

Joint Oceanfront Committee Interim 2017/2018 Report

I. Members:

- A. Joint Oceanfront Committee (JOC)
- B. Human Rights Commission (HRC)
- C. Resort Advisory Commission (RAC)
- D. Virginia Beach Police Department (VBPD)
- E. Resort Management (RM)

II. Background:

Following “College Beach Weekend (CBW) 2017”, the HRC formed a committee to do information gathering and open dialogue in hopes to assist in making a safe and welcoming environment during “CBW”. They requested that RAC join them in this discussion to provide the business community perspective. It is also noteworthy that after CBW 2017 there was a local petition signed by locals requesting that the City put an end to CBW. The crowd has historically been predominately college age, out of town and local visitors of African American decent.

III. Purpose:

The creation of the Joint Oceanfront Committee was originally for HRC and RAC members to establish open and honest dialogue to address issues that occurred during CBW 2017 and develop recommendations for future CBW events.

IV. Meetings:

In addition to the JOC, the Council Member, John Uhrin hosted meetings addressing the same concerns and Virginia Beach Vision (VBV), a private organization, also formed a committee with the same goals; they kindly extended an invitation to a member of the HRC to be a guest on their subcommittee who also acted as a liaison between the HRC and the VB Vision subcommittee. The JOC meetings were held monthly and attended by various members of HRC and RAC. Opinions of what should/could be done were many and often strongly expressed. Additionally, the JOC invited leaders from the African American Community and other community leaders to participate in the discussion.

V. Concerns:

- 1. Unanimously shared, and a most evident concern of the JOC is safety, for the resort visitors, including students, citizens, our uniformed law enforcement officers, fire department personnel, emergency medical services and the businesses located within the resort area. It was reported to the Committee that the

current City Budget did not have adequate funding allocated to “CBW” for Municipal services

2. Some JOC members expressed concern about not enough businesses open with affordable food. Concerns were expressed that more and brighter lighting was needed on the beach where portable restrooms were placed. HRC expressed a desire to discuss entertainment for the students.
3. Some JOC members reported that the businesses which were open, suffered loss of business and there was some minor damage to property. There were a substantial number of businesses that did not open or closed early due to safety concerns for their property and employees.
4. Lengthy discussions were had over real and perceived racial tensions and the short and long term impact that could have on our City as a whole.

VI. Findings:

1. Concern for lack of resources and funding for municipal services was forwarded to Council Member Uhrin’s meeting in form of a joint recommendation that resources and funding be designated to support municipal services.
2. Acknowledgement that additional lighting was needed to increase safety.
3. Acknowledgement that public restroom facilities were not adequate to handle the large crowds.
4. The large number of CBW students and other attendee’s from various Hampton Roads communities create crowd management issues. The large crowds exceed the resort parking capacity, create extensive traffic congestion, affect residents and businesses, and cause public safety response issues.

VII. Suggestions:

1. JOC suggested we hold forums/interviews with students, Community leaders and contact colleges. Through the HRC liaison to the VBV Committee, we learned that the VBV Committee had already begun a similar effort to conduct interviews. In order to avoid a duplication of effort, the JOC decided not to pursue the above mentioned forums or interviews at this time.
2. Unless one is present at oceanfront CBW during “prime time”, evaluation of activities is impossible; therefore, it was suggested that we reach out to key people in the Community in hopes they would become “observers.”

VIII. Recommendations:

1. Safety of the public should continue to be the primary objective managing CBW.
2. Continue to ensure adequate municipal resources and funding is available to address safety issues year round.

3. The JOC supports the resort traffic diversion plans used on multiple weekends during the year to manage large volumes of vehicles entering the resort area. We encourage City Leadership to continue to use best efforts to notify residents and businesses in advance of the time the actual traffic diversion is implemented.
4. JOC should have ongoing meetings for observation reviews and evaluations.
5. The JOC did not reach a consensus to recommend CBW be a City sanctioned event.
6. HRC will invite a team of interested community leaders to observe activities during prime hours on this weekend and collect their feedback and observations.
7. JOC requests City leadership to consider identifying a specific CBW revenue stream in advance that would not have an adverse impact on existing services or budgets.
8. City staff should explore opportunities to increase lighting availability in the resort area.
9. City staff should consider increasing access to public restrooms in the resort area.

IX. Summary:

The JOC has been successful in its purpose. There is now greater understanding between RAC and HRC in regards to “CBW.” There is great appreciation for VBPD as we continue to observe and learn of their challenges. We have been educated on the proper way events are planned and executed within the City. At this time, we have no further recommendations, however, we will continue to meet, communicate and exchange ideas.