

09-1539

JUN 23 2009

RESOLUTION TO CITY CLERK FOR PLACEMENT ON NEXT REGULAR COUNCIL AGENDA TO BE POSTED

#56

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens (Richard Steven Valenzuela) was born in Pacoima on May 13, 1941; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens was a rock and roll pioneer and a forefather of the Chicano rock movement, even though his recording career lasted only eight months; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens was brought up hearing traditional Mexican mariachi music, as well as flamenco guitar, R&B and jump blues, as his parents Joseph Steven Valenzuela and Concepcion Reyes were of Mexican decent; and

WHEREAS, Ritchie Valens expressed an interest in making music of his own by the age of 5, and he was encouraged by his father to take up guitar and trumpet, and later taught himself the drums; and

WHEREAS, even though Ritchie was left-handed, he was so eager to learn the guitar that he mastered the traditionally right-handed version of the instrument; and

WHEREAS, by the time he was attending Pacoima Junior High School, his proficiency on the guitar was such that he brought the instrument to school and would sing and play songs to his friends on the bleachers; and

WHEREAS, when he was sixteen years old, Ritchie Valens was invited to join a local band named The Silhouettes as a guitarist, and, when the main vocalist left the group, Ritchie assumed this position, and, on October 19, 1957, Valens made his performing debut with the Silhouettes; and

WHEREAS, Valens often improvised new lyrics and added new riffs to popular songs while he was playing, and due to his high-energy performances, Valenzuela earned the nickname "The Little Richard of the Valley"; and

WHEREAS, in May, 1958, after an audition with Bob Keane, the owner and President of Del-Fi Records, Keane decided to sign Ritchie to Del-Fi, and a contract was prepared and signed on May 27, 1958; and

WHEREAS, it was at this point that Valens took the name Ritchie, because, as Keane said, "There were a bunch of 'Richies' around at that time, and I wanted it to be different" and, similarly, it was Keane who decided to shorten his surname to Valens from Valenzuela, in order to broaden his appeal to White Americans; and

WHEREAS, the first songs recorded, at a single studio session one afternoon in July 1958, were "Come On, Let's Go" and "Framed," followed by a double A-side, with the songs "Donna" (written about a real girlfriend) and "La Bamba"; and

WHEREAS, in the autumn of 1958, Valens quit high school to concentrate on his career, including going on tour; and

~~WHEREAS, one of his first stops on tour was Philadelphia to appear on Dick Clark's American Bandstand television show on October 6, where he sang "Come On, Let's Go"; and~~

JUN 23 2009


JUN 23 2009

WHEREAS, in between the live appearances, Ritchie returned to Gold Star several times, recording the tracks that would comprise his two albums; and

WHEREAS, during this time, however, he scored several hits, including "Donna" which peaked at #2 on the Billboard Best Sellers chart; and, "La Bamba", which was originally a Mexican folk song that Valens transformed with a rock rhythm and beat; and

WHEREAS, in early 1959, Valens was traveling the Midwest on a multi-act rock and roll tour dubbed "The Winter Dance Party" and was accompanied by Buddy Holly with a new back-up band, Tommy Allsup on guitar, Waylon Jennings on bass, and Carl Bunch on drums; Dion and the Belmonts; J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson; and Frankie Sardo; and

WHEREAS, the bus they all were taking on the tour was plagued with a defective heater and Buddy Holly decided to charter a small plane for himself and initially his back-up band; and

WHEREAS, this day, February 3, 1959, has become known as "The Day the Music Died," as Valens and as fellow musicians Buddy Holly and J.P. "The Big Bopper" Richardson and 21-year-old pilot, Roger Peterson, were all killed when the plane crashed shortly after take-off; and

WHEREAS, this event inspired singer Don McLean's popular 1971 ballad "American Pie", and immortalized February 3 as "The Day the Music Died" and the event also inspired the Eddie Cochran song "Three Stars", which specifically mentions Holly, the Big Bopper, and Valens in Iowa; and

WHEREAS, Valens is interred in the San Fernando Mission Cemetery in Mission Hills, California; and

WHEREAS, Valens has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6733 Hollywood Blvd. in Hollywood, California, was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2001 and has been recognized by the Rockabilly Hall of Fame; and

WHEREAS, despite his early death and short music career, Valens was a pioneer of Chicano rock, Latin rock and was an inspiration to many musicians of Latino heritage, including influencing the likes of Los Lobos, Los Lonely Boys, and Carlos Santana at a time when there were very few Latinos in American rock and pop music; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Los Angeles City Council, Mayor, City Attorney and City Controller join Councilmember Richard Alarcón in recognizing Friday, July 3rd, 2009, "Ritchie Valens Day" in the City of Los Angeles.

PRESENTED BY *Richard Alarcón*
RICHARD ALARCÓN
Councilmember, 7th District

SECONDED BY *[Signature]*

Tony Cardenas

[Signature]

ORIGINAL

JUN 23 2009