



Chicago Park District

Legislation Text

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REQUEST TO INITIATE 45-DAY NOTICE PERIOD TO NAME GATELY PARK TRACK AND FIELD CENTER IN HONOR OF DR. CONRAD WORRILL

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 initiate a 45-day notice period to solicit public input to name the Gately Park Track and Field Center in honor of Dr. Conrad Worrill.

Proposed Park or feature: Gately Park Track and Field Center

Location: 744 East 103rd Street

Community Area: Pullman

Ward: 8

Proposed Name: Dr. Conrad Worrill Track and Field Center

II. Explanation

The Chicago Park District naming and renaming procedures allow for the naming of features in parks, including playgrounds and buildings.

Dr. Conrad Worrill, a lifelong activist and educator, passed away on June 3, 2020. His legacy of untiring and passionate advocacy, however, will continue to inspire generations to come.

Dr. Worrill was born in Pasadena, California, but moved with his family to Chicago at the age of nine, and

spent the rest of his life here. As a youth, he participated in several sports. In fact, the severe heckling his all-Black swim team experienced was cited as being the genesis of the racial consciousness that would become his life's work.

While serving in Japan in the U.S. Army, Dr. Worrill read extensively about African American history, culture, and politics. After returning to Chicago, he attended George Williams College, where he became active in the Black Power Movement, among other organizations examining civil rights and their relationship to the war. Dr. Worrill went on to earn a master's degree in Social Service Administration from the University of Chicago, and a doctorate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. After a two-year teaching period at George Williams College, Dr. Worrill was hired by Northeastern Illinois University, where he taught for the next forty years, until his retirement in 2016. While there, he eventually led the Carruthers Center for Inner City Studies.

His academic achievements went hand-in-hand with his achievements in the arenas of social activism and racial equality. While working throughout his life with numerous organizations, some of the most visible of Dr. Worrill's handiwork has been assisting in the election of Chicago's first Black mayor, Harold Washington; traveling to Geneva Switzerland, to formally charge the U.S. with genocide and human rights violations; and serving as a special consultant to 1995's Million Man March. Whether on a local or global scale, his work has advanced understanding in the areas of inclusive curricula, educational restructuring, reparations, and political and economic empowerment for the Black community.

Dr. Worrill also continued to espouse the relationship between athletic opportunities and academic achievement. He worked through the years to document and uplift the historical roles and contributions of Black people in the development of basketball. Coming from a family of track runners and being himself a high school track star, he long championed the revitalization of track and field for students of Chicago Public Schools, particularly advocating for the development of a track and field facility on the south side.

Dr. Worrill is survived by his wife, his daughters, a brother, and seven grandchildren. Although his homegoing service was private (but live-streamed, due to pandemic restrictions), his funeral procession of over 200 cars wound its way through numerous south side sites from his life, before bringing him to rest in Oak Woods Cemetery.

The new indoor track and field center at Gately Park is in no small part a direct result of his tireless dedication to this idea. It is a fitting tribute to name the center the Dr. Conrad Worrill Track and Field Center. This naming is supported by Alderman Harris, state senators and representatives, and community members.

III. Park Naming Procedures

Chapter VII, Section E of the Code of the Chicago Park District, (the Naming Ordinance), which governs the naming and renaming of parks and park features, 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.

Pursuant to the Naming Ordinance, this request to rename and name parks have been forwarded to the Secretary of the Chicago Park District, who shall (i) file a copy of this request with the Board of Commissioners (or appropriate Committee); and (ii) initiate a notice period of at least 45 days to provide notice and solicit public input. Such notice shall be posted at the respective subject park field house (or for any park without a field house, at the nearest field house) and it shall be sent to advisory councils located within a one (1) mile radius of the subject park. At the conclusion of the notice period, the General Superintendent or his designee may in his discretion recommend to the Board that it approve the requested renames and names.