

## RESOLUTION

**WHEREAS**, Chicago hip-hop pioneer P-Lee Fresh was born to Parker Lee Williams on *All Souls Day*; on the date of November 2nd, on Manhattan's Lower East Side to a jazz vocalist and unhoused youth advocate Flora Koppel and renowned jazz drummer Leroy "Jill" Williams; and

**WHEREAS**, P-Lee was named in part for Charlie Parker. P-Lee emerged from the womb with music as the center of his life and as an infant, P-Lee Fresh emulated his father by hitting licks on the skins; and

**WHEREAS**, After his parents divorced and after two years of high school, P-Lee Fresh moved to Chicago at age 15 to get away from falling into trouble in New York City and so that his mother could be close to her people (Flora studied acting at the Goodman Theater and met Leroy in the early 1960s as a singer at the Wells Street Nightclub she worked at, with she and Leroy relocating to New York City in 1967); and

**WHEREAS**, P-Lee Fresh bounced around Chicago, first to Wicker Park, then to Uptown, then to Edgewater and finally to Rogers Park; and

**WHEREAS**, likening it to his old stomping grounds on New York's Lower East Side, P-Lee referred to Rogers Park as the "Upper Northeast Side"; and

**WHEREAS**, P-Lee completed his secondary education at St. Patrick's High School, and he graduated from Columbia College in 1990; and

**WHEREAS**, after college, P-Lee Fresh accumulated so much overtime as a paid hourly intern with the "Oprah Winfrey Show" that Harpo Productions was compelled to put him on salary. He rapidly advanced from tape room assistant to Assistant Editor to Music Director for Harpo Productions; and

**WHEREAS**, while at Harpo, he composed new music to replace Oprah's original tinny elevator music-like theme music for her show, DJ 'ed and selected music for the show until the final episode, bringing in new revenue for Harpo by creating the Harpo Sounds Library and earning Emmy nominations in 2006 and 2009 for his work; and

**WHEREAS**, P-Lee Fresh was also music supervisor for the "Rosie O'Donnell Show" and for Wanda Sykes' comedy special "Herlarious"; and

**WHEREAS**, Pee-Lee's production company with his partner Dave Herrero, Who's the Boss, handles licensing and custom music for commercials, video games, movies, and television; and

**WHEREAS**, Who's the Boss produced 30 custom tracks for "The View" as P-Lee Fresh amassed IMDb, Independent Movie Database, credits; and

**WHEREAS**, in early 1980s, P-Lee Fresh met his longtime friend and fellow New York City expat Akbar Jamal, who had lived between the Big Apple and Los Angeles before settling in Chicagoland where he lived over 20 years on the Gold Coast and

**WHEREAS**, Akbar's father was also a jazz musician and lived on the same block as P-Lee's father in New York City; and

**WHEREAS**, P-Lee's relationship with Akbar was particularly unique since P-Lee grew up Jewish and Akbar grew up Muslim; and

**WHEREAS**, P-Lee Fresh and Akbar in 1985 founded the one of Chicago's first graffiti crew, TCP, The Crowd Pleasers; and

**WHEREAS**, P-Lee had earlier founded the X-MEN graffiti crew as off-shoot of a legendary New York City crew; and

**WHEREAS**, P-Lee Fresh pioneered Chicago hip-hop radio and Chicago college hip-hop radio in 1983 with his Sunday evening "Streetbeat" show on Northwestern University's WNUR-FM (88.3), which continues to air; and

**WHEREAS**, P-Lee frequently traveled to New York City to visit his father and returned with the newest records before anyone else in Chicago could get their hands on them, with P-Lee sharing those records on his WNUR show; and

**WHEREAS**, P-Lee Fresh founded Chicago's first recurring hip-hop party at the short-lived STEPP Entertainment and Dance Club, 6459 N. Sheridan Rd., adjacent to the Loyola University campus; and

**WHEREAS**, the open mic there was a lyrical nursery for Akbar and the likes of such evolving MCs as Ang-13; and

**WHEREAS**, that P-Lee Fresh party was also the template for Jesse de la Pena's Monday Blue Groove Lounge parties during the 1990s at Elbo Room in the Wrightwood subdivision of Lakeview; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1987, P-Lee Fresh and Akbar founded the hip-hop music group Mental Giants, with P-Lee as producer/DJ and Akbar as MC; and

**WHEREAS**, Akbar at the time had enjoyed two appearances on albums by Boogie Down Productions; and

**WHEREAS**, characterized by Akbar's rapid-fire delivery and P-Lee's smooth jazzy beats, Mental Giants was likened to a Midwestern counterpart of the DJ Premier and Guru of Gangstarr; and

**WHEREAS**, P-Lee Fresh and Akbar settled on the nom de hip-hop Mental Giants to distinguish themselves from TCP, which to them reflected aging graffiti artists; and

**WHEREAS**, in the early 1990s, P-Lee Fresh began collaborating on his Jazz Child Records label with his New York City home folks, first with Jamal-Ski and then with Curtis Brown, better known as Grandmaster Caz; and

**WHEREAS**, That issued output included a 1996 split Mental Giants collaboration with Cold Crush Brothers; and

**WHEREAS**, P-Lee Fresh's annual Scorpio Rising bashes with fellow Scorpio and Chicago hip-hop pioneer Duro Wicks at Red Dog in Wicker Park brought out as guests other famous Scorpions as Chicago hip-hop civic leader, educator, and artist Amina Norman Hawkins, who co-founded Chicago Hip-Hop Heritage Month in July with urban fine arts ombudsman and journalist Mark F. Armstrong; and

**WHEREAS**, P-Lee Fresh died at age 54 of a heart attack at Northwestern Memorial Hospital on December 2021. He was preceded in death by his father.; and

**WHEREAS**, P-Lee is survived by his mother, Flora Koppel, sisters Kim Jackson and Alexis and companion Stephanie Garland and her son Jeronimo and a tribe of colleagues and followers and was a cherished uncle to Leah, Maya, and Dion; and

**LET IT BE RESOLVED**, That the Mayor and the members of the City of Chicago, City Council hereby on Wednesday, October 11, 2023, eternally salute P-Lee Fresh's substantial contributions to evolving Chicago hip-hop by recognizing posthumously his birthday of November 2nd as P-Lee Fresh Day.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this resolution was prepared by 21<sup>st</sup> Ward Alderman Ronnie L. Mosley.



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Ronnie L. Mosley  
Alderman – 21<sup>st</sup> Ward