

A RESOLUTION HONORING MAYOR LYDIA LAVELLE

WHEREAS, Lydia Lavelle has lived a life of public service, and by the time she found her way to Carrboro, she had served for a decade on the Durham Open Space and Trails Commission and on the Durham Recreation Advisory Committee; and

WHEREAS, in 2006 and 2007, Lydia served as the chair of Carrboro's New Horizons Task Force, which aimed to foster better communication between the Town government and the residents of her neighborhood and other neighborhoods that had been newly annexed into Carrboro; and she later served on the Carrboro Planning Board; and

WHEREAS, Lydia is a lifelong learner and teacher and in her professional life is a member of the faculty of the North Carolina Central University School of Law, where she teaches state and local government law, sexual identity and the law, transgender rights, and social justice and gender law and policy; and

WHEREAS, Lydia served as an alderman of the Town of Carrboro for six years, having been elected in 2007 and re-elected in 2011, and then served four terms as mayor of Carrboro, after being elected in 2013 and re-elected in 2015, 2017, and 2019; and

WHEREAS, during her tenure as mayor and alderman, Lydia represented Carrboro as a member of the North Carolina Metropolitan Mayors Coalition, the North Carolina Department of Administration's Commission on Inclusion, the Chatham-Orange Joint Planning Workgroup, the Orange County Visitors Bureau Board of Directors, the Orange County Intergovernmental Parks Workgroup, the Orange County Solid Waste Advisory Group, the Chapel Hill Public Transit Committee, and the Chamber for a Greater Chapel Hill-Carrboro Board of Directors, and as the chair of the Durham-Chapel Hill-Carrboro Metropolitan Planning Organization Board; and she was the Town Council's liaison to the Affordable Housing Task Force, the Greenways Commission, the Planning Board, and the Recreation and Parks Commission; and

WHEREAS, Lydia takes pride in finding opportunities for Carrboro to shine as a leader among North Carolina municipalities and in modeling the way for her colleagues across the state; and

WHEREAS, Lydia worked with Carrboro resident James Williams to initiate the annual reading of Frederick Douglass's essay, "What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?"—which has become one of Carrboro's signature events by featuring dozens of community readers and presenting keynote addresses from prominent historical and legal scholars such as Professor Reginald Hildebrand, Professor Ted Shaw, Professor Blair Kelley, Professor April Dawson, Professor William Sturkey, and Professor Freddie Parker, and most recently from Associate Justice Anita Earls and former Chief Justice Cheri Beasley of the North Carolina Supreme Court; and

WHEREAS, for most of her last term as mayor, Lydia led the town through the COVID-19 public health emergency, working collaboratively with the mayors of Chapel Hill and Hillsborough and the chair of the Orange County Board of Commissioners to take a unified, countywide approach

to keeping all our communities safe, sharing consistent and accurate information, and supporting the county health director and emergency services director in organizing an effective emergency response; and

WHEREAS, Lydia was the first and is so far the only openly lesbian person to serve as mayor in North Carolina, and for most of her time as mayor was the only openly gay or lesbian mayor in the state; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, Lydia and her wife, Alicia Stemper, became the first same-sex couple to receive a marriage license in Orange County and celebrated their wedding in a public ceremony on the Town Commons; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, Lydia led the charge among local governments in calling for repeal of the anti-transgender, anti-gay, anti-worker House Bill 2; and in the aftermath of that fight, she worked in coalition with statewide advocacy groups to help towns, cities, and counties across North Carolina adopt comprehensive nondiscrimination ordinances that now protect the rights of millions of North Carolinians; and

WHEREAS, Lydia is a great advocate for the town and is deeply passionate about all things Carrboro, especially the music and poetry festivals, the Farmers' Market, the holiday celebrations and Pride parades, the ribbon cuttings, and other opportunities to celebrate the community and its residents; and

WHEREAS, Lydia was a strong and steady supporter of The 203 Project, which will add to the vibrancy and accessibility of downtown Carrboro as the home of the Orange County Southern Branch Library; and

WHEREAS, Lydia established the custom of inviting Carrboro's poet laureate to open each meeting of the Town Council, and at special events she often shared a poem of her own; and

WHEREAS, in October 2018, Lydia hosted Carrboro's first ever "mayor's roundtable," which featured a discussion among former Mayors Robert Drakeford, Jim Porto, Ellie Kinnaird, Mike Nelson, and Mark Chilton; and

WHEREAS, Lydia brought her lifelong love of sports into the mayor's office, most recently starting a student essay contest on "What Baseball/Softball Means to Me"; writing a "Play Ball Summer" proclamation for Carrboro; and celebrating the Centennial of the Negro Leagues; and she has never let her Town Council colleagues forget that she is a diehard fan of the NC State Wolfpack; and

WHEREAS, Lydia met regularly with elementary school students to talk about town government, she established the mayor's Youth Advisory Board, and to the delight of parents and coaches, she made a point of inviting local high school athletic teams to Town Council meetings to celebrate their achievements; and

WHEREAS, Lydia's colleagues on the Town Council describe her as "a gracious and inviting public servant who could be tough and tenacious when necessary"; "level-headed in her leadership" and having "successfully sustained an even keel through the most intense issues that the council has had to grapple with"; "thoughtful about community needs and values" and "a source of knowledge and support for council members"; "devoted to a collaborative process when problem solving"; "a strong advocate for Carrboro...and solid negotiator when representing Carrboro's interests at the county and interjurisdictional levels"; and "humble, down to earth, unpretentious—all qualities that really stand out in the world of politics"; and

WHEREAS, as another colleague said, "Lydia didn't understand that this was a part-time job. She did not stop. She was always available and worked full-time at being a mayor every week."

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Town Council wishes Lydia continued success as a teacher and mentor to future public servants, fun and happiness with family and friends on what will undoubtedly be her many upcoming trips to the beach, and great pride and pleasure riding her new e-bike all over Carrboro.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Council hereby expresses heartfelt thanks to Lydia for her service to the people of Carrboro, her optimism, and her example.

This the 7th day of December, 2021.