

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-\_\_ 368

**A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA, AUTHORIZING THE TERMINATION OF THE INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN BAKER COUNTY, THE CITY OF JACKSONVILLE, CLAY COUNTY, NASSAU COUNTY, AND ST. JOHNS COUNTY REGARDING THE NORTHEAST FLORIDA FIRE WATCH COUNCIL AND TRANSFER OF ANY REMAINING NON-MONETARY ASSETS TO THE FLORIDA NOT FOR PROFIT CORPORATION, THE FIRE WATCH PROJECT, INC.**

**WHEREAS**, the Board of County Commissioners in Baker, Clay, Nassau, and St. Johns County and the City of Jacksonville (the "*Counties*") in 2019 sought to establish the Northeast Fire Watch Council (the "*Fire Watch Council*") by Interlocal Agreement for the purposes of promoting programs to reduce the number of suicides among military veterans living in Northeast Florida; and

**WHEREAS**, effective on November 6, 2019, the Counties entered into the Interlocal Agreement Regarding Veterans' Suicide Prevention, which established the Fire Watch Council, a multi-jurisdictional governmental entity (the "*Interlocal Agreement*"); and

**WHEREAS**, in May 2020, the Fire Watch Council launched several veteran suicide prevention programs including, most notably, the Watch Stander program, an upstream, early intervention network of community volunteers trained to identify risk factors of veterans in crisis and to direct those veterans to the resources they need; and

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

**WHEREAS**, in its April 2024 report of 2022 vital statistics, the Florida Department of Health reported that, for the 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year, Veteran suicides in the Counties were 25% below the 2019 level, the year of the Council's founding, and that this decline far outpaces both Veteran and non-Veteran suicide decreases throughout the state; and

**WHEREAS**, by this same Florida Department of Health data, 103 fewer veterans within the Counties have died by suicide since the Fire Watch Council created its programs when compared to 2019 levels, a number which, according to a University of Kentucky study of suicide bereavement in veterans and military families that shows 135 people are affected by every suicide, means that nearly 14,000 fewer community members in the Counties are now suffering the loss of a veteran friend or loved one; and

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

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

**WHEREAS**, the Agreement requires an instrument in writing, executed by the Counties which may be executed in identical counterparts to terminate the Interlocal Agreement and approve the transfer of any remaining non-monetary assets to the Fire Watch Project, Inc. to grow the Watch Stander program and other suicide prevention initiatives across Florida; and

**WHEREAS**, St. Johns County determines that it is in the best interest of St. Johns County to comply with the request of the Fire Watch Council to terminate the Interlocal Agreement and execute this instrument in writing to allow the Fire Watch Council to approve the transfer of any remaining non-monetary assets into the Fire Watch Project, Inc. and terminate the Interlocal Agreement.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Board of County Commissioners of St. Johns County, Florida, that:

- Section 1.** The above Recitals are incorporated by reference into the body of this Resolution and such Recitals are adopted as legislative findings of fact.
- Section 2.** The Board of County Commissioners hereby authorized to terminate the Interlocal Agreement subject to the execution of similar authorization by the Counties by similar resolution.
- Section 3.** St. Johns County approves the transfer of any residual non-monetary assets of the Fire Watch Council to The Fire Watch Project, Inc.
- Section 4.** To the extent that there are typographical and/or administrative errors and/or omissions that do not change the tone, tenor, or context of this Resolution, then this Resolution may be revised without subsequent approval of the Board of County Commissioners.

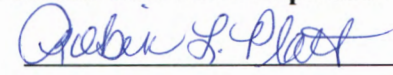
**PASSED AND ADOPTED** by the Board of County Commissioners of St. Johns County, Florida, this 3rd day of September, 2024.

**Rendition Date** SEP 03 2024

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA**

**ATTEST:** Brandon J. Patty, Clerk  
of the Circuit Court & Comptroller

By:   
Sarah S. Arnold, Chair

By:   
Deputy Clerk





Minutes of the Meeting of the Northeast Florida Fire Watch Council (NEFLFWC)  
By Zoom Teleconference Pursuant to Section 163.01(18), Florida Statutes

July 15, 2024 - 5:30 P.M.

Council Member Attendance			
X	Michael Fleming - Chair		Lori Mason
X	Buck Burney - Vice Chair	X	Mike Griffis
	Paul Lore		

Quorum Present: Yes

Nick Howland, Executive Director, The Fire Watch Project, Inc.  
Ian P. Keane, Program Administrator, (as assigned), NEFLFWC  
Derek Collins, Executive Director (as assigned), NEFLFWC

- I. Call to Order - Mr. Fleming called the meeting of the Northeast Florida Fire Watch Council (the "Council") to order at 5:30 pm.
- II. Public Comment - None
- III. Remarks from the Chair
  1. General Fleming is encouraged by 2022 Data
  2. In the meeting, there will be discussions on:
    - a. Crisis Intercept Mapping
    - b. Sunsetting the Fire Watch Council
  3. We are looking to launch the Faith Leader program across the U.S.
    - a. Currently 50-70 attendees at meetings
    - b. Call with VA Chaplain in November to expand nationwide
    - c. The Faith Leader Resource Page needs to grow to become less focused solely on NEFL and grow to be a nationwide tool.
- IV. 2024 Planning, including a potential vote to sunset the Northeast Florida Fire Watch Council and a subsequent review of draft sunsetting resolution for adoption by each of the five counties. Mr. Collins stated that there were two resolutions that



require a vote. Mr. Howland provided the history of the foundation of the Fire Watch Council through an interlocal agreement between the five Northeast Florida counties (Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau, and St. Johns) with a focus on developing veteran suicide prevention programming across the region. The initial agreement was over eight years having the hope that the efforts would incubate programs to allow organizations to run with it. It has previously been discussed that if we saw three consecutive years of a 25% reduction in veteran suicides within the five counties compared to 2019 baseline numbers, we would consider this successful. 2022 data shows that we achieved that goal. The question we have discussed is if we feel that we have been successful, can we provide a resolution to the five counties three years earlier than anticipated to shift all operations to the 501.c.3, the Fire Watch Project? A resolution has been drafted and received and forwarded to the Board members.

1. Mr. Collins presented the two motions to vote on.
  - a. Sunset the Fire Watch Council and shift operations to the Fire Watch Project, Inc. 501.c.3
  - b. Give the FWC chair authority to complete a resolution with the St. Johns County general council and introduce into the legislative cycle of all five counties to sunset the council and transfer to the not for profit Fire Watch Project, Inc. This means terminating the interlocal agreement three years early.

Mr. Collins read the resolution with no questions from the board members. It was highlighted that all non-monetary assets will be transferred to the Fire Watch Project, Inc. from the Fire Watch council such as intellectual property, logos, branding, “Watch Stander Program”, assets, etc. Any remaining monetary assets will be used for a celebration. Mr. Burney put forward a motion to sunset the Fire Watch Council, Mr. Griffis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Collins read the resolution to end the interlocal agreement. Mr. Griffis made the motion to give Mr. Fleming the authority to complete a resolution with the St. Johns County general council and introduce into the legislative cycle of all five counties to sunset the council and transfer to the not-for-profit Fire Watch Project, Inc. Mr. Burney seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

V. September 19<sup>th</sup> Event

Mr. Collins shared we are looking to do a September 19 Event on the deck of the USS Orleck to celebrate the accomplishments. We do have an event with the VA on the 19<sup>th</sup>. It was discussed doing our final FWC board meeting on the Orleck. Mr. Fleming suggested inviting family members to celebrate the accomplishments. He suggested planning and bring back to the board so we can do the County notifications and possibly get media coverage. Mr. Fleming mentioned shifting the date to September 26<sup>th</sup> which was agreeable to all members.



- VI. Review and Approve Minutes from Last Meeting (May 20, 2024). Mr. Griffis made the motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Burney seconded. Carried unanimously.
- VII. Executive Director's Report  
Mr. Collins verbally presented the Executive Director's report attached to these minutes.
1. Mr. Collins stated that there are currently 6,944 Watch Standers and 123 Veteran Safe Places. Of our seven priorities, we are looking to hit 8,000 before the end of the end of Q4. Our Veteran Safe Place goal is 150
  2. Did the St. Johns Crisis intercept map, and a Zoom call to complete the map will be on July 18, 2024 to complete that.
  3. Completed a Faith leader meeting on May 21st and it will be transferred to the Fire Watch Project, Inc.
  4. The target for the Clay County Veteran Safe Place will be Keystone Heights to be completed by the end of the year.
  5. In August, the Develop a structure to include county VSO partners post transfer to The Fire Watch Project, Inc.
  6. Final payments from Baker and Duval have been received
  7. Florida Women's Veterans need to submit receipts from a micro-grant
- VIII. Preliminary Q2 Watch Stander Survey Results  
Mr. Keane reported on the results of the 2024 Q2 Watch Stander Survey Results incorporating April-July 2024). Highlights include: 304 respondents, the most so far after 198 completing Q1's survey. 51% of responding Watch Standers are veterans, 49% of survey respondents are civilian. 86% of respondents encountered a veteran in the past three months with the largest location being at work (26%). 58% of respondents are new Watch Standers, having been a Watch Stander less than a year and the map shows that Watch Standers are primarily located in the three largest at-risk areas in Florida. NLP Logix with their 95% confidence estimates the number of veterans receiving a referral by a Watch Stander during Q2 is between 2,135 and 2,995.
- IX. All Other Business  
No new Business.
- X. Public Comment  
No public in attendance, so no public comment
- XI. Mr. Collins adjourned The Council meeting at 6:09 pm.



## Northeast Florida Fire Watch Council – Executive Director Report

To: Northeast Florida Fire Watch Council (the “Council”)

From: Derek Collins

Date: 15 July 2024

Program Update. Progress on my 2024 top priorities.

1. Work with The Fire Watch Project, Inc. to drive the Watch Stander network.
  - FWP goal is 8,000 Watch Standers by end of Q4 2024, with 50% or more of this growth focused on veteran suicide hotspot areas identified by existing data.
  - PROGRESS: 6944 current Watch Standers
2. Work with The Fire Watch Project, Inc. to drive the Veteran Safe Place network.
  - FWP goal is 150 Veteran Safe Places by end of Q4 2024, with 50% or more of this growth focused on veteran suicide hotspot areas identified by existing data.
  - PROGRESS: 122
3. Develop a Crisis Intercept Map in 1 county, subject to availability of SAMHSA.
  - SAMHSA has coordinated a date of April 25-26.
  - St Johns County will be the target.
  - Two-day site visit completed.
  - Follow up will be done via MS Team meeting on July 19th.
4. Host one Faith Leaders Webinars and transfer to The Fire Watch Project, Inc.
  - Completed May 21st
5. Complete Veteran Safe Community for one city in NE Florida.
  - Target Community will be Keystone Heights, FL in Clay County
  - Objective planning will begin in May with area champion, Buck Burney.
  - In Progress
6. Develop a structure to include county VSO partners post transfer to The Fire Watch Project, Inc.
  - In Progress



7. Transition remaining responsibilities to The Fire Watch Project, Inc by end of Q4 2024
  - Awaiting final payment for City of Jacksonville. Completed.
  - Awaiting final payment from Baker County. Complete
  - Awaiting final invoice from NEFL Women Veterans for micro grant. In Process
  - Discussion with Council pending.