



Certificate of Commendation

- Whereas,* Charlotte Lesser, a visionary civic leader and tireless advocate for public safety, founded the Manhattan Beach Neighborhood Watch (MBNW) in 1980 in response to a surge in residential burglaries, transforming concern into action through a grassroots movement that has become a cornerstone of community resilience; and
- Whereas,* inspired by a PTA conference and galvanized by a headline reading “A Streak of Stealing That Just Won’t Stop,” Charlotte leveraged her role as PTA President at Robinson Elementary and her deep ties to the community to launch a program that would forever change the safety landscape of Manhattan Beach; and
- Whereas,* Charlotte, alongside her husband Russ Lesser—then a City Councilmember—partnered with the City Manager and Police Chief to secure institutional support, while collaborating with reserve officers and civic leaders to research best practices and design a program tailored to Manhattan Beach’s unique needs; and
- Whereas,* Charlotte’s leadership was instrumental in organizing the first Neighborhood Watch meeting at the Joslyn Center in April 1980, where over 400 residents attended—far exceeding expectations—and volunteered to serve as block captains, area coordinators, and support staff, laying the foundation for a citywide network of vigilance and cooperation; and
- Whereas,* for three years, Charlotte and her team conducted multiple meetings each week in residents’ homes, reaching 85% of the community and dramatically reducing burglaries—from 111 in February 1980 to just 22 three years later—a testament to the program’s effectiveness and her unwavering commitment; and
- Whereas,* Charlotte’s strategic vision emphasized three core principles: securing homes, fostering neighborly awareness, and encouraging prompt reporting of suspicious activity—principles that remain central to MBNW’s mission today; and
- Whereas,* under Charlotte’s direction, MBNW evolved into a robust partnership with the Manhattan Beach Police Department, offering programs such as the Trifecta experience—where block captains tour the jail, visit the Regional Communications Center, and participate in ride-along—further strengthening community-police relations; and
- Whereas,* Charlotte’s influence extended beyond crime prevention, cultivating a culture of civic engagement, neighborly trust, and shared responsibility that continues to define Manhattan Beach’s identity; and
- Whereas,* Charlotte retired as Director of MBNW in April 2025 during its 45th anniversary celebration, receiving a standing ovation from a grateful community and leaving behind a legacy of safety, unity, and public service; and
- Whereas,* her enduring motto, “One block at a time,” reflects the grassroots spirit she championed and the blueprint she created for community empowerment—a model now emulated by cities across the region.

Now, Therefore, Be it Resolved, that the City Council, of the City of Manhattan Beach, hereby recognizes and commends

Charlotte Lesser

for her extraordinary dedication, pioneering leadership, and lifelong commitment to the safety and well-being of the residents of Manhattan Beach.

Dated this 17th day of June, 2025.

MAYOR DAVID LESSER

MAYOR PRO TEM JOE FRANKLIN

COUNCILMEMBER NINA TRIEU TARNAY

COUNCILMEMBER STEVE S. CHARELIAN

COUNCILMEMBER AMY THOMAS HOWORTH

