

APPROVED AS TO FORM AND LEGALITY


CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

OAKLAND CITY COUNCIL

RESOLUTION NO. _____ C.M.S.

INTRODUCED BY COUNCILMEMBER NOEL GALLO

RESOLUTION HONORING MR. MARTIN WAUKAZOO UPON HIS RETIREMENT AFTER 40 YEARS OF DEDICATED WORK AND SERVICE IN THE COMMUNITY FOR THE CITY OF OAKLAND

WHEREAS, after four transformative decades, Martin “Marty” Waukazoo (Lakota), the visionary CEO of the Native American Health Center (NAHC), will retire on November 1, 2023. NAHC’s Board of Directors have appointed Natalie Aguilera (Choctaw), the current Interim CEO and Chief Administrative Officer, to succeed Waukazoo. The Board is confident Aguilera will carry forward the vision and passion that Waukazoo has instilled in the center for decades; and

WHEREAS, Waukazoo’s 40-year tenure at NAHC highlighted his unwavering dedication to Native American health and wellbeing, and he leaves behind a powerful legacy. In 1983, Waukazoo began his journey as CEO of what was then the Urban Indian Health Board. His leadership steered NAHC through landmark achievements, from spearheading advocacy that influenced healthcare policy on local, state, and federal levels to magnifying the organization's reach and capabilities. Starting with 17 employees at one location in San Francisco and a budget of \$88,000, under his stewardship, NAHC grew to more than 300 staff across 12 locations with a budget of over \$35 million; and

WHEREAS, even in the face of adversity, Waukazoo’s dedication never wavered. A notable moment came in 1997 when the Board of Directors terminated him over concerns he raised about their spending. However, with unwavering support from his staff and the community, his concerns were soon validated. Just a month later, due to mismanagement of funds, state investigators and Alameda County officials mandated the Board's resignation. A new Board of Directors rightfully reinstated him as CEO; and

WHEREAS, Waukazoo's journey with NAHC is rooted in personal experience. Relocating to the San Francisco Bay Area from South Dakota in 1973 under the U.S. government's Native American relocation program, he faced significant challenges. His transformative experience and sobriety journey at Friendship House Association of American Indians of San Francisco (FH) ignited his dedication to bringing the community's dreams into reality. Under his leadership, NAHC became the heartbeat of the community, serving and uplifting Natives; and

WHEREAS, recognizing a demographic shift in 1983 as the Native population moved from San Francisco to Oakland, Waukazoo made the pivotal decision to purchase the American Indian Human Services Building in the Fruitvale neighborhood. While the decision initially faced skepticism, the 16,000-square-foot facility became a symbol of empowerment and ownership for the community. "We were no longer renters, we were owners—we weren't going anywhere," Waukazoo said, highlighting the monumental shift in mindset that ownership brought. This new building also gave the health center leverage to expand the organization further in the Fruitvale neighborhood, helping build the beginnings of a Native American Cultural District within Oakland. "We are taking back bits and pieces of this land," said Waukazoo; and

WHEREAS, Waukazoo oversaw the growth of services at NAHC as the organization worked to address all social determinants of health for members, an innovative effort NAHC led long before the concept became conventional. NAHC transitioned from an Indian Health Services clinic to a Federally Qualified Health Center and went on to achieve certification through the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care. These shifts enabled NAHC to provide more comprehensive care services to everyone in the surrounding communities regardless of Tribal affiliation or ethnicity; and

WHEREAS, Waukazoo is currently serving as Executive Director of FH, where he will close out his career, carrying on the legacy of his late wife Helen Waukazoo (Navajo). Helen co-founded FH and served as CEO for 60 years. In November 2021, the City of Oakland renamed 31st Ave. to Waukazoo Way in honor of Marty and Helen's dedication to the Bay Area Native community. Despite facing intense racism during their early years, Martin and Helen stood united, guiding their community to not only survive but thrive. Their story of healing and perseverance has served as a beacon of hope and inspiration for many in the community; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED: We are honored to recognize Mr. Waukazoo upon his retirement after 40 years of dedicated work and service in the community for the City of Oakland.

IN COUNCIL, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA,

PASSED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES - FIFE, GALLO, JENKINS, KALB, KAPLAN, RAMACHANDRAN, REID, AND
PRESIDENT FORTUNATO BAS

NOES –

ABSENT –

ABSTENTION –

ATTEST: _____

ASHA REED
City Clerk and Clerk of the Council of the
City of Oakland, California