

Legislation Text

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Honoring Greta Greenberger on her retirement after 25 years as tour director of City Hall and recognizing her dedication to the promotion and preservation of the history, heritage and beauty of this City.

WHEREAS, For the past 25 years, Greta Greenberger has been the public face of City Hall to visiting tourists. She has been on her job through five mayoral administrations and has become an expert on all matters of the building, its workings and its occupants as anyone in the City. She has been a curator for the building, working with the City Hall Art Program and Public Property on issues of preservation, maintenance and even the portraits of former mayors. At one moment, she is lovingly communicating the amazing story of the building and within the same day can be organizing to have a missing part of the bronze chandelier in the Mayor's Reception Room replaced - with money she personally raised. She has become a dogged defender and advocate for the building and the City's obligations to the visiting public and has seamlessly blended that visitation with the day-to-day workings of City government; and

WHEREAS, Greta Greenberger was trained as an arts educator, originally at the Tyler School of Art at Temple University, eventually getting her degree from the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston where she grew up. She became a high school art teacher in Portland, Maine where she taught for ten years. In 1979, she was offered a position with a national program based in Philadelphia called Architecture in Schools and moved here with her five-year-old daughter, Erika, during that summer; and

WHEREAS, A colleague of hers in Architecture in Schools happened to be an architect who graduated from Rensselaer with Greta's eventual husband, Alan Greenberger. They all met on the street by chance near 23rd and Walnut. By 1981, Greta and Alan married and had a daughter, Julia, in 1984. Greta left her job with Architecture in Schools to become the Chief Exhibit Designer at the Please Touch Museum where she oversaw the museum's move to 21st Street. After the birth of her second daughter, the Greenberger family moved to Australia where Alan's firm was designing the new Australian Parliament House; and

WHEREAS, The family returned in 1985 and Greta took a job with the Foundation for Architecture where she co-managed their program Architecture in Education. Eventually, she took on the leadership of the Foundation's architectural tour program which provided extensive public tours throughout the City as well as training to volunteer guides. In 1991, the Foundation was invited by then-Mayor Wilson Goode to run the tower tour program of City Hall. Greta was the natural person to lead this program and turned her attention to City Hall and its extraordinary architectural and social history. With the election of Mayor Ed Rendell, those responsibilities grew into a full-fledged program involving public tours inside and outside the building as well as to the observation level beneath the statue of William Penn; and

WHEREAS, And all the while, she has never actually been an employee of the City of Philadelphia. She started this program with the Foundation for Architecture. When it closed its operations, she carried on as the sole proprietor of her own business on contract to the City, and eventually as an employee of the Independence Visitor Center who currently contract with the City to manage the operation. The program, the Visitor Center, the volunteers who have served all these years, and the extraordinary hospitality offered every day are Greta's legacy and gift to her adopted City; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby honors Greta Greenberger on her retirement after 25 years as tour director of City Hall and recognizes her dedication to the promotion and preservation of the history, heritage and beauty of this City.

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