



HR0503

LRB102 20415 ECR 29276 r

1

HOUSE RESOLUTION

2 WHEREAS, Throughout the fall of 1871, a group of
3 Austro-Hungarian Jews assembled in a second-story loft above a
4 dry goods store in Chicago; on the eve of Simchat Torah,
5 October 8, 1871, these men congregated at the home of Moses
6 Hirsch on Milwaukee Avenue; and

7 WHEREAS, At approximately 9 p.m., as the men discussed the
8 details of the upcoming holiday, a fire ignited in a barn in
9 Chicago's crowded West Division; as their meeting concluded,
10 the 15 men stepped outside to find the city in flames;
11 undeterred and even inspired by the disaster, the men vowed to
12 meet again that very Shabbat, now under the banner of an
13 officially named congregation Gemeinde Rodef Sholom, meaning
14 "a gathering place for those who pursue peace"; a new
15 congregation, the first to meet in Chicago after the Great
16 Fire, was born; and

17 WHEREAS, In the beginning, the fledgling minyan rented
18 space in an assembly hall at the corner of Peoria and Ohio
19 Streets; in April of 1872, Gemeinde Rodef Sholom purchased the
20 wood frame of an old Norwegian Lutheran church on the corner of
21 Huron and May Streets; the synagogue then moved the structure
22 to land it had purchased on the corner of Huron and Peoria
23 Streets; and

1 WHEREAS, In June of 1873, a powerful windstorm destroyed
2 the synagogue; through the selling of bonds, the members of
3 the congregation quickly raised money, and a new structure was
4 speedily erected not far from the synagogue's original plot on
5 the corner of Huron and May Streets; with a new building,
6 Gemeinde Rodef Sholom became Beth El, meaning "the House of
7 God"; and

8 WHEREAS, In 1902, the synagogue purchased three adjoining
9 lots at Crystal Street and Hoyne Avenue; there, the
10 congregation built a much larger building for worship as well
11 as a separate structure with a gymnasium and rooms for a Sunday
12 school; Temple Beth El became the first synagogue in Chicago
13 to house its religious school and its sanctuary in independent
14 buildings; and

15 WHEREAS, In the 1920s, Temple Beth El built a new
16 structure at Palmer Square and Sawyer Avenue in the Logan
17 Square neighborhood; the Palmer Square facility began as a
18 humble clapboard house in the middle of a large vacant lot but
19 eventually grew to accommodate the richness of activity and
20 spirit; and

21 WHEREAS, Temple Beth El, like almost every synagogue in
22 Chicago, felt the effects of the stock market crash; by 1931,

1 the synagogue was in financial ruin; by 1932, it defaulted on
2 its mortgage, and the property was foreclosed; nevertheless,
3 the congregation remained resilient in the face of great
4 difficulty; dues continued to be collected, and social and
5 religious programming continued to be offered on a tentative
6 basis at the Palmer Square facility; and

7 WHEREAS, As Temple Beth El entered the 1950s, a greater
8 proportion of members now resided closer to Rogers Park than
9 to Logan Square; with this information, Rabbi Weissberg
10 successfully advocated for the synagogue to make a move;
11 ground was broken at the intersection of Touhy and Albany
12 Avenues for the Touhy Avenue facility in 1956; and

13 WHEREAS, By 1970, Temple Beth El reached milestone
14 membership numbers, including over 800 families; plans were
15 developed for construction and refurbishment of the Touhy Ave
16 building; on October 9, 1971, a centennial gala took place to
17 mark the synagogue's anniversary followed by a yearlong
18 celebration with landmark events spaced throughout 1971 and
19 1972; land was purchased in Northbrook on Walters Avenue to
20 house a religious school and small chapel; and

21 WHEREAS, In 1987, Temple Beth El purchased 3610 Dundee
22 Road in Northbrook to develop into a multi-phase expansion
23 project that would be completed over approximately 10 years;

1 on November 13, 1988, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to
2 begin building Beth-El's current home, where it will celebrate
3 its 150th anniversary year; therefore, be it

4 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
5 HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
6 we congratulate Temple Beth El on its 150-year anniversary as
7 a congregation; and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be
9 presented to Temple Beth El as a symbol of our esteem and
10 respect.