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Recognizing the substantial contributions of Amy Laura Cahn, and the Garden Justice Legal Initiative she founded, to the City of Philadelphia and her dedication to the empowerment of communities through community control of land, sustainable and equitable urban gardening and farming, and the pursuit of environmental justice.

WHEREAS, Amy Laura Cahn has been fighting for equitable and community-led environmental policy and practice for her entire career, often with a human rights lens, from her work in New York City to overturn lead laws impacting children's health to her work in New Orleans against racial disparity in flood protection and relief following Hurricane Katrina; and

WHEREAS, As a student at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, Cahn founded the Penn Environmental Law Project, which allowed students to engage in real-world policy analysis and legal advocacy work, and began working for the Public Interest Law Center where she produced a documentary on the fight to close the Pennhurst State School and Hospital, a landmark civil and disability rights case; and

WHEREAS, Cahn, with support from the Skadden Foundation, started the Garden Justice Legal Initiative at the Public Interest Law Center, through which she has helped to transform law and policy applicable to urban gardening and farming, and has provided legal advice and representation to countless community gardeners and growers across the City seeking land access or permanency; and

WHEREAS, Cahn has helped lead the "Healthy Food Green Spaces" coalition to ensure that Philadelphia's zoning code was compatible with local urban gardens and farms, and to ensure that the Land Bank and its policies recognize gardening and farming as vital activities to transform vacant and abandoned properties, and has ultimately transformed how City agencies view gardens and farms, from merely an interim use to understanding them an important features of community health and wellbeing; and

WHEREAS, Her work as a founding member of Soil Generation helped spur the organizing of a diverse network of advocates for urban agriculture, with stated goals of community self-determination and self-representation, responsive policies, healthy neighborhoods, and food and environmental justice; and

WHEREAS, She was a founding board director for the relaunch of the Neighborhood Gardens Trust and has helped to build its capacity as Philadelphia's land trust dedicated to the preservation of community gardens and shared open spaces, and as a preeminent organization in the fight for food and land sovereignty; and

WHEREAS, She was also a founding board member of the Food Policy Advisory Council, which brings together stakeholders and activists to advise City government on policy that improves access to "culturally appropriate, nutritionally sound, and affordable food"; her work in the governance of this council ensured that it was diverse and responsive, and has helped improve City policies that had previously created barriers to land access for gardeners; and

WHEREAS, Cahn represented the Norris Square Neighborhood Project, a cherished intergenerational

community garden founded by the Puerto Rican activist women known as *Grupo Motivos* to reflect, preserve, and nourish cultural traditions, and has worked tirelessly to help secure ownership of the land after decades and despite fragmented public and private ownership among other barriers; and

WHEREAS, Cahn also represented The Village of Arts and Humanities, a network of community spaces that include treasured mosaics and sculptures and which are used for reflection and celebration as well as youth and community farming and education, by ensuring that land endangered by sheriff sale was preserved and protected; and

WHEREAS, Cahn also represented the Central Club for Boys and Girls, a community space with a mission to provide a safe haven for children and families that has served its neighborhood for over 70 years and which, after stewarding a number of vacant lots for many years and eventually acquiring that land, was asked to pay decades of unpaid taxes from the previous owner; her commitment and litigation led to the Central Club for Boys and Girls being absolved of all taxes; and

WHEREAS, Cahn has worked with the Eastwick Friends and Neighbors Association to ensure that Eastwick residents have a fair and equitable voice in shaping the future of their community, in response to a development proposal that was made without local engagement and which would have severely harmed the already fragile environment in Eastwick, a historic win that recognizes the importance of prioritizing community input and listening to the vast, multi-generational knowledge held by local community members; and

WHEREAS, Cahn has worked to democratize access to information for people seeking access to vacant land by creating the Grounded in Philly website, a tool that helps compile essential data and allows for community networking, as well as by holding a popular series of “Vacant Land 215” Community Workshops; and

WHEREAS, Cahn’s work has raised awareness of environmental justice as something that is not only a matter of science but also one of equity, while at the same time reimagining the role of urban gardeners and farmers as valuable stewards of community land in the face of abandonment and exploitation; and

WHEREAS, With the knowledge that Philadelphia has over 40,000 vacant lots, an understanding of the importance of food sovereignty in all communities - but most especially marginalized communities that often have limited access to fresh and healthy food and which have suffered generations of structural oppression and trauma - and a recognition of the importance of community-controlled land for many communities that have historically been deprived of their right to control and become stewards of this land, it is vital that people such as Amy Laura Cahn are working to create innovative and empowering ways to approach vacant land use; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby recognizes the substantial contributions of Amy Laura Cahn, and the Garden Justice Legal Initiative she founded, to the City of Philadelphia and her dedication to the empowerment of communities through community control of land, sustainable and equitable urban gardening and farming, and the pursuit of environmental justice.

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