



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Honoring the life of Bobby Rydell and recognizing his lifetime of achievement in entertainment which delighted millions and made Philadelphia proud.

WHEREAS, As reported in the Philadelphia Inquirer on April 5, 2022, Bobby Rydell, 79, the singer who rose to fame as a South Philly teen idol with hits like “Kissin’ Time,” “Wild One,” and “Wildwood Days,” and maintained a career in show business that lasted six decades, has passed away; and

WHEREAS, Robert “Bobby” Ridarelli, was born in Philadelphia in 1942. He was raised in a rowhouse on South Philadelphia’s 11th Street where his father Adrio began taking him to entertainment venues like the RDA Club and Erie Social Club when he was 7, asking if his talented son could sit in and play drums with the house band; and

WHEREAS, In 1950, Rydell won a talent show during the television series “Paul Whiteman’s TV Teen Club” and became a regular on the program. After three years as part of Whiteman’s singing on-air crew, he changed his name to “Rydell,” and began playing for local bands such as Rocco and the Saints, an ensemble that also featured another South Philly friend, Frankie Avalon, as its trumpeter; and

WHEREAS, Along with Frankie Avalon, Chubby Checker, and Fabian Forte, Mr. Rydell was one of four South Philly teen idols who found a national audience in the late 1950s and early 1960s through Dick Clark’s Philadelphia based television show, *American Bandstand*; and

WHEREAS, Rydell hit the charts with “Kissin’ Time” in 1959. With that single, and its follow-ups, “We Got Love”, “Wild One,” “Swingin’,” and his take on the classic, “Volare,” Rydell became a bona-fide teen idol; and

WHEREAS, In 1963, Rydell played his biggest role yet of Hugo Peabody in the film version of the satirical musical “Bye Bye Birdie” with Ann-Margret and Dick Van Dyke. After the role, his name was so associated with the pre-British Invasion period of vintage rock-and-roll that the school in the 1971 musical and 1978 film *Grease* was known as Rydell High; and

WHEREAS, Bobby Rydell was open about his struggles with alcohol and penned a memoir, “*Teen Idol on the Rocks: A Tale of Second Chances*” which explained his battle with grief after the passing of his first wife, Camille, in 2003. Mr. Rydell said of the book, “I hope a lot of people who possibly have the same type of problem will possibly learn from the book”; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Rydell married his second wife, Linda, in 2009. They remained devoted companions through the rest of his life; and

WHEREAS, Rydell toured as a solo act until the present day, and was part of the Golden Boys stage production since 1985 with Frankie Avalon and Fabian. The three “idols” had been readying a spring and summer tour for 2022. His presence on stage and as a member of the Philadelphia community will be missed and is deeply appreciated by this Council; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, Does hereby honor the life of Bobby Rydell and recognize his lifetime of achievement in entertainment which delighted millions and made Philadelphia proud.