



MEMORANDUM

Office of City Council

TO: Mayor Rick Kriseman
FROM: Council Member Brandi Gabbard
SUBJECT: 2022 Budget Priorities
DATE: January 21, 2021

Mayor Kriseman,

As a follow up to the January 21st Committee of the Whole Meeting where Council members presented their individual budget priorities for FY2022, I am forwarding the following memo. Please consider this to be my official notice of personal budget priorities. This list was derived through meetings with neighborhood associations, union leadership, city partners, stakeholders, and individual residents. As always, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss all matters further in the coming months as the budget draft is being developed. If there are questions, please feel free to have your budget team reach out to set up one on one meetings to review the following items in more detail.

District 2 Specific Requests

District 2 is a vibrant and unique part of our city and prides itself on being the Gateway for those who are entering our city from surrounding areas. Being a major employment and activity center brings a lot of private investment into the area however at times it seems that revitalization of the district has been slow to meet the complete needs of residents who call District 2 home. For that reason, I am requesting that a Gateway District Plan be developed much like others we have seen be so successful in areas such as the Skyway Marina District. A plan focusing on the revitalization of 4th St N and Dr MLK Jr St N starting at 62nd Ave N and extending north to I275 would attract much needed services, private investment, increase property values, remove blight, and create more sustainable and resilient development for the business community and residents that surround these major corridors. The completion of the Forward Pinellas Gateway Master Plan and the changes implemented in the Coastal High Hazard area both have significant impacts on District 2. Therefore, it is my belief that the time is now to shine a brighter light on the opportunities that exist in this important part of our city.

In addition, the residents of District 2 have increased concerns about the infrastructure that is currently in place to protect them during weather events. The impacts of Tropical Storm Eta was a wakeup call for us as a city. Residents are aware that we are currently evaluating the systems in place and are confident we will handle any issues found, however, they are concerned about the future. It is their request that if there are upgrades that need to be addressed as it relates to the pumping system, public seawalls, backflow prevention or any other findings that these improvements become a top priority. The long-term sustainability and resiliency of the district depends on it!

This year more than ever it is important that I recognize our first responders who give of themselves every day to protect our city. The men and women of the St. Petersburg Police Department and St. Petersburg Fire and Rescue have worked tirelessly over the last year and risen to the challenges that have come from working through a pandemic. Oftentimes, they have encountered situations that have not only compromised their own health but that of their loved ones. There is no amount of money that could ever truly thank them for what they do every day, but I do believe there are tangible ways that we can show them how much we value them.

St Petersburg Police Department

As we embark on the implementation phases of the CALL program, I first of all believe it will be important that we properly fund the program in the coming years and follow through with all promises made when the program was first announced in the summer of 2020. There are growing concerns that the future need to send police officers on calls with the liaisons will not meet the goal of decreasing the workload on the force. It is my opinion that we need to closely monitor the progress of the program, along with the growth of our city and plan accordingly. We must look to the future and work toward a goal of a sworn strength of 600 officers. While this is a lofty goal, it is attainable only if we are willing to plan now to achieve this.

In addition, it has come to my attention that the firearms our officers are currently equipped with have surpassed their shelf life and are going on 9 years old. Because our officers train extensively, their firearms do not have the life expectancy of other departments and the potential for malfunction is greater over time. This is a safety issue for both law enforcement officers and residents. I ask that we evaluate the need and cost and plan for replacement over the next year.

St Petersburg Fire and Rescue

Many of Council's prior requests are still outstanding as it pertains to Station 2 and Engine 1, however, currently Station 2 is of the utmost priority. Council along with your administration has made some strides over the last year to come closer to achieving the reality of a permanent station but we have so far to go. I ask that we carry forward with this mission in our budget for 2022. Also, we need to protect the set aside monies for Engine 8, 4, and 12 replacements and reinstate Truck 9 and fund the 13 personnel that it requires.

St Petersburg Employee Benefits

It is my understanding that your administration has made the decision to incorporate into future union contracts the ability for employees to use their accrued personal leave when they need care for their sick dependents. This is a positive step forward to providing additional benefits to our employees. I applauded this decision and look forward to this becoming a benefit that all city employees can rely on in the future.

In addition, it is my hope that we can develop and implement an Employee Assisted Housing program that will support and incentivize city employees to become homeowners in our city. Many of our employees have verbally expressed interest in the ability to live in St. Petersburg but often lack the means to make that a reality. I believe that providing this benefit and opportunity will ultimately help our employees achieve a better quality of life for themselves, their families and allow them the opportunity to become an integral part of our community in their private lives.

Chamber of Commerce /Greenhouse

While it is important to continue to fund our overall commitment to the Greenhouse, the efforts extended by our staff and the Chamber in 2020 due to COVID-19 has shown now more than ever the need to support our small businesses in greater ways and with different resources. To that point, I request that we partner with the Chamber to fund a permanent Navigator position that will further assist small businesses going forward.

St Petersburg History Museum

Due to the \$250,000 spent to bring the existing city facility into fire code compliance, the St. Petersburg Museum of History respectfully requests an additional \$250,000 for the fiscal year 2022 budget. I support this request and hope that we can continue to assist this important community resource in their quest to bring their facility and programming into the next era.

Carter G Woodson Museum

As the Carter G Woodson embarks on a Capital Campaign to fund a proposed \$20 million-dollar new facility, I request enhanced funding for necessary staff support. An additional \$25,000 will ensure a full-time staff person to take on this major undertaking.

Quality of Life, Investment in Youth and Food Insecurity

As we continue to make strides in reducing the poverty rate, investment in basic quality of life issues and our youth will continue to be an integral part of helping our community move forward. I am requesting that we invest in the necessary needs associated with food insecurity, youth job programs, recreational activities, and facilities geared specifically to our youth residing throughout the city.

Support of Housing and Neighborhood Sustainability

This next set of requests will be somewhat redundant from the last several years, but I want to memorialize my continued commitment to these issues to the long-term sustainability and resiliency of our neighborhoods and a real funding commitment to our affordable housing efforts. I have a list of specific items that I plan to continue advocating for over the next year. It is my hope, however, that when preparing this year's budget, you will take a serious look at how we can more equitably balance our priorities between our City's economic development department and our neighborhood affairs department. This is real work that will take a long-term commitment but also a philosophical shift in focus and balance of properties.

The work that has been done to increase jobs in our city has been nothing short of miraculous and we have your leadership to thank for a lot of that success, however, I believe we are at a tipping point of no return as we are not adequately increasing our affordable and workforce housing stock at a rate that will allow us to keep up with the demand of where our workforce lives. Day in and day out, I personally engage with people who are moving out of St Petersburg due to the lack of affordability. It is no surprise to you that I am passionate about residents in all corners of our city being able to find a place in St. Petersburg to call home. After all the motto that you brought to life speaks to us being a city where people can LIVE, work and play. For this goal, I would make the following asks of you.

1. On all pieces of City owned land, located anywhere within the city, it is my hope that we will look at housing first as a major component of the redevelopment. Not only to make housing present but to ensure there is a substantial mix of affordable, workforce and market rate housing with opportunity for ownership and not just rental. City owned and acquired land is where we can really make a difference in the availability of housing stock without impeding on the rights of private property owners.
2. Anytime we reach the conclusion of a budget year and we look to allocate surplus funds it is my hope that a generous portion of these funds will be placed in a dedicated and protected housing trust fund. If we are committed to housing for all and from all, adequate funding for the development, attainability and sustainability of housing is vital. This commitment would be a major step in the right direction.

In addition to these two philosophical asks, I would like to provide the following lists of items I have presented in 2019, 2020, 2021 and am now again presenting as monetary priorities for 2022.

- Creation of a Flood Mitigation and Private Infrastructure Revolving Loan Program to provide resources for property owners who own and live in repetitive loss

structures and have the desire to mitigate these homes through elevation or demolition. This fund could also be used to allow residents to improve and raise their private sea walls and repair their private lateral sewer lines.

- Continued dedication of resources to reduce the Community Rating System for flood insurance affordability for residents
- Increase funding for the Rebates for Rehabs program not only in the Southside CRA but a serious look at expanding this program city wide
- Increase funding for the N-Team
- Support the continued exploration and implementation of a Co-Op Housing, Business and Grocery incentive and education program
- Increase funding for financial literacy programs with a goal of increasing homeownership

The overall quality of life for our residents and our city employees is of utmost concern to me as I enter this last year of my first term on City Council. It has been a pleasure working with you and your administrator on shared goals that make St. Petersburg the amazing city she is today. I look forward to continuing this work together.

Brandi Gabbard
Councilmember District 2

*Cc: Deputy Mayor Kanika Tomlin
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