



Resort Advisory Commission
2101 Parks Avenue, Suite 302
Virginia Beach, VA 23451
(757) 385-4800
FAX (757) 422-3666

RESORT ADVISORY COMMISSION MINUTES

DATE: July 2, 2020
TIME: 3:00 pm
PLACE: Virginia Beach Convention Center, 2nd Floor, Room 1BCD

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT

BJ Baumann
Bill Gambrell
Bryan Cuffee
Chuck Cayton
George Kotarides
Keith Ireland
Kristina Chastain
Laura Habr
Lori Overholt
Michael Ronan
Mike Eason
Page Miyares
Randy Thompson
Russell Lyons
Tyler Brown

COMMISSION MEMBERS ABSENT

Michael Levinson

OTHERS PRESENT

Billy Almond, PDRC
Preston Midgett, TPPC
Guy Tower, City Council
Rosemary Wilson, City Council
Deputy Chief Bill Dean, VBLE
Donna McMillan, Venture Realty
Richard Maddox, Maddox Enterprises
Dr. James Allen, VBIMC
Dr. Amelia Ross-Hammond, VAACC
Brian Solis, CMO, RMO
Kathy Warren, SGA/RAC Staff Liaison
Sheri Higgason, Recorder CVB/RMO

BJ Baumann called the meeting to order at 3:00pm. **Motion carried to approve the June 11, 2020 RAC minutes as written.**

Police Issues at the Resort – Deputy Chief Bill Dean, VBLE

Deputy Chief Dean stated it has been a difficult year for everyone due to the public health crisis and the economic impact. The Police Department understands these are tense and other than normal lifetimes. He referenced the incident that has prompted a lot of the disorder that we are seeing and that is the murder of George Floyd. Those gatherings occurring across the country came first in Norfolk. He indicated the Virginia Beach Police work closely with the other seven city police departments and knew it was a matter of time before they came to Virginia Beach.

The protests on May 31 prompted the police to make a declaration of unlawful assembly due to serious behaviors and concern for the safety of the community. Following May 31, the police have taken a proactive approach by attending 50+ organized demonstrations, meeting with demonstration leaders, community stakeholders and hosting virtual discussions on topical policing issues. They monitor social media to seek information on protests. There have been investigative efforts from May 31 to include criminal follow-up, video review and Commonwealth Attorney case review. They have identified 51 criminal incidents they have taken reports on, 10 arrests were made, and 60 separate

criminal offense charges have been made.

The person of interest in the red truck has been arrested by the Norfolk Police on Virginia Beach warrants and charged with disorderly conduct, disturbing the peace and reckless driving.

Deputy Chief Dean provided numbers for violence from **January 1 - June 30** on citywide shootings. There have been 36 total incidents resulting in 10 homicides and 26 aggravated assaults involving 44 victims; 38 were male and 8 were female. Police response has been through planned patrols to focus efforts on establishing police presence. The focus was on gun violence. They seized 26 firearms, arrested 18 individuals, and produced 30 gun-related search warrants because of those efforts.

Numbers reflected from **May 31 - June 30** showed 15 total shooting incidents citywide, with 2 homicides and 13 aggravated assaults. Oceanfront specific numbers reflected 6 total shooting incidents, with 1 homicide and 5 aggravated assaults. Oceanfront specific shootings were reviewed. All persons involved in these incidents were not from the Virginia Beach area.

Since Minneapolis, anti-police sentiment has grown significantly. Officers encounter hostility on a nightly basis. Oceanfront strategies put in place include partnerships with civic/community organizations, increased police presence, modifications to municipal parking lots, and illuminated lighting on Atlantic Avenue. Deputy Chief Dean stated all days off have been canceled and the police are required to work 12-hour shifts in days following May 31. Schedules will adjust accordingly. The third precinct police have been brought in to establish additional enforcement at the resort.

Oceanfront Activity since **May 31** reflected 1,879 calls for service, 181 arrests made, and 154 traffic summonses issued. Moving forward the police seek to establish a community communication plan and develop a comprehensive strategy with evaluating issues and developing recommendations.

Questions/Discussion

BJ Baumann thanked Deputy Chief Dean and the entire Police Department for all the work they do day in and day out. She explained there was a certain amount of activity at the oceanfront that are not included in his numbers. Police did not respond to shots being fired and there has been an increase in fighting. Deputy Dean indicated there have been open carry guns and concealed weapons at the oceanfront. If the person(s) have a permit to carry, it is allowed. They have dealt with shots being fired long-term throughout the City. It occurs early morning or end of the night. If they get calls, they investigate. If the perpetrator has left, then they look to witnesses for assistance.

Questions were raised concerning support to law enforcement from City Council and if more is needed. Deputy Chief Dean explained they have had open communication with City Council on processes in place. Council is balancing input from the entire community which is their role and he has not had concerns directed from them. There was discussion on financial resources and the need for more of a police force presence. He advised yesterday marked the beginning of a new budget year. Funds will go quickly through overtime salaries, staffing special events, staffing holiday operations and outcomes of civil disturbances. The department has outstanding equipment and opportunities for training. They did suffer cuts through economic impacts.

Kristina Chastain referenced the continual deficit in officers and asked if he lost officers because of the current stressful situation. He maintained it is not an easy job and they are in the visible middle when there is any conflict in society. The department has been fully staffed only twice in his 34-year career. Some staff were eligible and opted for retirement. Mike Eason congratulated Deputy Chief Dean and his entire staff for their professionalism conducting business. He asked if the Adopt-a-Muster program is still in place. Deputy Chief Dean said oceanfront businesses have been very generous and he recently attend one at the new Kempsville Precinct. Russell Lyons shared that several hotels have set up break rooms along the oceanfront as a thank you to the police. Michael Ronan inquired if there was anything the resort can do to help the police and the first responders that could make their jobs easier. Deputy Chief Dean responded that they feel a lot of support at the oceanfront and have worked with businesses throughout the years to establish any needs. What is seen now is outside of the normal tourist / visitor realm.

There have been comments that resort visitors have not seen as many police walking at the oceanfront. Deputy Chief Dean emphasized they do not have the staffing he would like, and he has been bringing people onboard in supplemental roles with the addition of 26–35 officers in specific roles each night for the past month. Overall, he has had to spread staff thinly. Walk around police contact is less frequent. He advised of recent crowd situations where enforcement has experienced gatherings form where the distance is closer and there is actual touching. They are addressing issues to make arrests when there has been fighting. COVID-19 changed the way they respond to certain calls for medical needs or in crisis related situations. They have flipped strategies where rescue responds first, and the police come in after.

Deputy Chief Dean explained their program for patrolling the oceanfront to have a seasoned 6-year veteran accompany a new officer and that covering the highest demand areas requires an amount of tenure on the force. They have enhanced communications, training, and education to bring in different levels of enforcement. He closed with addressing the upcoming July 4 holiday and plans for increased enforcement.

Listen.Learn.Love – Richard Maddox, Maddox Enterprises / Donna McMillan, Venture Realty

Donna McMillan with Venture Realty Group introduced herself. She is one of the partners developing the Dome property. She has had numerous business and city leaders reach out to her and ask how we could ever get back to that Something In The Water feeling that was created last April. A few weeks ago, she and various community partners held discussion on efforts to inspire and help unify the community. Business owners, religious groups, youth, and community members joined in an outreach program in efforts of awareness in Virginia Beach. She introduced several members of the community present and involved with the grassroots initiative. Former Police Chief Cervera is also part of the founding group.

Listen Learn Love is about promoting a dialogue through diversity and inclusion in Virginia Beach. Richard Maddox added Councilman Rouse and Councilman Tower have been involved every step of the way. He shared a slide presentation and overview of the program.

The Problem: Many people perceive Virginia to be unwelcoming to people of color. This is not a new phenomenon.

The problem did not start in 1989:

- First African Slaves Arrive in Nearby Hampton in 1619.
- Princess Anne Secessionist fired the first shot of the Civil War.
- Princess Anne County was excluded from the Emancipation Proclamation.
- Princess Anne County made national headlines for a KKK abduction of a priest and educator in 1926.
- Blacks systematically denied political and economic power in The Jim Crow / Political Machine Era.
- Beaches segregated until the 1960s.

The problem did not end in 1989

- Following Greekfest, Public Enemy's "Fear of a Black Planet" branded V.B. as racist to international audiences.
- The City responded by promoting country music concerts the following year (to push out the young black community).
- City leaders promote "Dixie Stampede" at the Oceanfront.
- 1998 VB cross burning case becomes milestone US Supreme Court Case (Virginia V. Black).
- 31st Street Park and Light Rail debates spark accusations of racism.
- Prominent black businessmen call for racial disparity study.
- College Beach Weekend.

We are now at a turning point. The Mission: Make Virginia Beach a Sanctuary for Human Rights by:

- Challenge the business community and civic leaders to lead the conversation of diversity and inclusion.
- Show the entire country how a city can listen to one another and affect real change.

Listen: To create inclusionary spaces to engage the gap in racial/civil disparities, economically and socially.

Learn: To listen with the intent to comprehend pain to effectively progress toward healing from past traumas and injustices.

Love: Intentionally stand for the rights of all lives, and against the oppression of all. Demonstrate to the world that Virginia understands how to care for its people and visitors.

Listen Learn Love - What do these words have to do with the condition of our City today? There is a relationship between the environment and behavior. We must create a more welcoming environment. At SITW, the Virginia Beach oceanfront was a place of belonging. It was a place for everyone. Pharrell created a festival that was for everyone. Law enforcement embraced the youth with open arms and fostered a sense of unity. Because the oceanfront finally felt like it was inclusive, people policed themselves. Virginia Beach is a city of hospitality. We prosper when we include people. We suffer when we exclude people. "inclusion" isn't just a moral issue, "inclusion" is a socio-economic issue.

Corporate American is Getting on Board.

Cox Communications: "All lives do not matter, until Black lives matter."

Bank of America: Is providing \$1 billion to support racial equality. This noble generosity reflects the true urgency that has arisen across our nation, particularly in view of the racial injustices we have seen in the communities where we work and live.

Lowes: "To overcome the challenges that we all face, we must use our voices and demand that ignorance and racism must come to an end. This is time to come together, to support one another and, through partnership, begin to heal."

GM: Is donating \$10 million to organizations that support inclusion and racial justice and is forming an Inclusion Advisory Board with the goal of becoming "the most inclusive company in the world."

Adidas: "It's time to own up to our silence while African-Americans decry racial injustice and police brutality following the recent deaths of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd and other Black American. Black Lives Matter."

Netflix: "With an understanding that our commitment to true, systemic change will take time – we're starting by highlighting powerful and complex narratives about the Black Experience."

PepsiCo: "We are committed to this work because we know that American society has placed the burden disproportionately on Black people, injustice and inequality are problems for us all, and we all must do our part to defeat them."

In the last 30 days, SITW Sponsors have invested over \$800 million in civil rights causes.

If you are a Civic Group or a Business, then we are asking you to:

- Acknowledge past hurt, injustices and inequality.
- Pledge to engage in a non-defensive and respectful way.
- Engage in real conversations about inequality and diversity at our forums and online.
- Participate in unconscious bias surveys and visitor case studies.
- Read the surveys and case studies.
- Participate in training initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion.
- Develop / implement best practices to promote diversity and inclusion in your organization.
- Develop and implement dynamic marketing and inclusive marketing campaigns.
- Participate in follow-up surveys to analyze performance.

- Commit to making diversity and inclusion an organizational objective.

We are asking the City of Virginia Beach to:

Join the conversation at our forums and online (including our first responders).

- Encourage public participation in surveys and visitor engagement case studies.
- Sign Mayor's pledge and become MBK community.
- Create / implement programs that promote stringer sense of community policing.
- Provide resources for training initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion.
- Provide resources to help groups and businesses develop / implement best practices to promote diversity and inclusion.
- Participate in follow-up surveys to analyze performance.
- Approve ordinance making Virginia Beach a "Sanctuary of Human Rights" and commit to making diversity and inclusion a city-wide objective.
- Assist in improving communication and relationships between public safety officials and people of color.
- Promote a law enforcement cadet program.

Questions/Discussion

BJ thanked the group for coming together and showing their civic leadership indicating conversations and communication can make a big difference. Bill Gambrell added this was a worthy cause and he hopes the community embraces its vision. He advised them to share the presentation with groups they are trying to reach. BJ suggested reaching out to the Human Rights Commission. Donna McMillan shared Three Ships in the ViBe has already painted Listen Learn Love on the side of their building. She was looking for ways the group could assist law enforcement. The group encourages the idea of a cadet program where a young person with specific roles provide outreach to others in the community.

There was discussion on the program being a movement, marketing campaign or both. Donna explained they have formed as an LLC for-profit. If money were raised it would most likely get donated. They are looking at education, learning and discussions and marketing to change hearts and minds. They encourage collective help. Richard shared they have not reached out to the government. Time is of the essence. They want this to be a grassroots organic ground level business, with faith-based and citizen efforts of the community. It does not need to be formed into a committee, studied for 12-months, and then come back with recommendations.

Dr. James Allen of the Interdenominational Ministers Conference commented on the approaching July 4 weekend and business owners at the Resort. He indicated everyone needs to come together and invest in each other's success. He accounted a time when Ret. Police Capt. Ronan joined the march with the Faith Freedom and Justice and the police took good care of them. He spoke of a recent trip the Virginia Beach Ministers Conference and police went on to the Virginia African American Cultural Center. They realized on the ride back that such young police officers did not know about the Civil rights movement. If they were born after 1974 they missed it. They then had an opportunity to see things from a different perspective. He went on to talk about challenges with negativity and the need for fundamental change in Virginia Beach.

Former Councilwoman, Dr. Amelia Ross-Hammond is the Founder and Chair of the Virginia African American Cultural Center. She expressed the importance of having an African American Cultural Center in Virginia Beach. The City sought it out to build on 4.3 acres of land. It would be an educational opportunity for young people to have a place to gather and learn. She emphasized the importance of pulling resources together to make this happen.

Chairman's Report – BJ Baumann

BJ advised they have requested a report on potential changes for short-term rentals with Bobby Tajan of the Planning Department. The joint HRC / RAC meeting is scheduled for July 15. She will reach out to a couple of commissioners to serve on that. BJ asked Preston Midgett to talk about the new law regarding pedestrian street crossing during his TPPC report. She indicated they are still waiting on word for PDA grant checks to get cut for some of the businesses in the resort that have applied. Kristina Chastain has accepted the Chair position for OSGAC.

Committee Reports

Transportation, Parking, Pedestrian Committee (TPPC)

TPPC Chair, Preston Midgett announced a new law effective July 1 in Virginia that mandates vehicles stop for pedestrians in a crosswalk. The law also requires motorists to stop when another vehicle is stopped for pedestrians. A Public Service Announcement went out recently. The Mobility Study is funded to move forward utilizing historical data collected over the years. The topics for review include parking lots, employee parking, trolleys, the RPP, curbside pick-ups, Atlantic Avenue designs, and parking rates.

Preston stated there is \$1 million in the budget approved this year for Atlantic Avenue sidewalks improvements from the curb to the storefronts on the west side only. There was discussion of doing this in a pilot project for 1-2 blocks. Some of this would be incorporated for review in the Mobility Study.

The speed limit on Pacific Avenue south of 16th Street to Rudee bridge and from 32nd Street to 40th Street is 35 mph. There was discussion in the TPPC meeting of changing this to 25 mph. There will be variable message speed limit signs for seasonal speed limit changes.

Scooters are coming back in Phase 3 through Bird, Lyme, Spin, and VeoRide franchises. There will be a 1,000-scooter cap citywide with forty percent at the oceanfront. Corrals and geo-fencing will be in place. Scooters are prohibited for use on the boardwalk or bike path. July 20 is the targeted date for scooter return. It is going to City Council to allow scooters back within the Trolley lane on Atlantic Avenue.

Preston wants to revisit past practices for keeping trash cans and benches bolted to the sidewalk on Atlantic Avenue to prevent from becoming projectiles as well as alternatives used for resort business landscaping.

Planning & Design Review Committee (PDRC)

PDRC Chair, Billy Almond stated the PDRC committee met to review the new apartment complex, The Pinnacle located at the 31st Street gateway. Breeden Construction is the developer. There is no retail at the present time. The project only includes the former Farm Fresh property. There could be property expansion in the future. The building includes some private amenity space on the 2nd Floor. They are imploring green screens along the parking garage. The landscape design along 30th Street and 31st Streets will include some public realm of trees. Site plans are being submitted on July 16.

Oceanfront Enhancement Committee (OEC)

OEC Chair, Randy Thompson stated the committee met last week and reviewed an update on initiatives to include the 17th Street Art Installation rescheduled for August. There is still \$6,000 in funding needed to complete the mural. The Projection Art Installation on 24th Street is expected to move forward with discussions of private funding.

The new restroom facilities are scheduled to move forward. Funds to date of \$750,000 will provide for the design and construction of the shower and the design of the restrooms. There will be three new facilities to be put in place where there is a need.

There is no funding in the budget for 24th Street Park improvements. The OEC committee requested traffic data for the Kiosks at the oceanfront. OEC meeting dates will change to the last Thursdays of the month starting in July. The next meeting is July 30.

Resort Investment Committee (RIC)

BJ stated RIC met with Commonwealth Attorney Collin Stolle in educational discussions of crime, gangs, curfew and relationships between the Commonwealth Attorney, Police and City Council. The Commonwealth Attorney's office will have a prosecutor attend RAC meetings starting next month to be a resource for any questions that may arise.

Oceanfront Strategic Growth Area Committee (OSGAC)

Kristina Chastain indicated OSGAC worked very hard with RASAP for a long time. Now they have reconvened and are reviewing development opportunities in the resort and Laskin gateway area. The Sports Center is due to open Nov. 2020. The Dome site is still in negotiations.

G.R.E.E.N.

G.R.E.E.N. Chair, Laura Habr reported they met regarding Legislative initiatives that passed in the Commonwealth on environmental issues. The committee is focusing on priorities for the future. There was discussion on the Lynnhaven River Now (LRNow) and Pearl Business Programs. There will be upcoming *Keep it Beachy Clean* trash can stickering events volunteers are encouraged to help with.

Staff Report

Kathy Warren announced funds are in place for the Mobility Plan and Atlantic Avenue sidewalk improvements. They are continuing to install LED lights on Atlantic Avenue. All RAC subcommittees met in person this month. G.R.E.E.N.'s next meeting will be virtual.

Brian Solis provided an update for July 4 Resort Programming:

- We are pleased to announce the much-anticipated launch of the City's signature nightly entertainment program, Live! On Atlantic. The Commonwealth's Phase 3 COVID-19 guidelines allow us to gather in greater numbers and we will follow these guidelines to create a safe and welcoming experience.
- We will begin on Friday July 3rd with DJ stage entertainment at 17th Street Park and 24th Street Park and historic theatrical performances in Naval Aviation Monument Park at 25th Street and at 26th Street between Atlantic Avenue and the Boardwalk. The Park stages are scheduled for 8 pm to 10:45 pm and the historic theatrical performances are scheduled to begin at 8 pm. This schedule is subject to change.
- A Roaming Piano Bike will be with us Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights July 4th weekend between 5th Street and 34th Street along the Boardwalk, which will be decorated in our hallmark patriotic Stars and Stripes motif. Patriotic larger than life-sized inflatables will reside in 17th Street Park, 24th Street Park and 31st Street Park throughout the weekend for guest photo ops. Also, throughout the afternoon of July 4th, stand by for patriotic happenings celebrating military aviation history that will be seen from along all our Atlantic beaches.
- And new for 2020, a temporary sound system is being installed along 20 blocks of the Boardwalk between 12th Street and 32nd Street to play uplifting and patriotic music for July 4th weekend. The sound system will be in place to create positive vibes for the rest of the summer.
- To date Beach Events and the City have coordinated to install Atlantic Avenue String Lights in The Fun Zone and are in the process of getting the Atlantic Avenue music/public address system fully back up and running from 17th Street to 25th Street.
- On the horizon, look for Live! On Atlantic to be back better than ever starting July 10th.
- In partnership with the City of Virginia Beach we bring this entertainment while recognizing to [Summer Smarter 2020!](#)

Old Business

There was none

New Business

Brian Solis announced an agreement was signed and the 17th Street restrooms will be open at 8:00 a.m. tomorrow through September 30.

George Kotarides suggested to invite the individuals involved in the Listen Learn Love program to come walk at the resort oceanfront this Saturday night. Mike Ronan offered to be an escort for anyone attending. Preston offered parking at Jungle Golf for any RAC or Human Rights members. They will meet at 11:00 p.m.

Public Comment

There was none

Meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.