

1 Introduced by Council Member Newby:
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4 **RESOLUTION 2022-375**

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

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

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

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

27 **WHEREAS**, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens was recognized 2 times
28 by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) during Mr. Vecchio's
29 tenure for the quality of its new exhibits - the Land of the Tiger
30 earned the Significant Achievement in Exhibitory award in 2015 and the
31 African Forest earned an Exhibit Award for Innovation in 2020. During

1 his tenure, the zoo also constructed the new Manatee Critical Care
2 Center and the Gardens of Trout River Plaza and Asian Bamboo Garden,
3 both of which were winners of an Award of Excellence from the Florida
4 Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association; and

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

15 **WHEREAS**, in the last several years Mr. Vecchio led the planning
16 and launch of the recently announced Rezoovenation capital campaign
17 which, in conjunction with the City of Jacksonville, plans to raise
18 \$50 million to continue the zoo's expansion and revitalization with
19 the construction of a new main entrance, a signature Manatee River
20 exhibit, a new lion exhibit and new education facilities; and

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

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

28 **Section 1.** The City Council hereby honors and commends Tony
29 Vecchio for his decades of service to zoos, to the cause of animal
30 and habitat conservation, and to education of the public about the
31 importance of understanding and protecting the creatures with whom

1 we share the world. His stewardship of the Jacksonville Zoo and
2 Gardens has substantially advanced the reputation of the city's zoo
3 as a top-quality educational, recreational and tourism attraction and
4 made it one of our community's greatest assets. The City extends its
5 grateful thanks for all his work and its best wishes for many years
6 of health and happiness.

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

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

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15 Form Approved:

16
17 _____ /s/ Mary E. Staffopoulos _____

18 Office of General Counsel

19 Legislation Prepared By: Jeff Clements, City Council Research

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