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4 **A RESOLUTION**

5
6 declaring August 5, 2021 as Black Nite Brawl Day in Milwaukee County and requesting
7 the Milwaukee County Historical Society honor the site of the Black Nite Brawl as a
8 historical monument and allow the installation of a memorial marker
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11 WHEREAS, the Black Nite was one of Milwaukee’s most popular gay bars in
12 1960 and was located at 400 North Plankinton Avenue, amongst several other gay bars,
13 which became known as the “gay strip”; and
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15 WHEREAS, on August 5, 1961, four servicemen attempted to enter the Black
16 Nite as a joke and, when they refused to provide identification, were removed by the
17 bouncer; and
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19 WHEREAS, when the servicemen later returned to the bar, they were met with
20 resistance from bar patrons, including Josie Carter, a drag performer and gender non-
21 conforming person of color, who was outspoken and pushed back against the
22 interlopers causing an intense brawl; and
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24 WHEREAS, the brawl at the Black Nite was the first LGBTQ+ uprising in
25 Wisconsin history and one of the first in United States history, occurring eight years
26 before the historic Stonewall Riots in New York City; and
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28 WHEREAS, like the Stonewall Riots, the Black Nite Brawl was a fierce defense
29 of LGBTQ+ spaces by people of color during a time when very few safe and celebratory
30 places existed for people identifying as LGBTQ+ in Milwaukee; and
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32 WHEREAS, the Black Nite Brawl was monumental in sparking the gay rights
33 movement in Milwaukee, inspiring community leaders, and leading to the creation of the
34 Gay People’s Union, according to the Wisconsin LGBTQ History Project; and
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36 WHEREAS, after the Brawl, the Milwaukee Common Council urged the Black
37 Nite owners to change the name if they wanted to keep their liquor license, so the Black
38 Nite bar was closed in 1961 and eventually demolished in 1966, losing a piece of
39 Milwaukee LGBTQ+ history forever; and

40 WHEREAS, although progress has been made to advance LGBTQ+ rights in
41 Wisconsin and the United States since the late 1960s, there is still much work to do to
42 protect individuals in our community; and
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44 WHEREAS, according to the Human Rights Campaign, 2020 was a landmark
45 year for violence against transgender and gender non-conforming people in the United
46 States, recording at least 37 murders that can be directly linked to the person's gender
47 identity; and
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49 WHEREAS, the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey found that 46 percent of
50 respondents reported being verbally harassed due to being transgender and 47 percent
51 of respondents reported being sexually assaulted at some point in their lifetime, with 53
52 percent of Black respondents reporting a lifetime sexual assault; and
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54 WHEREAS, Milwaukee County is committed to the ongoing pursuit of becoming
55 the healthiest county in Wisconsin through the achievement of racial equity (File No. 20-
56 174), which cannot be achieved unless LGBTQ+ individuals, especially those of color,
57 are not subject to senseless violence; and
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59 WHEREAS, Milwaukee County seeks to acknowledge and celebrate the history
60 of its vibrant LGBTQ+ community and the Black Nite Brawl; and
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62 WHEREAS, the historical significance of the Black Nite Brawl warrants a
63 historical marker at its former location at 400 North Plankinton Avenue; and
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65 WHEREAS, the Committee on Parks, Energy, and Environment, at its meeting of
66 July 20, 2021, recommended adoption of File No. 21-654 (vote 5-0); now, therefore,
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68 BE IT RESOLVED, that Milwaukee County is committed to advancing LGBTQ+
69 rights and supports the recognition of the Black Nite Brawl; and
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71 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Milwaukee County hereby declares August 5,
72 2021 as Black Nite Brawl Day in Milwaukee County; and
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74 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
75 hereby requests that the Milwaukee County Historical Society work with other
76 stakeholders and the Wisconsin LGBTQ History Project to permit the installation of a
77 historical marker at the former location of the Black Nite; and
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79 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
80 hereby requests the Milwaukee County Historical Society provide a report for the
81 December 2021 committee meeting cycle on progress towards the installation of the
82 historical marker.
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