Schuylkill Banks is a national model of public access and is enjoyed by more than a million people every year; and

WHEREAS, Russell continued to grow his vision for public space revitalization. In 2007, Russell founded Bike Share Philadelphia, after being inspired by a trip to France where he saw one of the earliest municipal bike sharing systems run by the City of Lyon. He was determined to bring the program to Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Bike Share Philadelphia's mission was to empower people to take their mobility personally, to bring joy and good health through multimodal transit expansion, and to reduce the need for people to have to wait for buses or search for parking. Russell envisioned a system where Bike Share was fully integrated into the City's transportation system, and everyone would have a station close to their home and anywhere they wanted to go; and

WHEREAS, Russell's undeniable enthusiasm and relentless advocacy for Bike Share resulted in City Council hearings, a feasibility study, and over 2,000 citizen letters to City Council; and

WHEREAS, After years of organizing and advocacy by Russell and many others, the City launched its public bike share program in 2015 branded as Indego Bike Share. Since its launch, Indego has expanded to more than 140 stations across the City with more than four million rides logged; and

WHEREAS, Russell brought his passion for bike share to cities across the country and around the world. He

was a frequent panelist and speaker at conferences around the globe. He helped develop and maintain a Bike Sharing World Map, an online resource that tracks bike share development in cities across the world, which he curated from 2009 until his passing; and

WHEREAS, Despite a renowned reputation and numerous awards for his work, Russell never stopped tending to his beloved neighborhood. He was a longtime board member of the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia, Logan Square Neighborhood Association, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and the Reading Terminal Market. He served for over a decade as the Democratic committee person in the 8th Ward and was a passionate champion for new and emerging political voices; and

WHEREAS, Russell found tremendous joy in engaging with everyday residents from planning events like the “Grumpy Old Men” event for the PHS Annual Flower Show to leading bike rides for Mural Arts to hosting a Halloween blowout party at Coxe Park to organizing award-winning flower planting sessions to beautify vacant pocket lots. For years, Russell tended to his beloved Coxe Park, meeting with parents and priding himself on remembering names of all the children in the neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, Russell did all of this while also being a full-time stay-at-home dad to his beloved children, Elisabeth and Alexandre Meddin, and a devoted husband to his wife Joan Rosoff. Russell’s legacy lives through them, through the vibrant public spaces of our City, through the joy that Philadelphians have on trails and bike share rides, through an emerging political force that rises from communities, and through the actions of extraordinary Philadelphians working towards a better City for all; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Commemorates the life and legacy of community activist Russell Meddin, whose tireless advocacy for vibrant public space and public bike share led to millions of Philadelphians enjoying and celebrating the City of Philadelphia’s public trails and provided a powerful model of civic engagement for the nation and the world.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Russell Meddin’s life partner, Joan Rosoff, as evidence of the sincere sentiments, appreciation, and gratitude of this legislative body.