

1 Introduced by Council Member Freeman and Co-Sponsored by Council
2 Members Salem, Becton, Morgan, Pittman, Bowman, Diamond & Priestly
3 Jackson:

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6 **RESOLUTION 2021-895-A**

7 A RESOLUTION HONORING THE LIFE AND MOURNING THE
8 PASSING OF GOLF LEGEND, LEE ELDER; PROVIDING AN
9 EFFECTIVE DATE.

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11 **WHEREAS**, Robert Lee Elder was born July 14, 1934 in Dallas,
12 Texas, the youngest of 10 children. When Lee was nine, his father was
13 killed in action during World War II, and then tragically his mother
14 died three months later. Lee was taken in by his Aunt Sarah when he
15 was 11, but was living independently by the age of 16; and

16 **WHEREAS**, Lee Elder entered into the world of golf as a caddie,
17 the only pathway for a Black man to be allowed on the course at that
18 time. In the early years, Lee played with scavenged golf balls and
19 wooden-shafted clubs bought at a second-hand store. As a teenager,
20 Lee survived by betting on his golf games around Dallas, and later
21 traveled the South with renowned hustler Titanic Thompson, posing as
22 his caddie before displaying his unexpected skills to his opponents;
23 and

24 **WHEREAS**, Lee Elder turned professional in 1959, two years before
25 the Caucasian-only racial prohibition clause was removed from the PGA
26 by-laws. After his discharge from the Army, he joined the United Golf
27 Association (UGA) Tour for Black players in the early 1960's. Lee
28 Elder was one of the UGA's best players, but the prize money was
29 barely enough to earn a living. Finally at 33, Elder had saved \$6,500
30 in the bank, the minimum requirement to enter the PGA qualifying
31 school where he earned his first tour card for the 1968 season; and

1 **WHEREAS**, at the age of 40, Lee Elder was the first Black golfer
2 to play in the Masters, paving the way for future generations. In his
3 career, Elder played in 448 PGA TOUR events, won four times, and
4 claimed another eight victories on PGA TOUR Champions. To play at the
5 Masters in Augusta, a victory at a PGA Tour event was required. Lee
6 Elder earned that at the 1974 Monsanto Open, the same Florida event
7 where he had been forced to change clothes in a parking lot years
8 earlier because Black people were not allowed to use the country club
9 locker room; and

10 **WHEREAS**, Lee Elder was the first African American on the cover
11 of Golf Digest, the first Black golfer to play the 1979 U.S. Ryder
12 Cup team, played in a South African PGA during apartheid and was the
13 2019 recipient of the Bob Jones Award for distinguished sportsmanship,
14 the highest honor given by the United States Golf Association. Forty-
15 five years after his trailblazing appearance at the Masters in
16 Augusta, Lee Elder was recognized by the club, which established
17 scholarships in his name at Paine College, a historically Black
18 college in Augusta, and also invited him to be an honorary starter
19 at the 2021 Masters; and

20 **WHEREAS**, Lee Elder challenged the entrenched racial barriers in
21 the sport of golf, he forged a hard road onto the PGA TOUR, overcame
22 a difficult childhood and faced discrimination to build a successful
23 career in a sport historically unfair to Black players. Lee Elder was
24 strongly aware of the impact that his life would have on future
25 generations, and he was proudly in attendance at Augusta National for
26 Tiger Woods' historic win there in 1997. Lee Elder passed away on
27 November 28, 2021, in Escondido, California at the age of 87; now
28 therefore

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

30 **Section 1.** The City of Jacksonville hereby honors the
31 remarkable life and accomplishments of Lee Elder. Jacksonville City

1 Council mourns the passing of Mr. Elder, the trailblazer and golf
2 legend, and extends condolences to his friends and family.

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

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7 Form Approved:

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9 /s/ Margaret M. Sidman _____

10 Office of General Counsel

11 Legislation Prepared By: Colleen Hampsey, City Council Research

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