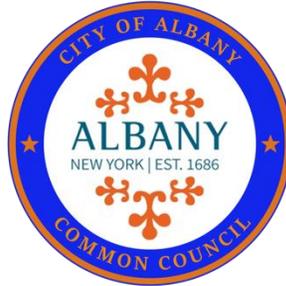


This meeting is being held in accordance to Governor Cuomo’s Executive Order and other Federal and State Orders that impact in-person attendance at public meetings, if applicable orders expire or are revoked before April 21, 2021, this will be an in-person meeting in City Hall, please check our website and Facebook for updates. Please submit your public comment via email commoncouncil@albanyny.gov or on our website <https://www.albanyny.gov/Government/CityOfficials/CommonCouncil.aspx> by **April 21, 2021 12pm**. These comments will be shared with members and/ or read for the record at the meeting. The meeting will be held using Zoom and streamed through the Albany Common Council’s Facebook. To stream this video please visit: <https://www.facebook.com/albany.commoncouncil>. If we experience any technical difficulties on Facebook, the video will be streamed to YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-rQHp1fBLPcdk_4N6J4XbQ



COMMON COUNCIL MEETING

GENERAL SERVICE, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Michael O’Brien, Chair

DATE: Wednesday, April 21, 2021

TIME: 5:30 p.m.

TOPIC(S) OF DISCUSSION/CONSIDERATION:

RESOLUTION NUMBER 102.111.20R

A RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF EDWIN H. SPERBER AND NAMING A PORTION OF ERIE BOULEVARD AS “EDWIN H. SPERBER WAY”

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: YES

Council Member Kimbrough with the Support of President Ellis introduced the following:

RESOLUTION NUMBER 102.111.20R

A RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF EDWIN H. SPERBER AND NAMING A PORTION OF ERIE BOULEVARD AS “EDWIN H. SPERBER WAY”

WHEREAS, Edwin H. Sperber, the ubiquitous Albany business presence behind Huck Finn’s Warehouse and other ventures, was also a quietly effective philanthropist who advocated for kidney donations after giving one of his own to his daughter. He was, in his 98 years, more than just a force; and

WHEREAS, “He was the force,” said his son, Jeffrey. “He impacted so many people, but nobody ever knew he was doing it. . . . He liked helping people that needed it out of the limelight.”; and

WHEREAS, the longtime businessman and benefactor died Sunday, July 5, 2020, at age 98 in his Albany home, surrounded by family, after suffering a fall and subsequent decline.; and

WHEREAS, Sperber’s life spanned decades and dozens of businesses, both in the Capital Region and beyond. His first, in the 1950s, was the Lansing Brothers china and glass store, which he and his wife, Rhoda, ultimately purchased and developed into a bridal registry shop — one of the first anywhere. In 1963, he and his brother Bob opened the Huck Finn Pottery Store on Western Avenue, naming it with a Mark Twain allusion because the Tom Sawyer Motel stood next door; and

WHEREAS, over the years Sperber opened another 25 shops in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, but Huck Finn’s furniture store remained a Capital Region icon — eventually moving into a warehouse on Erie Boulevard with Huck himself, barefoot and straw-hatted, gazing down at visitors; and

WHEREAS, the son of Samuel and Elizabeth Sperber, the man known as “Mr. Downtown” served in the army during World War II and made his life with Rhoda, whom he married in 1946; she died in 2005. They had two sons, Jeffrey and Reid, and a daughter, Barbara — who received her father’s kidney in Boston, Jeffrey said, well before the procedure had been attempted in Albany. By 1970, his parents had chartered what is now known as the Northeast Kidney Foundation. The foundation says it was started in 1974 thanks to a philanthropic gift from the Sperbers; and

WHEREAS, “This experience taught me the great importance of providing support services to patients and family members living with this illness,” he wrote in a letter to the Times Union. “That is why we founded the local organization.”; and

WHEREAS, although news outlets covered his work with the foundation, Sperber never trumpeted his philanthropy. That wasn’t in his nature, his son said. “It sounds funny, but it took his passing for me to have the opportunity to tell the rest of the community about how wonderful he was. . . . He would be very humbled by getting the attention and tribute,” Jeffrey Sperber said; and

WHEREAS, from his start as a shop owner, Ed Sperber was active in the city’s business community. After the Harriman state office campus was constructed in the 1960s, sucking workers away from city retailers, he lobbied Mayor Erastus Corning for ways to aid local businesses. ‘That’s how he became ‘Mr. Downtown,’” Jeffrey Sperber said. “He went to the mayor and said, ‘Look at all the businesses that are gonna die down here, and you’re gonna have a big cavity.’”; and

WHEREAS, in response, Corning tapped Sperber to assemble and chair a team of businesspeople — “He said, ‘I like your grit’” — and cook up ways to encourage downtown shopping, efforts that included

shuttle services and construction of parking garages. Sperber later became involved with the development of the Empire State Plaza; he also served on an abundance of boards, including the Retail Council of New York State, the Albany Parking Authority, and various health and human service organizations; and

WHEREAS, five years ago, Huck Finn's evolved once more as Sperber's sons acquired the old Hoffman's Playland and moved its amusement-park rides next to the Warehouse on Erie Boulevard. "Mr. Downtown" was then 93 and still heading into the office for an hour or two each day, Jeffrey recalled. "He said, 'You know, I could never be prouder of you guys. Not only do you have the business acumen but the heart, and you know, the commitment to the community that I tried to live by my whole life.'"; and

WHEREAS, after it opened, Sperber headed down each night to get a cone and watch children on the rides. He felt good, his son said, about the "Huck Finn family, as he liked to call it."; and

WHEREAS, Sperber is survived by his children Jeffrey and his wife, Charlotte; Barbara and her husband, Jim Wittorff; Reid and his wife, Susan — plus ten grandchildren, five great-grandchildren and Sperber's companion of 15 years, Florence Spiegel. "Together they made the age of 90 look like 50," says the obituary provided by Levine Memorial Chapel, which is handling funeral arrangements; and

WHEREAS, services and interment at Beth Emeth Cemetery in Loudonville will be private; contributions may be made in his memory to the Northeast Kidney Foundation, 22 Colvin Ave., Albany, NY. 12206. Messages for the family may be posted at levinememorialchapel.com; and

WHEREAS, "He just had a really good moral compass. . . . You know, it was just in his blood to be a giver," said Jeffrey Sperber, reflecting on his father's contributions. These days, people think of business as "just all about earning money. And he really did go into business to try to earn a living for his family. But once he got into it, he had a greater calling."; and

WHEREAS, after all his hard work and all it brought him, Sperber remained grateful — and determined to keep looking for opportunities to help. "You know the expression 'pay it forward'?" his son asked. "He was doing that 40 years before anyone said that.";

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Common Council of the City of Albany recognizes Edwin H. Sperber's life and contribution to the City of Albany; and

BE IT FURTHER, RESOLVED, that Erie Boulevard at the corner of North Ferry Street shall be named "Edwin H. Sperber Way".

To: Danielle Gillespie, City Clerk

From: John-Raphael Pichardo, Esq.

**Re: Request for Common Council Legislation
Supporting Memorandum**

Date: October 23, 1010

SPONSOR Council Member Kimbrough with the support of President Ellis

RESOLUTION NUMBER 102.111.20R

TITLE

A RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF EDWIN H. SPERBER AND NAMING A PORTION OF ERIE BOULEVARD AS “EDWIN H. SPERBER WAY”

GENERAL PURPOSE OF LEGISLATION

To designate Erie Boulevard at the corner of North Ferry Street as Edwin H. Sperber Way.

NECESSITY FOR LEGISLATION AND ANY CHANGE TO EXISTING LAW

To honor the life and legacy of Edwin H. Sperber.

FISCAL IMPACT(S)

None.