

1 Introduced by Council Member Diamond:  
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4 **ORDINANCE 2024-620**

5 AN ORDINANCE REGARDING THE NORTHEAST FLORIDA  
6 FIRE WATCH COUNCIL; AUTHORIZING TERMINATION OF  
7 THE INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT REGARDING VETERANS'  
8 SUICIDE PREVENTION BETWEEN BAKER COUNTY, CLAY  
9 COUNTY, NASSAU COUNTY, ST. JOHNS COUNTY AND THE  
10 CITY OF JACKSONVILLE AND AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR,  
11 OR HER DESIGNEE, AND THE CORPORATION SECRETARY  
12 TO EXECUTE DOCUMENTS AND TAKE ALL ACTION  
13 NECESSARY TO EFFECTUATE THE INTENT OF THIS  
14 ORDINANCE; APPROVING THE TRANSFER OF ANY  
15 REMAINING NON-MONETARY ASSETS OF THE NORTHEAST  
16 FLORIDA FIRE WATCH COUNCIL TO THE FIRE WATCH  
17 PROJECT, INC.; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.  
18

19 **WHEREAS,** in 2019 the Counties of Baker, Clay, Nassau and St.  
20 Johns and the City of Jacksonville/Duval County (collectively, the  
21 Counties") authorized execution of an Interlocal Agreement Regarding  
22 Veterans' Suicide Prevention (the "Interlocal Agreement") which  
23 established the Northeast Florida Fire Watch Council (the "Fire Watch  
24 Council"), a separate multi-jurisdictional governmental entity  
25 created for the purpose of developing and promoting programs and  
26 initiatives to reduce the number of suicides among military veterans  
27 living in northeast Florida; and

28 **WHEREAS,** the City Council approved and authorized execution of  
29 the Interlocal Agreement pursuant to Ordinance 2019-701-E and said  
30 agreement became effective amongst all the Counties on November 6,  
31 2019; and

1           **WHEREAS,** in May 2020 the Fire Watch Council launched several  
2 veteran suicide prevention programs including, most notably, the  
3 Watch Stander Program, an upstream, early intervention network of  
4 community volunteers trained to identify risk factors of veterans in  
5 crisis and to direct those veterans to appropriate resources and  
6 supportive services; and

7           **WHEREAS,** in April 2024 the Watch Stander Program surpassed  
8 6,500 trained volunteers of which more than 4,500 are residents of  
9 the Counties; and

10           **WHEREAS,** the Florida Department of Health reported in its April  
11 2024 report of 2022 vital statistics that, for the third consecutive  
12 year, veteran suicides in the Counties were 25% lower than in 2019,  
13 the year of the Fire Watch Council's founding, and that this decline  
14 far outpaces both veteran and non-veteran suicide decreases  
15 throughout the state; and

16           **WHEREAS,** this same Florida Department of Health data indicates  
17 that 103 fewer veterans within the Counties have died by suicide  
18 since the Fire Watch Council developed and implemented its programs  
19 when compared to 2019 levels; and

20           **WHEREAS,** a University of Kentucky study on suicide bereavement  
21 in veterans and military families shows that 135 individuals are  
22 affected by every suicide which means that the hard work and effort  
23 of the Fire Watch Council has ensured that nearly 14,000 community  
24 members in the Counties did not have to suffer the loss of a friend  
25 or loved one to suicide; and

26           **WHEREAS,** since its founding, it was the intention of the Fire  
27 Watch Council to incubate innovative suicide prevention programs,  
28 prove their efficacy, and then transition those programs to a private  
29 sector successor better structured and equipped to expand those  
30 programs geographically; and

31           **WHEREAS,** the Fire Watch Council has been successful in its

1 efforts, using a cooperative, coordinated and collaborative approach  
2 to suicide prevention through a number of programs and initiatives,  
3 and has grown to the point that it is no longer necessary to maintain  
4 its status as a separate, multi-jurisdictional governmental entity;  
5 and

6 **WHEREAS,** the Fire Watch Council has requested that the  
7 Interlocal Agreement be terminated and that all remaining  
8 non-monetary assets of the Fire Watch Council be transferred to The  
9 Fire Watch Project, Inc., a Florida not-for-profit entity created to  
10 carry on the mission, programs and initiatives of the Fire Watch  
11 Council on a broader geographic and programmatic scale; this request  
12 is reflected in the July 15, 2024 Minutes of the Meeting of the  
13 Northeast Florida Fire Watch Council attached hereto as **Exhibit 1** and  
14 incorporated herein by this reference; and

15 **WHEREAS,** the City Council has therefore determined that it is  
16 in the best interest of the City of Jacksonville to comply with the  
17 Northeast Florida Fire Watch Council's request to allow the important  
18 work of veteran suicide prevention to be continued by a private sector  
19 successor well suited to this mission; now therefore

20 **BE IT ORDAINED** by the Council of the City of Jacksonville:

21 **Section 1. Authorizing Termination of Interlocal**  
22 **Agreement.** The City Council hereby authorizes termination of the  
23 Interlocal Agreement Regarding Veterans' Suicide Prevention between  
24 Baker County, Clay County, Nassau County, St. Johns County and the  
25 City of Jacksonville, originally approved by Ordinance 2019-701-E and  
26 subsequently amended by Ordinance 2021-850-E. The Mayor, or her  
27 designee, and the Corporation Secretary are hereby authorized to  
28 execute any and all documents necessary to effectuate termination of  
29 the Interlocal Agreement and to otherwise take any action necessary  
30 to carry out the intent of this Ordinance.

31 **Section 2. Approving Transfer of Remaining Non-Monetary**

1 **Assets.** The City Council hereby approves and authorizes the transfer  
2 of any remaining non-monetary assets of the Northeast Florida Fire  
3 Watch Council to The Fire Watch Project, Inc.

4 **Section 3. Effective Date.** This Ordinance 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/ Mary E. Staffopoulos          

11 Office of General Counsel

12 Legislation Prepared By: Mary E. Staffopoulos

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