

Introduced by Council Member Johnson:

RESOLUTION 2026-75

A RESOLUTION HONORING THE JACKSONVILLE FREE PRESS NEWSPAPER FOR FOUR DECADES OF CONTINUOUS PUBLICATION AND SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY, RECOGNIZING ITS FOUNDING BY VISIONARY PUBLISHER RITA L. PERRY AND ITS CURRENT LEADERSHIP UNDER SYLVIA C. PERRY, AND SPECIFICALLY COMMENDING LYNN JONES FOR HER DISTINGUISHED JOURNALISTIC CAREER AND A MOMENT OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE THAT EXEMPLIFIED THE POWER OF HUMANITY, CULTURAL CONTEXT, AND RESPONSIBLE MEDIA ENGAGEMENT; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, a free, ethical, and community rooted press is foundational to a healthy democracy, civic literacy, and informed public discourse; and

WHEREAS, founded in 1986 by visionary publisher Rita L. Perry, the *Jacksonville Free Press* was established to ensure that the voices, stories, and lived realities of Black communities in Northeast Florida were not only heard but preserved with dignity, accuracy, and cultural integrity; and

WHEREAS, now entering its 40th year of continuous publication, the *Jacksonville Free Press* stands as the only African American focused, continually published newspaper of its kind in Northeast Florida, a distinction that underscores both its resilience and its irreplaceable role in the regional media landscape; and

WHEREAS, under the current leadership of Sylvia C. Perry, daughter of its founder, the *Jacksonville Free Press* has continued

1 its legacy as a family rooted, community accountable institution,
2 advancing a multigenerational commitment to journalistic excellence,
3 civic responsibility, and cultural stewardship; and

4 **WHEREAS**, the *Jacksonville Free Press*, widely recognized as
5 Florida's First Coast Quality Black Weekly, has for decades served
6 as a trusted institution amplifying voices too often marginalized,
7 documenting the social, political, cultural, and economic life of
8 Jacksonville's Black communities, and preserving a historical record
9 that might otherwise be lost; and

10 **WHEREAS**, since 2008, journalist Lynn Jones has been a
11 cornerstone of the *Jacksonville Free Press*, embodying the highest
12 ideals of the profession through integrity, intellectual rigor,
13 cultural fluency, and an unwavering commitment to community centered
14 reporting; and

15 **WHEREAS**, Ms. Jones' distinguished career includes interviewing
16 global and national leaders, chronicling local triumphs and
17 challenges, mentoring emerging journalists, and sustaining the
18 demanding discipline of weekly print journalism that prioritizes
19 accuracy, context, and service over sensationalism; and

20 **WHEREAS**, during the 2025-2026 NFL season, Ms. Jones became the
21 center of an internationally recognized moment following a post-game
22 press conference exchange with the Jacksonville Jaguars head coach,
23 wherein she offered words of affirmation, perspective, and dignity
24 following a hard fought and commendable season; and

25 **WHEREAS**, that moment resonated across media platforms worldwide,
26 generating millions of views and prompting meaningful dialogue
27 regarding professionalism, journalistic norms, and the essential role
28 of empathy, humanity, and cultural intelligence in public discourse;
29 and

30 **WHEREAS**, rather than diminishing journalistic standards, Ms.
31 Jones' exchange elevated them by reminding the nation that context

1 and compassion are not departures from professionalism, but hallmarks
2 of ethical, community aware journalism; and

3 **WHEREAS**, the moment reflected values deeply aligned with
4 Jacksonville's identity, resilience, and civic pride, reinforcing the
5 idea that leadership can be acknowledged without sacrificing
6 accountability and that affirmation can coexist with analysis; and

7 **WHEREAS**, as a result of this national moment, the *Jacksonville*
8 *Free Press* experienced increased readership, expanded subscriptions,
9 and renewed recognition of the indispensable role that local Black
10 owned media institutions play in shaping both local and national
11 narratives; and

12 **WHEREAS**, Lynn Jones' work exemplifies the intellectual,
13 cultural, and ethical labor required to sustain journalism as a public
14 good, and her contributions continue to inspire journalists, readers,
15 and communities across generations; now therefore

16 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of Jacksonville:

17 **Section 1.** The City Council hereby honors and commends the
18 *Jacksonville Free Press* for nearly forty years of continuous
19 publication and exemplary service to the City of Jacksonville,
20 recognizing its enduring commitment to journalistic excellence,
21 democratic engagement, and cultural preservation. The Council
22 recognizes and celebrates the legacy of founder Rita L. Perry, whose
23 visionary leadership established an institution that has informed,
24 empowered, and uplifted generations of Jacksonville residents. The
25 City Council further recognizes Sylvia C. Perry, whose stewardship
26 has sustained and advanced the mission of the *Jacksonville Free Press*
27 as a trusted, independent, and community accountable media
28 institution. The City Council specifically commends Lynn Jones for
29 her distinguished career in journalism, her unwavering service to the
30 community, and for a nationally significant moment that demonstrated
31 the power of humane, culturally grounded reporting. African American

1 owned and operated media are essential institutions of record,
2 accountability, and historical preservation within the civic life of
3 Jacksonville and beyond.

4 **Section 2. Effective Date.** This Resolution shall become
5 effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective
6 without the Mayor's signature.

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8 Form Approved:

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10 /s/ Shannon M^{ac}Gillis

11 Office of General Counsel

12 Legislation Prepared By: Colleen Hampsey, City Council Research

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