

## 2015-K1501

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commending Historian Alice Begley for her numerous years of service to the Town of Guilderland, New York

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body seeks to acknowledge those individuals whose professional lives and civic endeavors serve to enhance the stature of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commend Historian Alice Begley for her numerous years of service to the Town of Guilderland, New York; and

WHEREAS, For many decades, Alice Begley has rendered faithful, conscientious, and valuable service as Historian for the Town of Guilderland; and

WHEREAS, This esteemed woman has brought to her position an abiding commitment to her community, a background rich in experience, and a deep love of history that began long before her appointment as Town Historian; and

WHEREAS, Born and raised in North Albany, New York, Alice Begley and her late husband, James F. Begley, moved to Westmere, New York, a hamlet in the Town of Guilderland in 1953; she has happily lived in the same ranch house for 63 years; and

WHEREAS, As Historian of Guilderland, Alice Begley loves living in "this very special place"; she enjoys writing of daily town life long gone, about taverns from centuries past to long-forgotten Civil War heroes who hailed from the town to drag racing legend Shirley "Cha Cha" Muldowney; and

WHEREAS, In addition, Alice Begley has written about the old two-room schoolhouse on Schoolhouse Road, where her daughter attended school, and researched the history of Western Turnpike, known as Route 20, which was

a two-lane macadam country road when she arrived; today, she continues to relish investigating historical queries from residents; and WHEREAS, Alice Begley fondly remembers a time when there were no banks and no supermarkets in a town with a population of 4,500; currently, the Town of Guilderland is comprised of a major retail mall, shopping centers, strip malls, several supermarkets, many banks and more than 35,000 residents; and

WHEREAS, With a deep sense of civic pride, Alice Begley has been instrumental in saving and restoring John Schoolcraft's historic house on Western Avenue; a well-respected member of his community, John Schoolcraft held the position of President of the Commercial Bank of Albany, and served as both a New York State Legislator and a United States Congressman; and

WHEREAS, In 1845, John Schoolcraft built the distinctive Gothic Revival home near his family's glassworks factory along Foundry Road; he lived there with his wife, Caroline Canfield, whom he married in 1853, when he was 47 and she was 19; and

WHEREAS, Caroline Canfield was the niece of his close friend, William H. Seward, New York Governor, Presidential Candidate and Secretary of State for President Abraham Lincoln; the couple had three children before John Schoolcraft died in 1860; and

WHEREAS, Unfortunately, after many years of neglect, the landmark Schoolcraft house, with its pointed arches, Gothic windows, dormers and intricate gingerbread detailing, fell into severe disrepair; and

WHEREAS, In 1994, at the urging of Alice Begley and other history buffs, the Town of Guilderland bought the property for \$110,000, saving it from possible demolition; since then the house has been turned into

the town's cultural center, where they hope to host various lectures and other events for the public; and

WHEREAS, In defiance of critics who considered the purchase a waste of taxpayer money, the restoration has turned into a two-decade labor of

love by Alice Begley and the Friends of the Schoolcraft Cultural Center, a half-dozen diehard supporters; and

WHEREAS, With some funding from the Town, state grants, donations and proceeds from numerous fundraisers, significant funds have been spent renovating the beautiful home; rooms on the main floor have been fully restored, and more work is planned for the upstairs; and

WHEREAS, In 2013, Alice Begley published a book called CONGRESSMAN JOHN L. SCHOOLCRAFT ... AND HIS HOUSE, describing the noble public servant and telling the marvelous story of his historical house which deserves to forever remain a remembrance of Guilderland's storied past; and

WHEREAS, Recently, at the age of 90, Alice Begley published her fourth book entitled MORE FROM THE HISTORIAN'S DESK, a collection of local history pieces she wrote for the ALTAMONT ENTERPRISE; and

WHEREAS, Throughout her long and illuminating career, Alice Begley has highlighted local history and has delighted in sharing her vast knowledge with both young and old; she continues to be an invaluable resource for anyone with a desire to know more about the history of the Town of Guilderland and its surrounding environs; and

WHEREAS, During her outstanding tenure as Town Historian, Alice Begley has earned the admiration, esteem and affection of all of those whose lives she has touched; and

WHEREAS, With her throughout have been three children, five grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren, as well as her late husband, James, all of whom have felt privileged to be a part of her life and rejoice in her achievements; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body that those who enhance the quality of life in their community and have shown a long and sustained commitment to the maintenance of high standards in their profession, certainly have earned the recognition and applause of all the citizens of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to

commend Historian Alice Begley for her numerous years of service to the Town of Guilderland, New York; and be it further  
RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Alice Begley.