By: Zwiener   H.R. No. 2030

R E S O L U T I O N

1   WHEREAS, Over the past century, the mermaid has come to
2 represent the city of San Marcos and its special relationship to the
3 water resources of Central Texas; and
4   WHEREAS, The legendary story of the mermaid in San Marcos
5 begins with the abundant springs that every day release 100 million
6 gallons of freshwater from the Edwards Aquifer into the San Marcos
7 River; considered a sacred place by Native Americans and regarded
8 as the creation site of the Coahuiltecans, the springs have drawn
9 people to their banks for more than 11,500 years, making this area
10 what is thought to be one of the oldest continually inhabited sites
11 in North America; and
12   WHEREAS, In 1845, Edward Burleson, a former vice president of
13 the Republic of Texas, dammed the headwaters of the San Marcos,
14 thereby creating Spring Lake; over the ensuing years, the water
15 from the lake powered gristmills, sawmills, an ice factory, and an
16 electric light works; the San Marcos River also constituted an
17 important water stop along the Chisholm Trail; and
18   WHEREAS, A. B. Rogers bought the Burleson homestead in the
19 1920s and built a resort hotel on the shore of the lake; he later
20 began offering rides in glass-bottomed boats that allowed visitors
21 to see through the crystal-clear water to the bubbling springs
22 beneath; his son Paul, who succeeded him, established the Aquarena
23 Springs amusement park on the property, and in 1950 he built an
24 underwater theater, where young women known as "aquamaids" staged

1 exhibitions of synchronized swimming and underwater ballet; at the

2 peak of its popularity, the park drew up to 350,000 visitors every

3 year and was featured in *Life* magazine, with the submerged theater

4 making it to the cover of *Popular Mechanics*; in time, the show came

5 to include Glurpo, a pipe-smoking clown, and a swimming pig named

6 Ralph; and

7   WHEREAS, The performances continued until the 1990s, when

8 Texas State University acquired the park and set a new course for

9 the property; today, the site hosts the Meadows Center for Water and

10 the Environment, which conducts research and educational programs

11 focused on promoting sustainable water management and

12 environmental stewardship; the critical nature of its work is

13 underscored by the fact that the Edwards Aquifer supplies drinking

14 water to several million people and serves as the principal source

15 of water for agriculture and industry throughout the region, while

16 waters discharged by the aquifer also support recreation and

17 tourism; in addition, the aquifer system sustains over 40 highly

18 adapted species, a number of which are either threatened or

19 endangered, including five found in the San Marcos springs and a

20 stretch of river just below; and

21   WHEREAS, In 2016, the Mermaid Society of San Marcos was

22 created to foster harmony between environmental sustainability,

23 the arts, and economic growth; the society has established an

24 annual Mermaid Week, which includes a parade, the Mermaid Society

25 Art Ball, and the Mermaid SPLASH festival; moreover, the city has

26 funded mermaid-themed public art through a program supported by the

27 hotel occupancy tax; among the works underwritten by this

1 initiative are murals and a series of seven-foot-tall statues, each

2 one decorated by a different artist; and

3   WHEREAS, By adopting the mermaid as a symbol of the city, the

4 people of San Marcos are encouraging public interest in the natural

5 environment and highlighting the central role that their community

6 is playing in preserving the water resources of the Lone Star State;

7 now, therefore, be it

8   RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives of the 86th Texas

9 Legislature hereby commend the residents of San Marcos for their

10 efforts to promote environmental stewardship and to showcase the

11 iconic mermaid that is so closely identified with the city.