

1 Introduced by Council Member Diamond and amended by the Rules
2 Committee:

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4
5 **ORDINANCE 2024-620-E**

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

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

31 **WHEREAS**, the City Council approved and authorized execution of

1 the Interlocal Agreement pursuant to Ordinance 2019-701-E and said
2 agreement became effective amongst all the Counties on November 6,
3 2019; and

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

10 **WHEREAS,** in April 2024 the Watch Stander Program surpassed
11 6,500 trained volunteers of which more than 4,500 are residents of
12 the Counties; and

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

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

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

29 **WHEREAS,** since its founding, it was the intention of the Fire
30 Watch Council to incubate innovative suicide prevention programs,
31 prove their efficacy, and then transition those programs to a private

1 sector successor better structured and equipped to expand those
2 programs geographically; and

3 **WHEREAS,** the Fire Watch Council has been successful in its
4 efforts, using a cooperative, coordinated and collaborative approach
5 to suicide prevention through a number of programs and initiatives,
6 and has grown to the point that it is no longer necessary to maintain
7 its status as a separate, multi-jurisdictional governmental entity;
8 and

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

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

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

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

1 the Interlocal Agreement and to otherwise take any action necessary
2 to carry out the intent of this Ordinance.

3 **Section 2. Approving Transfer of Remaining Non-Monetary**
4 **Assets and Addressing Expenditure of Certain Remaining Monetary**
5 **Assets.** The City Council hereby approves and authorizes the transfer
6 of any remaining non-monetary assets of the Northeast Florida Fire
7 Watch Council to The Fire Watch Project, Inc. In addition, the City
8 of Jacksonville hereby directs that any monetary assets of the
9 Northeast Florida Fire Watch Council provided by the City shall be
10 expended for a public purpose in keeping with the mission of the
11 Northeast Florida Fire Watch Council and in accordance with all
12 applicable laws.

13 **Section 3. Effective Date.** This Ordinance shall become
14 effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective
15 without the Mayor's signature.

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17 Form Approved:

18
19 /s/ Mary E. Staffopoulos

20 Office of General Counsel

21 Legislation Prepared By: Mary E. Staffopoulos

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