

## RESOLUTION NO. 14-894

**WHEREAS**, the City Council and Mayor of the City of Huntsville, Alabama, are apprised that Topper Birney was first elected to the Huntsville City Schools Board of Education in 2002 and was elected to serve a total three terms. During his time on the Board, he was a very visible presence in all of the schools in Huntsville. He made it a goal to visit every school in the system every year he was in office, and not only achieved that goal, but formed close relationships with principals and teachers. He has tutored and mentored students and financially supported individual classroom projects and teachers. He is best known for his presence at every football game and academic competition; and,

**WHEREAS**, after living the first 11 years of his life in a small town 17 miles southwest of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he moved in 1947 to El Paso, Texas, where his father was working with a group of German rocket scientists. This stay lasted until 1950 when the rocket team was moved to Huntsville, thus changing Huntsville from the watercress capital of the world to Rocket City, USA; and,

**WHEREAS**, Topper graduated from Huntsville High School and later from the University of Alabama with an engineering degree. After working a few years with the Department of the Army, he transferred to the Marshall Space Flight Center where he spent the rest of his working career; and,

**WHEREAS**, in 1967, he met a young schoolteacher named Sherry Burnett, whom he married the following year. They celebrated the birth of their son Toby in 1971 and the birth of their daughter Kelley in 1973. Both children graduated from the Huntsville City Schools and later from the colleges they attended. Both are married, Toby to a Lithuanian named Marija and Kelley to Tim Reischauer. On May 2, 2003, Kelley and Tim made Topper and Sherry the proud grandparents of a baby girl named Emma Claire. Toby and Marija gave Topper and Sherry their second granddaughter, Emilja Marguerite, on April 14, 2004. Their first grandson, Theodore Hoffman Reischauer, joined the family October 18, 2005. He is known as Theo; and,

**WHEREAS**, Topper spent many of his years in Huntsville as a community volunteer serving various agencies such as Chi Ho, T.A.S.C., CASA, the Food Bank of North Alabama and the HEALS Clinic. He has also driven the Mobile Soup Van each month since its inception and tutors as often as he can. He is a member of the South Huntsville Kiwanis Club, Madison County Emergency Food and Shelter Board, HEALS Board, CAJA Friends Board and First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); and,

**WHEREAS**, when Topper retired from NASA in 1993, he wanted to continue his volunteering in Huntsville by helping young children. He called Lincoln Elementary School and talked to Larry Rice, who convinced him that Lincoln was where he needed to be. Jim Black, the principal, made Topper's volunteer service with Lincoln some of the most rewarding hours he has ever had. Later, Jim convinced Topper to become a substitute teacher, which opened a new door for him. It helped make him aware of the problems teachers face in the classroom and what the schools need to prepare their students for the future. It also was his motivation for running for the Huntsville City Schools Board of Education.

**Topper Birney**  
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**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Huntsville, Alabama, that we wish to express our grateful appreciation to Topper Birney for his devotion to the children and teachers of our great city, and for lending his efforts and expertise to the many other organizations which he has assisted for the betterment of all the citizens of our city and other local communities.

**ADOPTED** this the 20th day of November, 2014.

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President of the City Council  
of the City of Huntsville, Alabama

**APPROVED** this the 20th day of November, 2014.

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Mayor of the City of  
Huntsville, Alabama