

BY: Senator HINCHEY

CELEBRATING the life and accomplishments of Dr.
Michael Thonney

WHEREAS, There are certain outstanding members of our community who, through their selfless commitment and dedication, have served to better the quality of life in our community and have had a measurable positive impact on the lives of its residents; Dr. Michael Thonney was one such individual; and

WHEREAS, It is with great sorrow and deep regret that this Legislative Body records the passing of Dr. Michael Thonney, noting the significance of his purposeful life and accomplishments; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Michael Larry Thonney of Ithaca, New York, died on Friday, April 23, 2021 at the age of 71; and

WHEREAS, Raised on a farm in eastern Washington where he had a small flock of Hampshire sheep, Michael Thonney received his Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Sciences from Washington State University in 1971; and

WHEREAS, After obtaining his MS (1973) and PhD (1975) degrees in nutrition at the University of Minnesota, Dr. Michael Thonney began his illustrious career as an Assistant Professor of Animal Science at Cornell University, attaining the rank of Professor in 1988; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Michael Thonney has directed the Cornell Sheep Program since 1998, including major decisions associated with the 300- to 500-ewe flock managed under the STAR accelerated lambing system; and

WHEREAS, In addition, Dr. Michael Thonney served as his department's alternate senator for both the university and college faculty senates; he also served as the Director of Graduate Studies for the cross-departmental Field of Animal Science at Cornell University since January of 2013; and

WHEREAS, Deeply committed to the viability of small livestock farms, Dr. Michael Thonney's initial sheep research centered around out of season breeding, winter grazing and the development of economical feed rations using byproduct feeds high in fermentable fiber; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, when the Cornell Sheep Flock was sharply reduced in 2016, Dr. Michael Thonney instigated it's move directly onto campus and piloted practical methods to use meat sheep breeds for commercial sheep dairying; and

WHEREAS, With a steadfast and unwavering commitment to the sheep and agriculture industry, Dr. Michael Thonney established an on-campus, student-operated sheep dairy facility, providing his own funds for initial equipment, building a milking platform from scratch and

convincing a team of volunteers to remodel the defunct Stevenson Road Sheep Facility; and

WHEREAS, Today, through this extraordinary program, countless students, many with no previous farm experience, have learned to milk sheep, monitor lambing and artificially raise lambs; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, Dr. Michael Thonney published extensively on biology and management of beef cattle and sheep in animal-related journals and gave numerous invited presentations in Scotland, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States; and

WHEREAS, Through the tireless efforts of Dr. Michael Thonney the Cornell sheep flock and Cornell solar farms have been instrumental in increasing livestock farmer knowledge, as well as ways to diversify income through the use of livestock, combining meat with dairy, and the co-location with New York State renewable energy projects; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Michael Thonney's infinite selflessness and benevolence will shine on through his family's vivid and happy memories; his insight and strength will forever serve as a beacon of love, light and hope to the countless lives he touched; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit and imbued with a sense of compassion, Dr. Michael Thonney leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all who were privileged to have known and loved such an amazing man; he will be deeply missed and truly merits the grateful tribute of this Legislative Body; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to celebrate the life of Dr. Michael Thonney, and express its deepest condolences to his family; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Dr. Michael Thonney.