

In Memoriam



Bob Buckhorn, Mayor

WHEREAS, the City of Tampa takes pride in recognizing those individuals whose dedication have made a lasting impact on our community and its citizens. One of these individuals was **Catherine Genevieve Pisacane Barja**, a beloved and respected Public Servant, Community Leader and Trailblazer who passed away on Monday, March 19, 2018, at age 85; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Barja was born on May 23, 1932 in New York City, New York, and she was educated in Catholic schools there until she moved with her family to make Tampa, Florida home where she excelled as a student at Hillsborough High School and her early aspirations included working in radio; and

WHEREAS, concerns for her Sulphur Springs community after its annexation by the City of Tampa led Mrs. Barja to become an activist for neighborhood improvements and safety measures, and she attended meetings and City Council sessions regularly to advocate for positive changes; and

WHEREAS, leading the way for others, Mrs. Barja became the first woman elected to Tampa City Council in 1971 representing District Seven and she was the first woman to serve as Acting Pro-Tempore during her first term that ended in 1975, and her vast knowledge of the Tampa City Charter and City ordinances made her well-respected among her peers, and her down-to-earth approach and personal contact with constituents and genuine caring for their concerns endeared her to the community; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Barja was reelected to Tampa City Council in 1975 for a second term winning with nearly 80 percent of the votes and she served until her resignation in 1978 to run for a Hillsborough County Commission seat, and she served again in 1986 when she was appointed to fill a vacant seat when Sandra Warshaw Freedman became Acting Mayor of Tampa, and her career as a public servant led to many accomplishments as she worked behind the scenes on behalf of the community, including acquiring donated land for the Parks and Recreation Department; and

WHEREAS, legally blind since the age of five, Mrs. Barja was active in the Hillsborough County Citizens for Disabilities and the Tampa Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind, and she was a member of Democratic Party, the Democratic Executive Committee, League of Women Voters, North Tampa Chamber of Commerce, Tampa Bay Citizens Club, the Sulphur Springs Neighborhood Service Center Advisory Board, and she was honored with the *Josephine Howard Stafford Memorial Award* from the City of Tampa in 2013 as a trailblazer and for her lifetime of dedication, many achievements, and steadfast commitment to the Tampa community; and

WHEREAS, known as an inspiration and motivator to all who knew her, she will be forever remembered for her deep love of family and friends, her integrity, strength, humble nature, and insightfulness, and although we are grieved at the loss of this extraordinary citizen, her legacy will continue to live on through the impact she had on our community and in all those whose lives she touched and encouraged.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Bob Buckhorn, by virtue of the authority vested in me as Mayor of the city of Tampa, Florida, do hereby urge all citizens to join me in publicly expressing sorrow and heartfelt appreciation to the Catherine Barja Family, her sons Fernando, Jr. and John, her daughter Bonita, grandchildren and other family members, and to express our hopes that they will take solace in their many cherished memories and the impact of her life on our city.

Dated in Tampa, Florida, this 26th day of March, 2018.



Bob Buckhorn

Mayor