

RESOLUTION NO. RS2018-1115

A resolution honoring the life and accomplishments of Dr. Eugene ("Gene") Arthur TeSelle.

WHEREAS, Dr. Eugene ("Gene") Arthur TeSelle, a retired Vanderbilt Divinity School professor, pioneer of neighborhood advocacy, social justice activist, early integration proponent, noted author, and beloved mentor, passed away on March 1, 2018; and

WHEREAS, Dr. TeSelle, a native of Ames, Iowa, graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a bachelor of arts from the University of Colorado; received a bachelor of divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary; and earned his PhD from Yale where he subsequently taught in the Yale Department of Religious Studies for seven years; and

WHEREAS, in 1969, Dr. TeSelle moved to Nashville to join the Vanderbilt Divinity School faculty, eventually serving as the Oberlin Professor of Church History and Theology. But his contributions to Vanderbilt, to local neighborhoods, and to Nashville at large soon extended beyond his role as a faculty professor; and

WHEREAS, in 1970, Dr. TeSelle helped form and lead Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors, one of the earliest neighborhood advocacy groups ever established in Nashville. Working through this organization, Dr. TeSelle emerged as an early architect of neighborhood advocacy, promoting inclusion, improvements in planning and zoning, preservation of urban neighborhoods, and opposing misguided interstate highway construction that divided and destroyed communities and neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, Dr. TeSelle also worked on a comprehensive integration plan for Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools as a member of Concerned Citizens for Improved Schools. He further served on the board of the Fair Housing Foundation of Nashville, acting as liaison to the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice; and he was an early organizer of the Nashville Peace and Justice Center; and

WHEREAS, Dr. TeSelle met his beloved wife, Penny, in the PTA at Eakin School, marrying soon afterwards to raise their blended families – Dr. TeSelle's two children and Penny's three children – in the Belmont-Hillsboro neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, following his retirement, Dr. TeSelle remained active in the Belmont-Hillsboro neighborhood, gently guiding and mentoring others through often-tumultuous neighborhood development and social justice issues. His thoughtful advice, learned opinions, and extensive historical background strengthened the Belmont-Hillsboro Neighbors and served as a template for neighborhood advocacy throughout Nashville; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that the Metropolitan Council pause in recognition of the enormous contributions rendered by Dr. TeSelle, give honor to his life and legacy, and express its sincere condolences to his family and to all who loved him.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. The Metropolitan County Council hereby goes on record as honoring the life of Dr. Eugene ("Gene") Arthur TeSelle.

Section 2. The Metropolitan Council Office is directed to prepare a copy of this Resolution for Dr. TeSelle's wife, Penny Saunders TeSelle; his sister, Ellen Boal; his two children, Elizabeth R. TeSelle and John G.

TeSelle; three stepsons, William Peatman, James Peatman and Thomas Peatman; and nine grandchildren.

Section 3. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of The Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.

INTRODUCED BY:

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