Metropolitan Nashville and Davidson County, TN

Legislation Text

File #: RS2021-1227, **Version:** 1

A resolution honoring the life and trailblazing accomplishments of Dr. and Coach Catana Starks.

WHEREAS, the Metropolitan Sports Authority and the Metropolitan Council of Nashville and Davidson County is participating in a year-long celebration of the 50th anniversary of Title IX on June 23, 2022, and desires to recognize Nashvillians who have made not only a significant and long-lasting impact as an athlete, but have also opened doors, removed barriers, and encouraged participation in sports for girls and women; and

WHEREAS, the LGBTQ Caucus of the Metropolitan Council recognizes Coach Starks' important part of LGBT history in the state of Tennessee and Nashville; and

WHEREAS, in 1986, Tennessee State University (TSU) needed to meet NCAA Title IX requirements, which required the university to end the Baseball and Men's Swimming and Diving programs. TSU was required to add other women sport programs and also desired to include Men's Golf; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Catana Starks was asked to become the Head Coach of the new Men's Golf team, and was not only the first woman to coach a Division I men's college athletic team, but also the first Black woman to coach a Division I men's college team; and

WHEREAS, Starks coached the TSU golf team from 1986 until 2005, and had such a meager budget upon the founding of the golf program that she went one full year without pay; and

WHEREAS, Coach Starks went above and beyond normal coaching duties and personally drove her team to tournaments, often arranged for her players to stay overnight at the homes of people they knew to save money, or slept three to four players per room to save on hotel fees for travel games. She also personally washed the team's clothes, and balanced a full-time teaching load with her coaching duties; and

WHEREAS, Coach Starks recruited players internationally in order to boost the team's profile and coached people of all socio-economic backgrounds, opening new doors to the game, and creating an environment that was welcoming for all; and

WHEREAS, Coach Starks led the Tigers to victory at the PGA National Minority Collegiate Golf Championship in 2005 with a still-standing lowest score record of 840; and

WHEREAS, Starks coached many players during her coaching career including Sean Foley, who went on to become Tiger Woods' swing coach, Sam Puryear, who became the first Black men's head golf coach in any major conference, and Robert Dinwiddle, an All-American who later played on the European professional tour, many PGA Professionals throughout the country, and whose story inspired the movie, "From the Rough" starring Oscar nominee Taraji P. Henson as Coach Starks and the late Michael Clark Duncan; and

WHEREAS, Coach Starks persevered through sexism and racism while serving as one of the first woman coaches in the NCAA. During a time where there were more men than women coaching women's teams, she empowered women by encouraging sports leaders to open the door for women to coach; and

WHEREAS, Starks earned a doctorate degree, began teaching, and eventually became the department head of Human Performance and Sports Sciences at TSU, later retiring from the university in 2011; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, Starks was inducted into the National Black College Alumni Hall of Fame, and in 2019, TSU honored Starks by recognizing her achievements during a ceremony on campus; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Starks was a member of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, Phi Delta Kappa, the Executive Women's Golf League, the Black Golf Coaches Association, the Golf Coaches of America, and was also a member of the Metropolitan Sports Authority Board from 2016-2019; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Starks hailed from Mobile, Alabama, where she had little opportunity to play golf in the segregated South. She lived in Nashville from 1980 until her death in 2020 at the age of 75, and is survived by her partner of 31 years, Mallanese Wells, whom Starks legally married in 2018; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Starks is remembered as a pioneering coach who developed her players into great students and well-rounded adults, and was also known to be a very humble woman who was reluctant to talk about her many remarkable accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that the Metropolitan Council recognizes the trailblazing career of Dr. Starks and her efforts to empower women in collegiate sports coaching.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. That the Metropolitan County Council hereby goes on record as honoring the life and trailblazing accomplishments of Dr. and Coach Catana Starks.

Section 2. This Resolution shall take effect from and after its adoption, the welfare of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring it.