

1 Introduced by Council Members Gaffney, Jr., Johnson, Amaro, Howland,
2 Pittman, White, Salem, and Boylan and Co-Sponsored by Council Member
3 Miller:
4
5

6 **RESOLUTION 2025-697-A**

7 A RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND SERVICE OF
8 MARY FRANCES GRIFFIN SPARKS, THE FIRST BLACK
9 FEMALE CORRECTIONS OFFICER WITH JACKSONVILLE
10 SHERIFF'S OFFICE; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.
11

12 **WHEREAS**, Mary Frances Griffin Sparks, a lifelong resident of
13 Jacksonville, led a life marked by her commitment to public service
14 and love for her community; and

15 **WHEREAS**, Mrs. Sparks was a volunteer elections worker, tutor to
16 underserved children, faithful member of Asbury United Methodist
17 Church, and, most notably, made history as the first Black female
18 corrections officer with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO),
19 where she served for 17 years; and

20 **WHEREAS**, during her time with JSO, Mrs. Sparks became part of
21 history as the officer responsible for guarding Dr. Martin Luther
22 King, Jr., during his visit, and demonstrated her resolve in a later
23 incident when she and another correctional officer were held hostage,
24 remaining calm and courageous throughout the ordeal; and

25 **WHEREAS**, the legacy of Mrs. Sparks continues through her family,
26 who serve the Jacksonville community with pride, including sons Rev.
27 James F. Jennings (Geraldine), Nathaneil Jennings (Mona), Dr. Rudolph
28 Jamison, and Louis A. Wilson (Shirley), and daughters Juanita Allen,
29 Beverley Watson (Waymond), and Sheryl Wilson; now therefore

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

31 **Section 1.** The City Council hereby honors the life and

1 legacy of Mary Frances Griffin Sparks, the first Black female
2 corrections officer with the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office and a
3 committed public servant, who courageously paved the way for greater
4 inclusivity within the organization at a precarious time in our nation
5 and city.

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

9
10 Form Approved:

11
12 /s/Mary E. Staffopoulos

13 Office of General Counsel

14 Legislation Prepared By: Brandon Russell, City Council Research

15 GC-#1712229-v1-2025-697-A.docx