Hi Neighbors,

A new school year has started and neighborhoods are buzzing with activities. The fall is one of my favorite times as it evokes feelings of new beginnings. Speaking of new beginnings, we are close to starting the 34th Street and Central Town Center Master Plan and we need your help. Please [click here](#) to be included in the invitation for the project kickoff meeting. The purpose of this project is to encourage investment in the area and create a place that has an identity, is more walkable, and has multiple transportation options. We are also excited to announce the beginning of construction of the Booker Creek pickleball and basketball court and can’t wait to see those young and old enjoying this new amenity when complete. Also, Publix is back open in Disston Plaza, Historic Kenwood just got a new toddler playground, and an alley near 39th Ave. that was was attracting crime has been permanently closed. Lots of exciting developments in District 8! Keep reading to learn more about general city business and issues. - Amy

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**Affordable Housing in St. Petersburg**

The need for affordable housing in St. Petersburg has steadily increased in recent years as new development and the city’s population continue to grow. In fact, in the past year alone, single-family home prices have gone up 7.2% in the Tampa Bay area. This dramatic rise in prices has left many hard working families without a home or keeps them living in constant threat of becoming homeless. Among people in St. Petersburg that are currently housed, 40% are cost burdened, meaning that they spend more than 30% of their income on housing. While there is no single solution to this growing problem, City Council has been working tirelessly on addressing these important issues and recently approved a 12 month work plan to modify regulations and create and fund programs that help residents find and keep affordable housing. The FY2019 Capital Improvement Budget dedicates 3% to local housing programs. In District 8, we have a prime example of quality, affordable, housing in Burlington Place. A second building, Burlington Post, located right next door, opened last month to 55+ residents. Although these are great local options for affordable housing, they have not solved the entire problem, as is evidenced by the wait list to get
into the buildings that is hundreds of people long. In order to encourage development of similar buildings, the City plans to incentivize builders of affordable housing by reducing burdensome regulations such as required parking spaces. Additionally, Council is exploring options to create a dedicated funding source for affordable housing, allowing the City to help developers of affordable housing fund their projects. For a more detailed look at what Council has been doing to address this crisis, come to the next Housing, Land, Use, and Transportation Committee meetings, or click here to read reports from previous meetings.

Face of District 8: Meet Jennifer!

Disston Heights is the largest neighborhood in St. Petersburg with 8,200+ homes and 22,000+ residents. Jennifer Joern is currently their president. Jennifer graduated from Pinellas County Citizen University in 2015 and is a CONA (Council of Neighborhood Associations) Leadership Class of 2016 graduate. She currently serves as CONA’s Secretary. Jennifer is actively involved with her local alumni chapter, the Rutgers Club of Tampa Bay (Go Scarlet Knights!), and has served as its Vice President for the past two years. She is also a member of 100 Women Who Care Pinellas County which raises money for local non-profit and 501(c)3 organizations. Jennifer loves living in Disston Heights as she is centrally located to so many things: 10 minutes to downtown, 10 minutes to the beaches, and 10 minutes to the Interstate. By day, she is the Director of Channel Services for Rosetta Technologies Corporation and has been in information technology sales for the past 20+ years. When not fighting traffic with her daily commute into Tampa, you can find her at the St. Petersburg Museum of History or attending a Preserve the 'Burg event as she is very interested in learning more about her house which was built in 1925. Please visit http://www.disstonheights.org for information about DHCA and all upcoming events.

Water Rates

Last month, City Council voted to increase water rates that will take effect this fall. Council is aware of burden this will add to many households, but the increase is necessary in order to repair the City’s infrastructure, prevent future system failures, and ensure fiscal responsibility. A typical customer utility bill will increase by $6.91 or $10.78 for reclaimed water customers. For more information, click here.

FY 2019 City Budget

The 2019 Fiscal Year Budget will soon be approved by City Council. Your last chance to give public comment will be at the Thursday, September 13th Council meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall. For details on the FY2019 budget, click here.
September in Florida means we’re right in the middle of hurricane season and it’s time to prepare if you have not already. Make sure to sign up for Alert St. Pete to get notifications during emergency situations including mandatory evacuations and flooding events. Make sure you Know Your Zone and have a plan for relocating if need be. Also, make preparations for your family’s needs for at least three days. Remember, the first 72 hours is up to you. For more information, click here.