

Offered by Councilors Breadon, Bok, Flynn, Murphy, Mejia, Louijeune, Baker, Coletta, Fernandes Anderson, Flaherty, Lara and Arroyo



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

RESOLUTION COMMEMORATING THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HOTEL VENDOME FIRE ON JUNE 17, 1972 AND MEMORIALIZING THE LIVES OF NINE FIREFIGHTERS LOST IN THE LINE OF DUTY

- WHEREAS*, On June 17, 1972, after nearly three hours of fighting a massive blaze at the Hotel Vendome at 160 Commonwealth Avenue in the Back Bay, part of the building collapsed, trapping 25 Boston firefighters and claiming the lives of nine members, making the tragedy the largest Line of Duty Death (LODD) in the history of the Boston Fire Department; *and*
- WHEREAS*, Construction of the Hotel Vendome and its its Victorian façade began in 1871 at the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and Dartmouth Street, and by late 1969 at least six fires occurred at the Hotel within two years with damage prompting the City to pull the building's occupancy permits, until new owners undertook major renovations in 1971 to convert the building into luxury apartments; *and*
- WHEREAS*, On the afternoon of June 17, 1972, construction workers found smoke drifting from the upper floors, prompting the evacuation of workers and patrons, while at 2:35 P.M. Box 1571 was pulled at the corner of Dartmouth and Newbury Streets; *and*
- WHEREAS*, More than 100 firefighters hailing from total of 16 engine companies, five ladder companies, two aerial towers, and a heavy rescue company responded to battle the four-alarm fire which had largely been contained after nearly three hours; *and*
- WHEREAS*, While heavy fire had been brought under control, several crews remained on scene to perform routine overhaul operations, when suddenly at 5:28 P.M. all five floors at the southeast corner of the building collapsed without warning, immediately prompting rescue operations; *and*
- WHEREAS*, The collapse trapped 25 firefighters and killed nine, the last member being recovered at 2:45 A.M. on Sunday, June 18th, Father's Day, leaving eight women widowed and 23 children fatherless, and causing Special Signal 10-15 to be transmitted the next morning announcing the Line of Duty Deaths; *and*
- WHEREAS*, The nine members of the Boston Fire Department whose lives were lost were Fire Lieutenant Thomas J. Carroll of Engine 32; Fire Lieutenant John E. Hanbury of Ladder 13; Firefighter Charles E. Dolan of Ladder 13; Firefighter Joseph P. Saniuk of Ladder 13; Firefighter John E. Jameson of Engine 22; Firefighter Thomas W. Beckwith of Engine 32; Firefighter Paul J. Murphy of Engine 32; Firefighter Richard B. Magee of Engine 33; and Firefighter Joseph E. Boucher, Jr. of Engine 22; *and*

WHEREAS, An estimated 10,000 people attended the funeral Mass held at Cathedral of the Holy Cross to pay their last respects to the nine Boston firefighters killed in the line of duty, and a citywide day of mourning was declared; *and*

WHEREAS, A Board of Inquiry was established to determine the cause of the collapse, determined to be the removal of a load-bearing wall during renovations in 1890 and its replacement with an overloaded steel column exacerbated by a duct being cut beneath it, but the cause of the fire remains unknown; *and*

WHEREAS, On the 25th anniversary of the fire in 1997, a memorial was dedicated on the Commonwealth Avenue Mall across from the site of the fire, consisting of curved granite base with a bronze sculpture of a firefighter's helmet and jacket with inscriptions of the names of the firefighters lost; *and*

WHEREAS, The tragedy of the Hotel Vendome fire exemplifies the risk, courage, and selfless sacrifice of the firefighting occupation in the performance of duty and service; *NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT*

RESOLVED: That the Boston City Council commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the Hotel Vendome fire on June 17, 1972 with grateful appreciation and heartfelt regret in recognition and memory of the lives of nine firefighters lost in the line of duty, and expresses its deepest condolences to the families of those whose loved ones were lost in service to the City of Boston.

In City Council June 10, 2022.