

BY: M. of A. Palmesano

COMMEMORATING the 100th Birthday of the Corning
Centerway Bridge

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to support the preservation and commemoration of venerable landmarks which express and preserve the social and cultural origins of this great 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 commemorate the 100th Birthday of the Corning Centerway Bridge to be celebrated with a Kick-off ceremony on Tuesday, May 25, 2021, at Riverfront Park; and

WHEREAS, Centerway Bridge opened to traffic in 1921, when Warren G. Harding was president of the United States; it closed to motor vehicles in 1981, when Ronald Reagan occupied the White House; and

WHEREAS, It was built to relieve the stress of growing automobile and streetcar traffic on the Bridge Street Bridge, the city's only other river crossing in the early 20th Century; and

WHEREAS, The project was so controversial that the decision was submitted to city voters in a 1920 referendum, which passed by a 2-1 margin; and

WHEREAS, In return for its approval, Corning's Houghton family gave the city 100 acres of land on the Northside that became the Houghton Plot residential district; and

WHEREAS, This earth-filled, seven-span structure was designed by pioneer concrete bridge engineer Abraham Burton Cohen (1882-1956) of New York City; two of his other projects, the Harrison Avenue Bridge in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western Railroad's Tunkhannock Viaduct, are on the National Register of Historic Places; and

WHEREAS, Details of the design and construction of the Centerway Bridge are preserved at Cohen's alma mater, Purdue University, in a collection of his work; and

WHEREAS, Although high water and a fire in the construction area complicated the building process, the bridge was finished in the Fall of 1921 and paved the following Spring; and

WHEREAS, Over the next six decades, wind, rain, snow, ice, floods and increasing traffic caused the deterioration of the bridge until it became obsolete for 20th Century traffic; and

WHEREAS, It was scheduled for demolition in the Spring of 1980;

before it could be torn down, hundreds of people gathered on the bridge to demonstrate their support for preservation of the landmark; the "Save Our Bridge" campaign was successful; and

WHEREAS, An extensive renovation led to its reopening in 1986 for use by pedestrians, bicyclists and double-decker, English-style buses carrying tourists from the Corning Museum of Glass to the Market Street Historic District; a maze painted on the bridge roadway became popular with children; and

WHEREAS, Use of the bridge by the tourist buses eventually ended; another major renovation, which began in 2012 and was completed in 2013, created today's bridgescape of a park suspended above the Chemung River; and

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize those distinct unique features throughout the State of New York such as the Centerway Bridge in the City of Corning which provide transportation opportunities for its residents and have become a part of the history of this great Empire State; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 100th Birthday of the Corning Centerway Bridge; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Mayor William Boland, City of Corning, New York.