

1 Introduced by Council Members Carlucci, Lahnen and Johnson and  
2 Co-Sponsored by Council Members Salem, Amaro, Miller, Freeman,  
3 Howland and Clark-Murray:

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5  
6 **RESOLUTION 2024-449-A**

7 A RESOLUTION HONORING AND COMMENDING TOM WILLS  
8 ON HIS NEARLY 50 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE  
9 JACKSONVILLE COMMUNITY AT WJXT CHANNEL 4,  
10 INCLUDING AS THE ANCHOR OF THE EVENING NEWS FOR  
11 MORE THAN 40 YEARS; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

12  
13 **WHEREAS,** Tom Wills, a native of Pittsburgh, earned his  
14 journalism degree from American University and began his journalism  
15 career as a reporter at WTOP radio and WTOP-TV in Washington D.C.;  
16 and

17 **WHEREAS,** during his 11-year tenure in Washington, Mr. Wills  
18 covered some of the most important news events of the second half of  
19 the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the riots following the assassination of  
20 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the funeral of Robert F. Kennedy, the  
21 U.S. Supreme Court's hearings on the "Pentagon Papers", the Watergate  
22 break-in, and President Richard Nixon's resignation from office; and

23 **WHEREAS,** in 1975, Tom Wills moved to Jacksonville to take a  
24 position with WJXT Channel 4 as co-anchor of the evening news; in  
25 1981, he was joined at the anchor desk by Deborah Gianoulis and  
26 sportscaster Sam Kouvaris and together with legendary meteorologist  
27 George Winterling who had already been at the station since 1962, the  
28 quartet became the longest-tenured news broadcasting team in  
29 Jacksonville history with 22 years together until the retirement of  
30 Ms. Gianoulis in 2003. Mr. Wills then teamed with Mary Baer as his  
31 co-anchor and meteorologist John Gaughan for another 20 years until

1 their retirements in 2023; and

2       **WHEREAS**, as a local station not affiliated with a national  
3 network, Channel 4 has always devoted a tremendous amount of its  
4 resources and airtime to news programming throughout the day, and  
5 aggressive investigative journalism has been a station tradition from  
6 its founding. Throughout his five decades at the anchor desk, Tom  
7 Wills has reported, interpreted, and provided context for every  
8 important story in Jacksonville and Northeast Florida over the last  
9 half-century, from natural and man-made disasters to politics, crime,  
10 and education, and from interesting and unusual events to heartwarming  
11 human-interest stories and inspiring good news; and

12       **WHEREAS**, in his five decades at Channel 4, Mr. Wills has  
13 developed a deep and enduring connection with his viewers and has  
14 been relied upon as a trusted and reliable provider of the important  
15 news of the day for several generations of Northeast Florida and  
16 Southeast Georgia residents; and

17       **WHEREAS**, it has recently been announced that Tom Wills will be  
18 retiring from WJXT after an illustrious career that has made him a  
19 beloved institution in Jacksonville; now therefore

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

21       **Section 1.**       The City Council hereby honors and commends WJXT  
22 Channel 4 news anchor Tom Wills for his nearly five decades of service  
23 to the Jacksonville community on the occasion of his retirement and  
24 extends its very best wishes for health and happiness in the years  
25 to come. His professionalism, calm demeanor, dedication to fair and  
26 honest reporting, and love for the Northeast Florida community have  
27 made him a legendary figure in journalism in our area and his  
28 reassuring presence on the air every evening will be greatly missed  
29 and gratefully remembered.

30       **Section 2.       Effective Date.**   This Resolution shall become  
31 effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective

1 without the Mayor's signature.

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3 Form Approved:

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5           /s/ Mary E. Staffopoulos          

6 Office of General Counsel

7 Legislation Prepared By: Jeff Clements, City Council Research

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