

A Proclamation

WHEREAS, Native Americans have played a vital role in the life of our State, City, and Country, with their many contributions enhancing the freedom, prosperity, and greatness of South Carolina; and

WHEREAS, the Wassamasaw Tribe of Varnertown Indians, a state-recognized sovereign nation based in Berkeley County, has preserved the history, culture, and unique heritage of South Carolina's Native American people. The tribe continues to play an essential role in maintaining their ancestral traditions and enriching the cultural landscape of our town; and

WHEREAS, the Wassamasaw Tribe, whose ancestors include Edisto, Etiwan, Catawba, and Cherokee peoples, established a settlement community near Carnes Crossroads and the Wassamassaw Swamp in the late 1700s and have resided there ever since, contributing significantly to the history and development of Berkeley County; and

WHEREAS, historic Native American Indian missions and schools, including the Pine View Indian School, Barrows Mission, St. Barnabas Mission, Groomsville School, and Varner Indian School, were established to serve Native communities, playing a crucial role in educating and supporting Native peoples in the region; and

WHEREAS, the Wassamasaw Tribe was historically known as the Summerville Indians and formally acknowledged as such by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1977, is among the Native American communities whose descendants still reside in Berkeley County and across South Carolina today, preserving their legacy and traditions; and

WHEREAS, the Wassamasaw Tribe has a longstanding engagement with Berkeley County and the Town of Moncks Corner, actively participating in discussions on land and cultural preservation, and community development to ensure their needs and perspectives are incorporated into local governance; and

WHEREAS, the Wassamasaw Tribe, has contributed significantly to the broader society. Notable individuals from the Varnertown Indian community include Geneva Varner Clark, who boldly proclaimed her Native heritage during the Great Depression and is the only known lowcountry Indian documented in the Library of Congress; Henry Clark, who was the first Native American to register a business in South Carolina; and William and Mary Varner, who generously donated land for schools, businesses, and a church. Their legacy is now commemorated by a state historic marker on that same land, recognizing the contributions of the Varnertown Indian people; and

WHEREAS, Wassamasaw Tribe members have served with valor and distinction in wartime, and their artistic, entrepreneurial, and cultural contributions have greatly enriched the heritage of Moncks Corner and the state as a whole; as evidenced in the cultural classes offered monthly along with the annual cultural festival and Powwow held by the tribe each October, and

WHEREAS, the South Carolina General Assembly has recognized November as National Native American Heritage Month in South Carolina.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Thomas Hamilton, Mayor of the Town of Moncks Corner, South Carolina, along with my fellow members of Moncks Corner Town Council, do hereby proclaim November 2024 as **South Carolina Native American Heritage Month** in the Town of Moncks Corner, and urge all citizens to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that honor the rich heritage and lasting contributions of Native American communities in our state.

Signed this 19th Day of November, 2024.

Thomas J. Hamilton, Jr., Mayor