



Chicago Park District

Legislation Text

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REQUEST TO NAME A BEACH AND GREENSPACE (A FEATURE) IN BURNHAM PARK IN HONOR OF MARGARET T. BURROUGHS

To the Honorable Board of Commissioners of the Chicago Park District

I. Recommendation

It is recommended that an order be entered authorizing the General Superintendent or his designee to officially name 31st Street Beach and adjacent green space- a feature in Burnham Park- as Margaret T. Burroughs Beach and Park

II. Park Naming Information

Proposed Feature: 29.75-acre beach and green space

Location: Burnham Park between 26th Street and 31st Street

Community Area: 35- Douglas

Ward: #4

Proposed Feature Name: Margaret T. Burroughs Beach and Park

III. Park Naming Procedures

The Chicago Park District naming and renaming procedures allow for the naming of features in parks, including playgrounds and buildings. Pursuant to Chapter VII, Section E (1) of the Code of the Chicago Park District naming requests must be filed with the Secretary of the Chicago Park District. Generally, a notice period to solicit public input is initiated. The 45-day notice period to name a 29.75-acre beach and green space in Burnham Park in honor of Margaret T. Burroughs shall be waived because in this cause the community process has taken place under the direction of U.S. Representative Bobby Rush and Alderman Burns. This board letter will provide for the official naming.

Chapter VII, Section E of the Code of the Chicago Park District, (the Naming Ordinance), states that if a proposed name honors a person, the (i) person shall have been deceased for a least one (1) year prior to consideration; and (ii) the person shall have demonstrated a continued commitment and made an extraordinary contribution to civic betterment, locally, nationally or internationally.

IV. Explanation

There has been strong community movement in favor of naming the 31st Street Beach in honor of Margaret T. Burroughs. This proposal has the support of U.S. Representative Bobby L. Rush, 4th Ward Alderman Will Burns, State Senators Emil Jones, Antonio Munoz, William Delgado and Mattie Hunter; State Representatives Monique Davis, Marcus Evans, and Mary Flowers along with more than a dozen other prominent Chicagoans. In addition, thousands of citizens have signed a petition in support of naming a beach and green space in Burnham Park in honor of Margaret T. Burroughs.

Margaret T. Burroughs (1917 -2010) was an accomplished Chicago artist, teacher, civic leader, historian, and founder of the DuSable Museum of African American history. Born in Louisiana, Margaret moved to Chicago with her family during early years of the Great Migration. After graduating from Englewood High School, she received a teaching certificate from the Chicago Teachers College. She went on to study art and art education at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, earning both a bachelor's and master's degree. In the late 1930s, when she learned that the WPA Federal Arts Program wanted to establish art centers in large American cities, she spearheaded the creation of the South Side Community Art Center which was formally dedicated by first lady Eleanor Roosevelt in 1941. For decades, Margaret played a prominent role in Chicago's African American art scene, as an artist, art teacher, poet, and a leader. Her art was featured in prominent museums and galleries throughout the nation, and she led various cultural initiatives such as

serving as art director for the Negro Hall of Fame.

In 1961, Margaret and Charles Burroughs (her second husband) founded one of the nation's first museums of African American history out of their own home in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood. The institution continued to grow, and in 1973 it moved into the historic Administration Building in Washington Park. Today, the museum has a collection of more than 15,000 artifacts and artworks and is one of the nation's premier cultural institutions devoted to interpreting and preserving African and African American history.

In 1972, Lewis University bestowed Margaret Burroughs with an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters degree. She also received numerous awards over the years. These include the 1975 President's Humanitarian Award, and having been named as one of Chicago's Most Influential Women by the Chicago Defender in 1977. In 1986, Mayor Harold Washington appointed Margaret to serve on the Chicago Park District Board of Commissioners. She made many contributions to Chicago's parks, spearheading such initiatives as developing cultural centers, honoring women, and celebrating African American history through Chicago Park District programs and initiatives.

The General Superintendent and CEO recommends that an order be entered to waive the 45-Day Notice and to name the 31st Street Beach and adjacent green space in honor of Margaret T. Burroughs. Upon approval of the Commissioners, the naming will be in effect immediately. Pursuant to the Code of the Chicago Park District Chapter VII Section E1., the General Superintendent can at his discretion waive the notice period for soliciting public input and as such request to officially name the beach and green space, a feature in Burnham Park.