

Legislation Text

File #: 230064, **Version:** 0

Honoring and recognizing the dedicated service of Betsy “Ms. Betty” Beaufort, whose determined advocacy on behalf of her South Philadelphia community has strengthened her neighborhood, as well as the City of Philadelphia.

WHEREAS, Betty Beaufort was born and raised on a farm in Cerro Gordo, North Carolina, the oldest of three children, but headed North when she turned eighteen years old in search of opportunity and adventure; and

WHEREAS, Her travels led her first to Baltimore, where she enrolled in the Cortez Peters business college, a satellite campus of the first Black-owned business school in the United States. Founded in Washington, D.C. in 1934, the Cortez Peters schools prepared African Americans for business and civil service. It was at Cortez Peters that one of her teachers changed her name from Betsy to Betty, a name that she preferred and is known by today; and

WHEREAS, After graduating from Cortez Peters, Ms. Betty made her way to her relatives who lived in South Philadelphia. She first stayed with an aunt who lived on S. Garnet Street in the Point Breeze neighborhood of South Philadelphia-the same home that Ms. Betty still lives in today; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Betty worked as a head cashier at both the Navy Yard and Automatic Retailers of America or “ARA”-the company that would eventually become Aramark. She was also married in 1966, gave birth to her son Anthony in 1972, and became a grandmother to Isaiah in 2000; and

WHEREAS, In 1990, Ms. Betty was called to serve God, and left her job at ARA. Though she had no formal nursing training, she began to care for her elderly neighbors, including Ms. Lillian Johnson at 21st & Oakford Streets, and later Ms. Mamie Nichols at 18th & Reed Streets; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Nichols was a long-time community activist who mentored Ms. Betty and helped usher in her community activism. Together, the two women joined with their neighbors to prevent Comcast from converting a local pharmacy into a hub, due to their concerns about the health ramifications to the neighborhood. After a hard-fought battle, the community organizers were successful in preventing the turnover; and

WHEREAS, Since then, Ms. Betty has been an integral member of several neighborhood-based campaigns, including the Coalition to Save Libraries in 2008-09-a cross-neighborhood alliance that fought Mayor Nutter’s proposal to close 11 public libraries throughout Philadelphia-and Save Smith School in 2013-a group of Point Breeze neighbors that organized in an attempt to prevent the School District from selling the Walter G. Smith Elementary School to a private developer to be turned into an apartment building and luxury homes. Though their campaigns were not always successful, Ms. Betty’s passion and devotion to the work was a huge asset to those campaigns; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Betty’s work with the Coalition to Save Libraries led to being named president of Friends of the Queen Memorial Library in Point Breeze in 2009, a position she continues to hold today. Her continued advocacy has led to increased funding for Philadelphia’s public libraries, though Ms. Betty feels there is still

work to be done. Ms. Betty is very active at the Queen Memorial Library, where she successfully advocated for funding for a teen space in 2020, and currently assists with a health cooking class and chess club for children; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Betty also serves on the 17th Police District Advisory Council and as a chaplain; and

WHEREAS, In addition to her extensive community service, Ms. Betty is a faithful member of St. Stephens Missionary Baptist Church, under the leadership of Pastor Trondell Hill; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Betty has never been afraid to stand up to powerful interests, whether it be fighting against multinational corporations attempting to interfere in her neighborhood or a local developer threatening retaliatory measures when Ms. Betty joined a lawsuit against him. Her passion for her neighbors and community is best captured in the advice she gave when reflecting on the 2008 battle to keep the libraries open: “Fight for what you want cause if you don’t fight, you not gonna get nothing. Cause life is a struggle and you wanna turn a struggle into a movement. Don’t get discouraged, cause some days you might say to heck with it, but we need to fight on. Being involved in the Coalition has reminded me of my own strength. We have to be reminded of our own strength because there’s always gonna be something we got to fight for, and I’m ready for the fight!”; and

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby honor and recognize the dedicated service of Besty “Ms. Betty” Beaufort, whose determined advocacy on behalf of her South Philadelphia community has strengthened her neighborhood, as well as the City of Philadelphia; now, therefore, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That an Engrossed copy of this resolution be presented to Betty Beaufort as an expression of the sincere respect and awe of this legislative body.