

RESOLUTION TO HONOR THE MEMORY OF THE LATE HONORABLE
YVONNE JEFFRIES JOHNSON, FORMER COUNCILPERSON, MAYOR AND MAYOR
PRO-TEMPORE

WHEREAS, On December 4, 2024 the City of Greensboro and the state of North Carolina lost a beloved community leader and activist with the passing of the Honorable Mayor Pro-Tempore Yvonne Jeffries Johnson, former Councilperson, Mayor, and Mayor Pro-Tempore;

WHEREAS, native to Greensboro, Mayor Pro-Tem Johnson, lovingly known as Yvonne to so many, was born on October 26, 1942 in the only hospital that served the black community;

WHEREAS, a very educated person, Yvonne graduated from James B. Dudley High School; from Bennett College, a historically black women's college, as a Bennett Belle; from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University with a Master's of Science, Guidance and Counseling degree; enrolled in Howard University and received a Graduate Fellowship; and received an honorary Doctorate of Human Letters degree from her beloved alma mater Bennett College which is bestowed upon those that distinguished themselves through humanitarian and philanthropic contributions to society;

WHEREAS, she experienced segregation from a young age which ultimately shaped her future path into politics and her involvement as a civil rights activist; she participated in the famous Sit-Ins, being incarcerated for three days following a demonstration; walked in the 1963 March on Washington alongside Martin Luther King Jr.; and stood in attendance at the "I have a Dream" speech;

WHEREAS, after her marriage to Walter Johnson, she moved to New York with her husband; and was employed as a Social Worker in Orange County;

WHEREAS, the Johnsons returned to Greensboro to raise and lead all four children into public service; with three children in the educational field and one in government;

WHEREAS, following her own participation as a youngster, Yvonne became a troop leader for the Girl Scouts of America;

WHEREAS, Yvonne dedicated approximately 30 years to the Greensboro City Council, serving as a Council Member, Mayor, and Mayor Pro-Tempore, and making history as the City's first African American Mayor

WHEREAS, she co-founded Barjo, Incorporated with her husband and served as its President and Chief Executive Officer; founded The Greensboro Drifters, Incorporated; One Step Further, where she served as a workshop facilitator, focusing on topics of diversity and racism, and was promoted to Executive Director, a position she held for nearly 40 years; and was a founding participant of the Summit House;

WHEREAS, making a name for herself among the community, Yvonne served on or participated in multiple boards and commissions such as the Commission on the Status of Women; The Black

Child Development Institute; Goodwill Industries; the Greensboro Education and Development Council; The North Carolina Community Sentencing Association; The Greensboro Arts Council; The Greensboro Housing Coalition; The Sherri Denise Jackson Foundation; chaired the Greensboro City Council General Government Committee; was a member of the Greensboro City Council Public Safety Committee; served as liaison for Hope VI (Willow Oaks); the Greensboro Housing Development Partnership; the South Elm/Lee Street Development Project; the Municipal Planning Organization/Transportation Advisory Committee (MPO/TAC); and Guilford County Workforce Development;

WHEREAS, Yvonne served as the City of Greensboro representative to the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM); and was recognized in memoriam of the 2024 4th Quarter Southern City NCLM Magazine which honors local government elected and appointed officials who have passed away, as a way of celebration to her legacy and the impact on local governance and civic life;

WHEREAS, additionally, Yvonne served on the Piedmont Triad Regional Council; the Malachi House Executive Board; as the first President and the President Emeritus of the Women's Resource Center Board; the Bennett College Board of Trustees; the Justice Fellowship Task Force; the Delancy Street Task Force (a rehabilitation program); facilitated Episcopal Diocese Racism Workshops; served on the United Way of Greensboro Board of Directors; the Triad Sickle-Cell Anemia Foundation; the Youth Services Bureau; the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA); the Greensboro Cerebral Palsy School; the Greensboro Child Advocacy Board; Sports Dreams; Foster Friends; was a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority; a Tribal member of the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi nation; served as the youngest national President, National Drifters, Incorporated; and was the first African American to join the Junior League;

WHEREAS, during her tenure in local government, Yvonne's passion spurred her support of key issues that included housing, transportation, and workforce development;

WHEREAS, she launched initiatives to provide workforce skills to young people in the community; worked with people in need, supporting a food pantry that served over 4,000 people weekly; launched an initiative to reintegrate previously incarcerated people back into the community; supported the establishment of the Civil Right Museum in the Greensboro's Woolworth's Five and Dime, site of the Greensboro Sit-In's; the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, that investigated the 1979 Greensboro Massacre events; initiated commemorating the heroism of the Black Patriots of the American Revolution by having their names monumented on a city transit bus; supported the closing of the White Street Landfill; the renovation of the Morning Side Homes into Willow Oaks; and initiated a historical marker being placed in LaBauer Park to recognize the first site of the YWCA in Greensboro which became the first organization to practice integration in the 1950's;

WHEREAS, being recognized as a phenomenal leader and servant, Yvonne received numerous awards, honors and recognitions such as the Girl Scouts of America African American Wing Scout, Women of Distinction Award; Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Curved Bar Award; Tau Omega Chapter Citizen of the Year Award; the Greensboro Commission on the Status of Women

Achievement Award; Sigma Image Award; James Benson Dudley High School Education and Sports Hall of Fame Award; Bennett College Women of Substance Award; Bennett College National Alumnae Achievement Award; Gandhi, King Justice and the Rosetta C. Baldwin Foundation Strength, Power, and Bravery Award; Gandhi, King, Ikeda Award for Peace from Morehouse University; the Greensboro Economic Development Alliance (GEDA) Stanley Frank Lifetime Achievement Award; and the Black Business Inc. Power 100 Award;

WHEREAS, as the epitome of excellence, Yvonne was also honored as the African American Atelier, African American Woman of Distinction; recognized with the International Civil Rights Center and Museum Lifetime Community Service Award; and received the highest and most distinguished honor by Governor Roy Cooper with the Order of the Long Leaf Pine Award;

WHEREAS, on December 13, 2024, during the celebration of life for Yvonne, Mayor Nancy Vaughan proclaimed December 4th as a special recognition day for Mayor Pro-Tem Yvonne Johnson in remembrance of her being sworn in as the City of Greensboro's first African American Mayor on December 4, 2007 and her death date on December 4, 2024; and to memorialize the lifelong accomplishments of the woman that served with grace and dignity, that had a balance of common sense thinking and compassion for others, and served as a trailblazer in the City of Greensboro;

WHEREAS, the outpouring of respect paid to Yvonne and her family included dignitaries such as former Governor Roy Cooper, Congresswoman Alma Adams, Representative Gladys Robinson, Representative Kathy Manning, Representative Amos Quick, Mayor Nancy Vaughan, former Mayor Robbie Perkins, and former North Carolina State Treasurer Dale Folwell;

WHEREAS, to pay homage city-wide, the City of Greensboro flags were lowered to half-staff at all city facilities; and the Greene Street parking deck illuminated purple lighting, Yvonne's favorite color;

WHEREAS, the Greensboro Transit Agency wrapped a City bus with Yvonne's photo to honor her with a Black History Spotlight; as an advocate for everyone to have access to opportunities and specifically the advancement of transportation, Former Mayor/Mayor Pro Tem/Councilmember Yvonne J Johnson was recognized as an African American hero that worked through challenging circumstances and created change for the community;

WHEREAS, Yvonne was attributed as being a dedicated public servant who led with courage, passion and a sense of justice; as the pillar of the community whose life embodied the very essence of service earning the title as the Mother of Greensboro; a beacon of hope with her passion and unwavering commitment to social justice, equity and uplifting the community; and always serving as a role model as one of the City's staunchest champions working with countless organizations;

WHEREAS, her legacy leaves all in the City of Greensboro remembering her words of wisdom to "listen to your heart"; to "always do the right thing"; and Yvonne's mantra that "service is the rent you pay for your time on earth"; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF GREENSBORO:

1. That the City Council wishes to express its sense of loss and offer its condolences, sincere appreciation, and deepest gratitude to the family of the Honorable Yvonne Jeffries Johnson. Her legacy will be remembered by the outstanding contributions she made and carried in the hearts of all those that were hugged, loved, and mentored by her.
2. A copy of this resolution shall be presented to the family of the late Honorable Yvonne Jeffries Johnson, in recognition of her dedication and the countless hours she devoted to the City of Greensboro, her community, and the State of North Carolina, as a token of the City of Greensboro's deep appreciation.