

# MIAMI BEACH

## **COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM**

TO: Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee Members

FROM: Rickelle Williams, Interim City Manager

DATE: June 5, 2024

SUBJECT: **DISCUSSION REGARDING PLACEMENT OF A PLAQUE IN HONOR OF CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND PRESERVATIONIST JOE TOM EASLEY AT PRIDE PARK**

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### **HISTORY:**

At the May 15, 2024 Commission meeting, at the request of Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt, the Mayor and City Commission referred an item (C4 M) to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee ("PSNQLC"), to discuss the placement of a plaque in honor of civil rights activist and preservationist Joe Tom Easley at Pride Park. (Exhibit A).

### **ANALYSIS**

Joe Tom Easley, who passed away in February of 2022, was a leading national civil and gay rights activist, a noted attorney instrumental in getting "don't ask/don't tell" repealed, and a fierce advocate for historic preservation, serving on the board of the Miami Design Preservation League for many years.

His marriage to husband Peter Freiberg was among the first same-sex unions announced in the New York Times. Mr. Easley served in the Navy during the Vietnam War, spent years fighting for the repeal of "don't ask/don't tell," and used his skills as a speaker, teacher and leader to serve the gay community. He was a chairman of the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, a group that sought to end discrimination against gay military personnel, served as chairman of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, an LGBT group, and as president of the Human Rights Campaign Foundation.

His husband, Peter Freiberg, and the Palm View Neighborhood Association have requested that the City of Miami Beach honor Joe Tom Easley. They request doing so within the Palm View neighborhood, and are suggesting to place the plaque near a tree in the northwest corner of Pride Park. Mr. Easley fought hard to make Pride Park happen and therefore, they believe it would be a suitable place to honor his memory and legacy.

The Parks and Recreation Department and the Economic Development Department support placing a memorial plaque in Pride Park. The cost to produce and install a 12" x 12" plaque and a supporting pedestal, is approximately \$3,000 - \$5,000.

**CONCLUSION:**

It is recommended that the PSNQLC discuss and make a recommendation on the placement of a plaque in honor of civil rights activist and preservationist Joe Tom Easley at Pride Park. If recommended, and approved by the City Commission, this will require an appropriation of a budget, not to exceed \$5,000, to purchase the plaque and pedestal.

**Applicable Area**

South Beach

**Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-14?**

Yes

**Does this item utilize G.O. Bond Funds?**

No

**ATTACHMENTS:****Description****Type**

Exhibit A – Referral Memo from May 15, 2024 Commission Meeting - Item C4 M

Memo

## MIAMI BEACH

## COMMISSION MEMORANDUM

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Commission  
 FROM: Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt  
 DATE: May 15, 2024

SUBJECT: REFERRAL TO THE PUBLIC SAFETY AND NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY OF LIFE COMMITTEE  
 TO DISCUSS THE PLACEMENT OF A PLAQUE IN HONOR OF CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND  
 PRESERVATIONIST JOE TOM EASLEY AT PRIDE PARK.

**ANALYSIS**

Please place on the agenda a referral to the PSNQLC a discussion about installing a memorial park in Pride Park for late Miami Beach resident Joe Tom Easley. Joe Tom was a leading national civil and gay rights activist, was a noted attorney instrumental in getting "don't ask/don't tell" repealed, and was a fierce advocate for historic preservation, serving on the board of Miami Design Preservation League for many years.

His husband Peter Freiberg and the Palm View Neighborhood Association would like to have a plaque honoring Joe Tom, and while they initially thought someplace in their neighborhood might work, the feeling is that a location in the northwest corner of Pride Park, which Joe Tom fought hard to make happen, would be a more suitable location.

Please see the links below to learn more about Joe Tom's remarkable life and legacy.

<https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/obituaries/article258677928.html>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/obituaries/2022/02/22/joe-tom-easley-gay-rights-dead/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/23/us/joe-tom-easley-dead.html>

<https://www.washingtonblade.com/2022/02/23/law-professor-lgbt-rights-advocate-joe-tom-easley-dies-at-81/>

**SUPPORTING SURVEY DATA**

n/a

**FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

n/a

**Applicable Area**

South Beach

**Is this a "Residents Right to Know" item pursuant to City Code Section 2-14?**

No

**Does this item utilize G.O. Bond Funds?**

No

**Strategic Connection**

Non-Applicable

**Legislative Tracking**

Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt