

2009-J4113

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION paying tribute to the life and accomplishments of Albert Capsouto, premier restaurateur and civic leader

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to recognize those individuals of preeminent character whose lives exemplified the highest ideals of humanity and whose lifework and civic endeavor served to enhance the quality of life in their communities and the great State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Albert Capsouto, pioneering restaurateur and civic leader, died on January 19, 2010, at the age of 53; and

WHEREAS, Born in Cairo, Egypt, in 1956, Albert Capsouto was the youngest of three brothers; the family, Sephardic Jews, moved to Lyon, France, in 1957, fleeing the Suez War, and then continued on to New York in 1961; and

WHEREAS, After graduating from Stuyvesant High School at the top of his class, Albert Capsouto enrolled at Yale University where he earned a Bachelor's degree in architecture and engineering; and

WHEREAS, After completing college, Albert Capsouto returned to New York and soon began working with his older brothers on the family's longtime dream of opening their own restaurant; and

WHEREAS, Albert Capsouto and his brothers arrived in Tribeca when the neighborhood could still be called a frontier; they took a chance on the old manufacturing district's future, building a restaurant in a high-ceilinged landmark building near the Hudson River; and

WHEREAS, Albert Capsouto used his newly acquired degrees to transform the warehouse into a restaurant and Capsouto Freres, a French Bistro located at 451 Washington Street, was opened for business in 1980; and

WHEREAS, Soon, Capsouto Freres was the center of Tribeca's fledgling community, one of the only places Tribeca residents could walk to and

delight in conversation over a good meal; and

WHEREAS, Albert Capsouto, who was 24 when the restaurant opened, ran the front of the house, welcoming guests and often stopping by patrons' tables to chat; and

WHEREAS, At the 25th anniversary of Capsouto Freres in 2005, Albert Capsouto said he and his brothers drew inspiration for their menu from meals shared with their late mother, Eve; and

WHEREAS, Despite his busy professional life, Albert Capsouto was an exemplary leader and advocate who was called upon to contribute his time and talents to countless endeavors on behalf of the Tribeca community and always gave of himself unstintingly; and

WHEREAS, As the neighborhood began to change, and residents and small shops replaced the warehouses and wholesale stores, Albert Capsouto joined Community Board 1 to help with the transition to a mixed-use neighborhood; and

WHEREAS, A humble yet persistent force on community issues, Albert Capsouto proudly served on the board for over 19 years; during his tenure, he chaired the Tribeca Committee and his practical, patient voice became influential on everything from liquor license applications to the 1995 rezoning of Tribeca; and

WHEREAS, In addition to the rezoning of Tribeca, Albert Capsouto fought for the completion of Hudson River Park and the landmarking of swaths of Tribeca; and

WHEREAS, After 9/11, Albert Capsouto and his brothers kept their restaurant open to serve rescue workers and to give people a place to come together; at this time, he also increased his advocacy responsibilities for small businesses, serving as Chairperson of the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation's Restaurants, Retailers and Small Business

Advisory Council, and traveling to Washington, D.C., to fight for financial assistance; and

WHEREAS, Albert Capsouto also helped many fellow entrepreneurs fill

out forms to obtain aid, and in 2003, in recognition of his tireless efforts, he received a Phoenix Award for Small Business Economic Injury Recovery from the U.S. Small Business Administration; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, Albert Capsouto was very active at New York Downtown Hospital and was going to be named to its Board; and

WHEREAS, A beautiful light in the lives of many, Albert Capsouto was the spirit and drive of Tribeca for many years; a mentor and friend, his passionate concern for others motivated people for the good of the community; Tribeca is a better place for having had him in its midst and its residents will forever endeavor to follow in his footsteps; and

WHEREAS, Albert Capsouto is survived by his brothers, Jacques and Sammy Capsouto, his sister-in-law, Kathy, and Sammy's three children, as well as a loyal legion of friends and neighbors; and

WHEREAS, Armed with a humanistic spirit, imbued with a sense of compassion, and comforted by a loving family, Albert Capsouto leaves behind a legacy which will long endure the passage of time and will remain as a comforting memory to all he served and befriended; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to pay tribute to the life and accomplishments of Albert Capsouto, premier restaurateur and civic leader; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the family of Albert Capsouto.