

1 Introduced by Council Members Carlucci, Lahnen and Johnson:
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4 **RESOLUTION 2024-449**

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

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

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

21 **WHEREAS**, in 1975, Tom Wills moved to Jacksonville to take a
22 position with WJXT Channel 4 as co-anchor of the evening news; in
23 1981, he was joined at the anchor desk by Deborah Gianoulis and
24 sportscaster Sam Kouvaris and together with legendary meteorologist
25 George Winterling who had already been at the station since 1962, the
26 quartet became the longest-tenured news broadcasting team in
27 Jacksonville history with 22 years together until the retirement of
28 Ms. Gianoulis in 2003. Mr. Wills then teamed with Mary Baer as his
29 co-anchor and meteorologist John Gaughan for another 20 years until
30 their retirements in 2023; and

31 **WHEREAS**, as a local station not affiliated with a national

1 network, Channel 4 has always devoted a tremendous amount of its
2 resources and airtime to news programming throughout the day, and
3 aggressive investigative journalism has been a station tradition from
4 its founding. Throughout his five decades at the anchor desk, Tom
5 Wills has reported, interpreted, and provided context for every
6 important story in Jacksonville and Northeast Florida over the last
7 half-century, from natural and man-made disasters to politics, crime,
8 and education, and from interesting and unusual events to heartwarming
9 human-interest stories and inspiring good news; and

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

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

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

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

28 **Section 2. Effective Date.** This Resolution shall become
29 effective upon signature by the Mayor or upon becoming effective
30 without the Mayor's signature.

1 Form Approved:

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3 /s/ Mary E. Staffopoulos

4 Office of General Counsel

5 Legislation Prepared By: Jeff Clements, City Council Research

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