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Introduced by Council Member Newby and Co-Sponsored by Council Members Gaffney, Ferraro, Becton, Dennis, Diamond, Cumber, Carlucci, Boylan, Carrico, Howland, Pittman, White, DeFoor, Freeman, Priestly Jackson, Salem, Bowman, and Morgan & amended on the Floor of Council:

RESOLUTION 2022-375-A

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens was recognized 2 times

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

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

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

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

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

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Legislation Prepared By: Jeff Clements, City Council Research

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Form Approved:

The City Council hereby honors and commends Tony Section 1. Vecchio for his decades of service to zoos, to the cause of animal and habitat conservation, and to education of the public about the importance of understanding and protecting the creatures with whom we share the world. His stewardship of the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens has substantially advanced the reputation of the city's zoo as a top-quality educational, recreational and tourism attraction and made it one of our community's greatest assets. The City extends its grateful thanks for all his work and its best wishes for many years of health and happiness.

Section 2. Requesting emergency passage upon introduction Pursuant to Council Rule 4.901. Emergency passage upon introduction of this Resolution is requested in order to recognize the honoree in a timely manner.

Section 3. Effective Date. This Resolution shall become effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective without the Mayor's signature.