

CITY OF NEW BEDFORD

IN CITY COUNCIL

January 18, 2018

RESOLUTION HONORING CYNTHIA A. RODRIGUES, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE SOUTHEASTERN MASSACHUSETTS LABOR COUNCIL IN RECOGNITION OF HER RETIREMENT AFTER THIRTY YEARS AS A LABOR LEADER AND FOR PROMOTING A BETTER FUTURE FOR WORKING FAMILIES

WHEREAS, As a Nation, the United States has maintained a complex and challenging relationship with work and labor, about the value of working hard, and about how one can - or at least should be able to - "get ahead" if one just works hard enough, the Puritan ideas of the virtue of hard work are deeply embedded in our National consciousness, yet at the same time, we have a long history of valuing certain occupations over others, of giving some kinds of workers quite a bit of respect and deference while looking down upon others; and

WHEREAS, Labor Unions have a substantial impact on the compensation and work lives of both unionized and non-unionized workers, effecting wages, fringe benefits, total compensation, pay inequality, and offer workplace protections, unions play a pivotal role both in securing legislated labor protections and rights, such as safety and health, overtime, family/medical leave and in enforcing those rights on the job; and

WHEREAS, Labor protections enjoyed by the entire U.S. workforce can be attributed in large part to unions, the workplace laws and regulations, which unions helped to pass, constitute the majority of the labor and industrial relations policies of the United States, however, these laws in and of themselves are insufficient to change employer behavior and/or to regulate labor practices and policies, research has shown convincingly that unions have played a significant role in enforcing these laws and ensuring that workers are protected and have access to benefits to which they are legally entitled, unions make a substantial and measurable difference in the implementation of labor laws; and

WHEREAS, In the words of President John F. Kennedy, "Our Nation's labor unions are not narrow self-seeking groups, they have raised wages, shortened hours and provided benefits, and through collective bargaining and grievance procedures, unions have brought justice and democracy to the workplace"; and

WHEREAS, Cynthia Rodrigues lifelong commitment to the labor union movement began at the age of sixteen when she went to work as a Machine Operator at San-toro Manufacturing Company and later at Domani Manufacturing Company in Fall River, Massachusetts, both unionized clothing mills; and

WHEREAS, Cynthia Rodrigues became a volunteer for her union, the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union and her co-workers, mainly immigrant women, benefited greatly from her negotiating skills which brought her to the attention of management and Cynthia was soon named Business Agent for ACTWU (now UNITE-HERE); and

WHEREAS, In 1981, while working as a staff member for the Grant Program, UNITE-HERE, AFL-CIO New England States, Cynthia Rodrigues established ESOL classes in union shops throughout New England, whereupon, she was hired as an International Representative for UNITE-HERE in 1982, and was responsible for servicing and enforcing collective bargaining agreements for over 1,500 members across New England; and

WHEREAS, Serving twenty-two years as the Business Agent for her union, one of the first women Business Agents on the New England Region Joint Board, Cynthia Rodrigues worked as union organizer, political action activist and legislative lobbyist until she accepted early retirement from UNITE-HERE in 2005, yet still continued to work as a union organizer and labor activist; and

WHEREAS, From 1990, Cynthia Rodrigues has served as the President of the Greater Southeastern Massachusetts Labor Council and Vice-President of the Massachusetts AFL-CIO Boston, representing Southeastern Massachusetts; and as Chairperson of the Steering Committee and as an Advisory Board Member with the UMASS/Dartmouth Labor Education Center, Secretary-Treasurer of the New Bedford/Cape Cod Labor Council; and

WHEREAS, Every year since 1967, the Labor Guild has presented an annual award for outstanding service in the eastern Massachusetts labor relations community, in 2017, Cynthia Rodrigues was honored with the Cushing-Gavin Award for her lifelong work with union organizations; and

WHEREAS, Let us be grateful for the work of others which contributes to and sustains our own lives, this means, in part, honoring all workers for the contributions they make to our interdependent existence, and working to ensure that they are treated fairly and with respect; and

WHEREAS, Cynthia Rodrigues has always lived by the motto, "Never forget where you came from. Always remember where you gotta go.";

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the New Bedford City Council hereby honors **CYNTHIA A. RODRIGUES, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE GREATER SOUTHEASTERN MASSACHUSETTS LABOR COUNCIL IN RECOGNITION OF HER RETIREMENT AFTER THIRTY YEARS AS A LABOR LEADER AND FOR PROMOTING A BETTER FUTURE FOR WORKING FAMILIES**, thanks her for her lifelong dedication to defending the interests and rights of the working man and woman, commends her on a long career placing value on each person and wishes her many more years of continued success, good health and happiness.