

By: Zwiener

H.C.R. No. 176

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

1 WHEREAS, For thousands of years, the mermaid has been one of
2 the most striking symbols of humanity's connection with the natural
3 world, and over the past century, this legendary figure has come to
4 represent the city of San Marcos and its special relationship to the
5 water resources of Central Texas; and

6 WHEREAS, The story of the mermaid in San Marcos begins with
7 the abundant springs that every day release 100 million gallons of
8 freshwater from the Edwards Aquifer into the San Marcos River;
9 considered a sacred place by Native Americans and regarded as the
10 creation site of the Coahuiltecan, the springs have drawn people
11 to their banks for more than 11,500 years, making this area what is
12 thought to be one of the oldest continually inhabited sites in North
13 America; and

14 WHEREAS, In 1845, Edward Burleson, a former vice president of
15 the Republic of Texas, dammed the headwaters of the San Marcos,
16 thereby creating Spring Lake; over the ensuing years, the water
17 from the lake powered gristmills, sawmills, an ice factory, and an
18 electric light works; the San Marcos River also constituted an
19 important water stop along the Chisholm Trail; and

20 WHEREAS, A. B. Rogers bought the Burleson homestead in the
21 1920s and built a resort hotel on the shore of the lake; he later
22 began offering rides in glass-bottomed boats that allowed visitors
23 to see through the crystal-clear water to the bubbling springs
24 beneath; his son Paul, who succeeded him, established the Aquarena

1 Springs amusement park on the property, and in 1950 he built an
2 underwater theater, where young women known as "aquamaids" staged
3 exhibitions of synchronized swimming and underwater ballet; at the
4 peak of its popularity, the park drew up to 350,000 visitors every
5 year and was featured in *Life* magazine, with the submerged theater
6 making it to the cover of *Popular Mechanics*; in time, the show came
7 to include Glurpo, a pipe-smoking clown, and a swimming pig named
8 Ralph; and

9 WHEREAS, The performances continued until the 1990s, when
10 Texas State University acquired the park and set a new course for
11 the property; today, the site hosts the Meadows Center for Water and
12 the Environment, which conducts research and educational programs
13 focused on promoting sustainable water management and
14 environmental stewardship; the critical nature of its work is
15 underscored by the fact that the Edwards Aquifer supplies drinking
16 water to several million people and serves as the principal source
17 of water for agriculture and industry throughout the region, while
18 waters discharged by the aquifer also support recreation and
19 tourism; in addition, the aquifer system sustains over 40 highly
20 adapted species, a number of which are either threatened or
21 endangered, including five found in the San Marcos springs and a
22 stretch of river just below; and

23 WHEREAS, In 2016, the Mermaid Society of San Marcos was
24 created to foster harmony between environmental sustainability,
25 the arts, and economic growth; the society has established an
26 annual Mermaid Week, which includes a parade, the Mermaid Society
27 Art Ball, and the Mermaid SPLASH festival; moreover, the city has

1 funded mermaid-themed public art through a program supported by the
2 hotel occupancy tax; among the works underwritten by this
3 initiative are murals and a series of seven-foot-tall statues, each
4 one decorated by a different artist; and

5 WHEREAS, By adopting the mermaid as a symbol of the city, the
6 people of San Marcos are encouraging public interest in the natural
7 environment and highlighting the central role their community is
8 playing in preserving the water resources of the Lone Star State;
9 now, therefore, be it

10 RESOLVED, That the 86th Legislature of the State of Texas
11 hereby designate the city of San Marcos as the official Mermaid
12 Capital of Texas; and, be it further

13 RESOLVED, That, in accordance with the provisions of Section
14 [391.003\(e\)](#), Government Code, this designation remain in effect
15 until the 10th anniversary of the date this resolution is finally
16 passed by the legislature.