Resolution commending James W. Chow on the occasion of his 100th birthday, and
declaring May 12, 2021, as James W. Chow Day in the City and County of San
Francisco.

WHEREAS, James W. Chow, born May 12, 1921 in San Jose, California, is one of
California’s most remarkable native sons and a hero to his family, friends and community; and
WHEREAS, In the eyes of his family and friends, Mr. Chow is one-of-a-kind: an
indomitable, independent, self-reliant, community-minded man who lives what he preaches:
hard work, study, thrift, respect, gumption, with love of family and loyalty to friends, and
upholding pride in his heritage; and
WHEREAS, Having been born in a period of intense anti-Chinese racism and under a
system of discriminatory, restrictive laws that stifled immigration and land ownership, Mr.
Chow relocated to China under his parent’s care in 1922; and
WHEREAS, Mr. Chow returned to California at 13 with $2 in his pocket in July 1934, in
the midst of the Great Depression; and
WHEREAS, Mr. Chow faced intense interrogation by the Special Board of Inquiry
comprised of three U.S. Immigration inspectors to prove his natural-born citizenship, and
stayed approximately two weeks in the detention barracks and the U.S. hospital in the area
known as China Cove, in the northeast corner of Angel Island, awaiting adjudication of his
case; and
WHEREAS, After proving his citizenship, Mr. Chow learned to cook when he
accompanied his older brother on trips across the country to Florida, worked at restaurants
during school breaks, developed a habit of earning his keep and saving for his education, and,
while not working, joined his Galileo and Chung Wah Chinese Central High School friends, riding street cars and buses all over San Francisco in addition to car trips to Los Angeles; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Chow served his country during World War II as a shipfitter at the Hunters Point and Mare Island U.S. Naval Shipyards from 1942 to 1945, contributing mightily to the war effort; and

WHEREAS, While working in the shipyards, Mr. Chow attended City College, studying to be an engineer, where he met his future wife, the lovely and intelligent Arleen May Gong, and where they were active in the China War Relief - staging plays and performances in storefronts and school auditoriums to raise funds and support for the Allied effort in China and the Pacific; and

WHEREAS, After the war, Mr. Chow went into business with his older brother, taking over a grocery store in Oakland, the “Friendly Food Market” at the corner of Allendale and 38th Avenues, in a predominantly Caucasian neighborhood in which he handled the grocery department, his brother the meat department and together they earned the loyalty and trust of their customers and neighbors; and

WHEREAS, In 1952, a few years after the birth of their first child, Mr. and Mrs. Chow opened “The Fashion Center,” a women’s and children’s clothing and variety store on San Francisco’s Stockton Street; and

WHEREAS, Over the course of little more than decade, while raising his children Stephanie, Christopher and Lisa, Mr. Chow expanded into the poultry product wholesale business, serving clients in the East Bay, North Bay and San Joaquin Valley, and the laundry service industry with the coin-operated “Sani-White Laundromat,” among the first in Chinatown to offer self-service machines to customers; and

WHEREAS, After Mr. Chow put all his children through San Francisco State University and the University of California, he helped his wife earn her bachelor’s degree and teaching
credential from University of San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, From the 1970s to 2007, Mr. Chow was a stalwart ally and assistant to his late wife, during her 35-year tenure as a teacher and vice-principal of the Hip Wo Chinese Christian Academy, one of America’s longest-standing Chinese language schools; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Chow has been active in building and strengthening his community organizations and institutions, serving as a leader and five-term English Secretary for the Gee Tuck Sam Tuck Benevolent Association; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Chow served as Chairman of the Board of the Chung Wah Alumni Association (Chinese Central High School) for more than 20 years, inspiring new leadership to sustain its mission to serve the Chinese-American community, including the launch of a capital campaign to renovate and retrofit the school campus in Chinatown; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Chow serves as the epitome of the common man who lived his principles to an uncommon degree with uncommon endurance and uncommon will, his life encapsulating good, hard work; thriftiness; education; fairness; freedom; honesty; respect for all people and gumption to do the right thing in the right way; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco commends James W. Chow on the occasion of his 100th birthday; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco declares May 12, 2021, as James W. Chow Day in the City and County of San Francisco.
Resolution commending James W. Chow on the occasion of his 100th birthday, and declaring May 12, 2021, as James W. Chow Day in the City and County of San Francisco.

May 11, 2021 Board of Supervisors - ADOPTED

Ayes: 11 - Chan, Haney, Mandelman, Mar, Melgar, Peskin, Preston, Ronen, Safai, Stefani and Walton

File No. 210516

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on 5/11/2021 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution, not being signed by the Mayor within the time limit as set forth in Section 3.103 of the Charter, or time waived pursuant to Board Rule 2.14.2, became effective without her approval in accordance with the provision of said Section 3.103 of the Charter or Board Rule 2.14.2.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board