

1 Introduced by Council Member Newby and Co-Sponsored by Council Members  
2 Gaffney, Ferraro, Becton, Dennis, Diamond, Cumber, Carlucci, Boylan,  
3 Carrico, Howland, Pittman, White, DeFoor, Freeman, Priestly Jackson,  
4 Salem, Bowman, and Morgan & amended on the Floor of Council:  
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7 **RESOLUTION 2022-375-A**

8 A RESOLUTION HONORING AND COMMENDING TONY  
9 VECCHIO ON HIS OUTSTANDING CAREER AS A ZOO  
10 DIRECTOR, INCLUDING THE LAST 12 YEARS AS  
11 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE JACKSONVILLE ZOO AND  
12 GARDENS; REQUESTING EMERGENCY PASSAGE UPON  
13 INTRODUCTION; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.  
14

15 **WHEREAS**, Tony Vecchio completed a bachelor's degree in  
16 environmental resource management/wildlife conservation at Penn State  
17 University and earned his master's degree in zoology from the  
18 University of South Carolina; and

19 **WHEREAS**, Mr. Vecchio began his zoo career as Curator of Mammals  
20 at Zoo Atlanta, followed by the directorship of the Roger Williams  
21 Zoo Park in Providence, Rhode Island for ten years and the Oregon Zoo  
22 in Portland for eleven and a half years; and

23 **WHEREAS**, Tony Vecchio came to Jacksonville in July of 2009 to  
24 become the Director of the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens and has led  
25 the zoo through a series of expansions and renovations that have made  
26 it one of the premier zoos in the United States (named one of the Top  
27 25 Zoos in the U.S. by TripAdvisor) and a primary tourism attraction  
28 in Jacksonville, attracting over 1 million visitors a year in the  
29 pre-COVID era; and

30 **WHEREAS**, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens was recognized 2 times

1 by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) during Mr. Vecchio's  
2 tenure for the quality of its new exhibits - the Land of the Tiger  
3 earned the Significant Achievement in Exhibitory award in 2015 and the  
4 African Forest earned an Exhibit Award for Innovation in 2020. During  
5 his tenure, the zoo also constructed the new Manatee Critical Care  
6 Center and the Gardens of Trout River Plaza and Asian Bamboo Garden,  
7 both of which were winners of an Award of Excellence from the Florida  
8 Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association; and

9 **WHEREAS**, during Tony Vecchio's tenure the Jacksonville Zoo has  
10 also been well known for its long-standing commitment to wildlife  
11 conservation efforts around the world, for which it has received  
12 recognition from various organizations for achievements in  
13 conservation efforts including the Lowland Tapir Initiative in  
14 Brazil, the Okapi Conservation Project and the Gorilla Rehabilitation  
15 and Conservation Education Center (GRACE) in the Democratic Republic  
16 of Congo, and the AZA Award for Outstanding Commitment to Conservation  
17 of the Puerto Rican Crested Toad Species Survival Plan, among many  
18 others; and

19 **WHEREAS**, in the last several years Mr. Vecchio led the planning  
20 and launch of the recently announced Rezoovenation capital campaign  
21 which, in conjunction with the City of Jacksonville, plans to raise  
22 \$50 million to continue the zoo's expansion and revitalization with  
23 the construction of a new main entrance, a signature Manatee River  
24 exhibit, a new lion exhibit and new education facilities; and

25 **WHEREAS**, Tony Vecchio has recently announced his retirement from  
26 the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens after a long and successful career  
27 as a zoo director, and the City Council wishes to recognize his  
28 outstanding achievements and to thank him especially for his  
29 invaluable leadership of one of our city's most beloved institutions;  
30 now therefore

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

