



Legislation Details (With Text)

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Resolution to Initiate a Statue to Honor Kathy Kozachenko

The City of Ann Arbor will be celebrating the community's Bicentennial during the entire year for 2024. As part of that effort the City wants to undertake a special recognition of former City Councilmember Kathy Kozachenko, the first openly gay or lesbian candidate in the United States of America to be elected to public office.

Reviewed by: Milton Dohoney Jr., City Administrator

Whereas, Kathy Kozachenko made history on April 2, 1974 by successfully running for elective office as the first openly gay or lesbian candidate in the United States;

Whereas, Kathy Kozachenko stood as a beacon of courage, ahead of her time, epitomizing the essence of diversity, equity, and inclusion;

Whereas, Kathy Kozachenko, then a 21-year-old University of Michigan student, ran as a member of the Human Rights Party (HRP) representing the Second Ward of the City of Ann Arbor;

Whereas, Kozachenko was preceded on City Council by fellow Human Rights Party members Jerry DeGriek, a gay man, and Nancy Wechsler, a lesbian, who, while not out at the time of their elections in 1972, made history in their own right by becoming the first gay and lesbian elected officials to come out while serving in elected office;

Whereas, Kathy Kozachenko, a woman of Ukrainian descent, was also an activist student at the University of Michigan;

Whereas, In her 1974 victory speech, Kozachenko acknowledged her history-making election by saying, "This is the first time in the history of the U.S. that someone has run openly as a gay person

and been elected to public office. Gay liberation was not a major issue in the campaign - both candidates in this ward said they supported gay rights, but 10 years ago, or even three years ago, lesbianism would have meant automatic defeat. This year we talked about rent control. We talked about the city's budget. We talked about police priorities, and we had a record of action to run on. Many people's attitudes about gayness are still far from healthy, but my campaign forced some people at least to re-examine their prejudices and stereotypes."

Whereas, While Kathy Kozachenko was the first openly gay or lesbian candidate to win an election, she helped pave the way for hundreds of openly LGBTQ+ elected officials in the years to follow her, including the at least 1,185 LGBTQ+ elected officials currently serving in the United States, according to the Victory Institute;

Whereas, It is befitting during the 200th birthday of Ann Arbor, Michigan, which coincides with the 50th anniversary of her own election, that Councilmember Kozachenko's inspirational contributions to society and the LGBTQ civil rights movement be recognized and celebrated;

Whereas, Councilmember Kozachenko has graciously agreed to permit the City to effect her recognition; and

Whereas, The City of Ann Arbor is delighted to partner with the international organization, Statues for Equality, in recognition of Kathy Kozachenko's historic service;

RESOLVED, The City intends to recognize Kathy Kozachenko by erecting a statue of her in front of Larcom City Hall;

RESOLVED, The City hopes to raise \$100,000.00 to ensure the design, construction, and delivery of the statue by Statues for Equality;

RESOLVED, That the City Administrator pursue a State of Michigan marker to complement the contemplated statue; and

RESOLVED, That the City Administrator be authorized to take the necessary actions to implement this resolution and to ensure an unveiling ceremony be part of the 2024 Bicentennial activities as soon as the statue is ready for placement, including negotiation and execution of appropriate agreements and documents.

Sponsored by: Mayor Taylor and Councilmembers Radina, Eyer and Disch