

RESOLUTION NUMBER 218
DENNIS EDWARDS

WHEREAS, Dennis Edwards was born to a preacher in Fairfield, Ala., on Feb. 3, 1943, and grew up in Detroit. As a teenager he sang in a gospel group and studied music at the Detroit Conservatory of Music before signing with Motown in the late 1960s; and

WHEREAS, Dennis Edwards, who became a lead singer of the Motown hitmakers the Temptations in 1968 as they embraced psychedelic funk and won Grammy Awards for the songs “Papa Was a Rollin’ Stone” and “Cloud Nine,” died on February 1, 2018 in Chicago. He was 74; and

WHEREAS, before joining the Temptations, Mr. Edwards sang with another Motown group, the Contours, best known for their 1962 hit “Do You Love Me” (recorded before he joined them). The Contours opened for the Temptations in the late 1960s, and when the Temptations’ lead singer David Ruffin left the group in 1968, he was asked to take over; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ruffin told him personally that he was going to get the job, showing up at his house very early in the morning, Mr. Edwards said. “I thought he was kidding,” he said; and

WHEREAS, at his first show with the Temptations, and some later ones, he recalled, Mr. Ruffin showed up, leapt onstage and took the microphone from him to sing some of his older hits. In time he left Mr. Edwards alone; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Edwards joined the Temptations just as the group, under the direction of the producer and songwriter Norman Whitfield, was developing a grittier sound, one largely influenced by the psychedelic soul of Sly & the Family Stone and very different from their earlier songs, like “My Girl” and “Ain’t Too Proud to Beg.”; and

WHEREAS, shortly after Mr. Edwards joined the group, the Temptations won their first Grammy, for the propulsive, upbeat “Cloud Nine” (1968); they won another for the funk anthem “Papa Was a Rollin’ Stone” (1971). That song, like two other Temptations hits from that period — “I Can’t Get Next to You” and “Just My Imagination” (on which Mr. Kendrick sang lead) — reached No. 1 on the Billboard pop singles chart; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Edwards left the Temptations in 1977 to pursue a solo career but rejoined them some years later. In 1989, he was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, along with the five members from the Temptations’ mid-1960s heyday; and

WHEREAS, after parting ways with the Temptations, Mr. Edwards remained with Motown as a solo artist. In 1984 he had an R&B hit with “Don’t Look Any Further,” a duet with Siedah Garrett, which was later sampled for records featuring rappers like Rakim and Tupac Shakur; and

WHEREAS, in the 1990s, he toured with a group billed as Dennis Edwards and the Temptations, which led to a legal battle with Otis Williams about the use of the Temptations name. He settled by touring as the Temptations Review featuring Dennis Edwards; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Edwards’ marriage to Ruth Pointer, one of the Pointer Sisters, ended in divorce. His survivors include his wife, Brenda, with whom he lived in St. Louis; five daughters, Issa Pointer, Maya Peacock, Denise Edwards, Alison Turner and Erika Thomas; a son, Bernard Hubbard; and grandchildren.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Aldermen of the City of St. Louis that we pause in our deliberations to remember the life of Dennis Edwards and we direct the Clerk of this Board to spread a copy of this Resolution across the minutes of these proceedings and to prepare a memorial copy to the end that it may be presented at a time and place deemed appropriate by the Sponsor.

Introduced this 9th Day of January, 2018 by:

The Honorable Samuel L. Moore, Alderman 4th Ward

Adopted this 9th Day of January, 2018 as attested by:

Donna Elliot
Assistant Clerk, Board of Aldermen

Lewis E. Reed
President, Board of Aldermen