September is a full month. As I mentioned in my previous message, National Braai Day takes place on the 24th. Of course, that date is Heritage Day. Lighting a fire and sharing a braai is something all South Africans have in common, and a great way to celebrate the differences and similarities of our diverse cultures.

It is, after all, this very diversity that makes us such a colourful nation. Our combined heritage is an important ingredient of our melting pot society. I encourage you to celebrate your cultural history on Heritage Day, but I also challenge you to learn something new about at least one of the other beautiful cultures of South Africa. This is when the spirit of Ubuntu rings at its loudest: I am because we are.

September is also Tourism Month. Aimed at encouraging South Africans to travel to and discover our fantastic local destinations, Tourism Month also highlights the importance of this industry in terms of our national economy. We know that tourism is one of the main drivers of our local economy and appreciate everyone who works within this industry.

One of the main attractions within Greater Knysna’s tourism industry is the incredible natural beauty. It stands to reason that we must protect our natural assets in order to maintain a healthy tourism industry and economy. This year’s World Environmental Health Day of 26 September is themed “Climate change challenges, time for global environmental health to act in unison”. As residents of planet Earth, I believe that we are all custodians of our environment. As such, it is every person’s responsibility to treat Greater Knysna with respect and to do what we can to minimise our negative impact on nature.

Speaking of responsibilities, September is also Public Service Month. It serves as a reminder of what it means to serve our communities, and to look at the impact of government – especially around issues of service delivery. We are proud of the level of service delivery we provide our residents. Still, we are committed to working ever harder to attain even higher standards.

At the end of this month we enter the final quarter of the calendar year. October also brings us Breast Cancer Awareness Month. One of the most common cancers among South African women, positive diagnoses of breast cancer are increasing. According to a statement by the Western Cape Government, approximately one in every 12 women in the Western Cape has breast cancer. And, while it is rare, Breast Health Foundation says that South Africa has the highest rate of male breast cancer in the world. A healthy lifestyle minimises your risk of falling victim to many diseases, but it is important to remember that early detection, diagnosis and treatment maximises your chances of survival. In other words, please commit to regular check-ups and keep yourselves healthy.

The last three months of 2019 are almost here. Let’s all buckle down and work even harder towards the end of the year. Not only will you appreciate your December break so much more, but the harder we all work in 2019, the better 2020 will be for all of us.

‘til next month …

MARK WILLEMS
EXECUTIVE MAYOR
The municipality has contracted 21 small business entrepreneurs to maintain neighbourhoods and public spaces. These contractors will be performing services such as grass cutting, clearing of verges, tree felling, beautification, etc.

We are especially delighted at the number of job opportunities that have come with this partnership. It is expected that, between the contractors, a total of 140 jobs will be created. As an equal opportunities organisation, female and disabled entrepreneurs were also given the opportunity to submit bids.

The Municipality's Parks Department will manage these contractors. Please report any issues to nnelson@knysna.gov.za or telephone 044 302 6327.

Newly elected DA Councillor Hilton Stroebel took the Oath of Office at the Ordinary Council Meeting on Thursday 29 August 2019.

“I am truly humbled by the support and faith that the residents of Ward 5 have put in me by electing me their Councillor and the voice of their area. I will always try my best not to let you down.” (Taken from Knysna Ward 5 Facebook page).

We wish Cllr Stroebel success in his endeavours to serve the people of Knysna, specifically the residents of Ward 5.

As part of our commitment to amazing service delivery, providing potable water to our north- and north-eastern communities is now a reality. Works at these pump stations, as well as at the Concordia and Dam-se-Bos reservoirs have been completed. We have already started work on the new Heidevallei reservoir and project that these will run until May 2020. Not only will our residents in these areas have better access to potable water, but the project employs 37 labourers.

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PROTECTING OUR ESTUARY BY UPGRADING OUR INFRA-STRUCTURE

Our wastewater treatment works has been upgraded to the tune of R9.7 million. We have converted the sequential batch reactor to a nutrient removal plant. This will remove nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus from our waste-water before it is discharged, protecting our estuary from these harmful nutrient compounds. The mechanical and electrical works will be completed during the current financial year.

EMPOWERING WOMEN AND KEEPING OUR RIVERS HEALTHY

51 ladies are employed four days a week to clear refuse from the main tributaries of the Bongani and Bigai rivers. This waste inevitably ends up in our estuary, but these women are making a valiant effort towards managing the situation – whilst earning an income.

NEW JOBS GIVE INVASIVE PLANTS THE AXE

The Department of Environmental Affairs approved our invasive species plant control plan in February. Since then, a team of 10 residents has been trained, equipped and employed to eradicate invasive plants on municipal properties. The undeniable link between invasive plants and fire risk makes this a long-term project and three additional teams will be appointed to join this fight against invasive vegetation.

INVESTING IN THE WHITE LOCATION COMMUNITY

Retired American soccer star Julie Foudy wrote: “...sports build good habits, confidence, and discipline. They make players into community leaders and teach them how to strive for a goal, handle mistakes, and cherish growth opportunities.”

This ties in perfectly with our spend of just over R11 million on the upgrades to the sports field at White Location, as well as the R25 million spend on the new White Location multipurpose community centre. Soon our budding sport stars will have access to a fantastic training facility, and the community will have access to a centre where they can foster our community leaders of tomorrow.

Days to remember

22 SEPTEMBER
KAROO TO COAST CYCLE TOUR

24 SEPTEMBER
HERITAGE DAY
Property owners are responsible for keeping their properties well maintained.

Please report overgrown private properties to the municipality's Customer Relations Management Department at customercare@knysna.gov.za. Tell us why you consider the site to be overgrown, provide us with its address and your contact details.

An inspection will take place within seven working days from when the report was officially logged. Determining if a property is overgrown is at the discretion of the Fire Chief and is generally considered as such if the grass is above knee height. Shrubbery size requirements are based on the growth form of specific plants and are considered on merit.

If the property is found to be overgrown, the property owner will be informed by registered post and instructed to clear the property within 21 workdays from the date on the registered letter.

Once the notice period has expired, the property will be inspected again. If the owner has in fact failed to comply with the municipal notice, a contractor will be appointed and instructed to clear the property. The cost of the clearing will be billed against the owner's municipal account.

Please note that vacant municipal erven and properties owned by other spheres of government are handled in the same manner and should be reported as above.

The Municipality's Parks Department cuts grass on municipal open spaces according to a schedule and addresses areas of concern as necessary, according to the available resources.

Knysna Municipality awards grants to deserving organisations and establishments each year. Applications are herewith invited from organisations and establishments which would like to be taken into consideration for such financial assistance for the municipality's 2019/2020 financial year. Preference is given to community and welfare organisations.

As a result of limited available funds, an allocation cannot be made to every organisation/establishment that applies. Council will consider applications from organisations or bodies outside the sphere of government, in terms of its Grant-in-Aid Policy. Organisations such as NPO's or properly constituted community, welfare or voluntary organisations which have a constitution, provable active membership and an annual general meeting held during the previous 12 months, may apply.

Any consideration and allocation will be subject to the conditions contained in the approved Grant-in-Aid Policy. Certain organisations are excluded from benefitting and interested organisations need to consult the policy to ascertain whether they qualify.

Applications must reach the Municipal Manager, PO Box 21, Knysna, 6570, or at knysna@knysna.gov.za, by no later than Friday 27 September 2019.