**Recap of Second Precinct CAC Meeting of October 11, 2023**

Meeting held at VBVRS Station #14 Conference Room. Eighteen (18) people attended in person with another four online for the concurrent Zoom session hosted by **CAC Secretary Lynn Hightower** of the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum.

**Mr. Agresti** opened the meeting with a number of comments:

**National Breast Cancer Awareness Month:** is held every October. Many VBPD officers are wearing pink patches, badges, and collar brass in recognition. Mr. Agresti quipped that “real men wear pink.”

**Early Voting:** is underway (until November 4) for the November 7 General Election. Many local General Assembly Delegate and Senate districts have changed. See [Who's My Legislator? (virginiageneralassembly.gov)](https://whosmy.virginiageneralassembly.gov/) for the latest information.

Mr. Agresti also mentioned a scam being perpetrated (mostly in Northern Virginia) by an organization calling itself “Virginia Voter Assistance,” that falsely threatens citizens with loss of social security, Medicare, Medicaid, and other governmental services if they do not vote. Virginia’s Attorney General Jason Miyares has issued a Cease-and-Desist order to this organization.

**SpeakUpVB:** offers an opportunity for citizen input to two current surveys – one on the Future of Recycling and the other on Opioid Abatement. Visit <https://speakupvb.com> to learn more and to provide input.

**New Covid Vaccines:** are available that help thwart the most severe effects of new strains XBB.1.5, BA.2.86, and EG.5. Visit <https://vaccinate.virginia.gov> to find locations with the shot and to schedule an appointment. Medicare and most insurance plans cover the shot. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) also has information for those without health insurance. Visit <Https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/> or phone 1-877-VAX-IN-VA (829-4682) for additional information.

**Wicked 10K and Monster Mile:** Races and events will close portions of Atlantic Avenue on October 27 (5:00 PM – 11:00 PM) and October 28 (6:00 AM – 2:00 PM). Plan accordingly.

**“Miss Debbie” Kopicki**, long-time administrative assistance to the Commander of the Second Precinct will retire (for the second time) on October 27. Her replacement will be Ms. Samantha L. Thomas.

Finally, Mr. Agresti introduced “**special guest stars**” attending this evening:

* Captain Marcie Fox, Commanding Officer of VBPD Animal Services
* Lieutenant Brian Strouse, 2nd Precinct, in lieu of Captain McBrien
* Ms. Nancy Bloom, City of VB Community Engagement Strategist
* Ms. Courtney Pierce, representing Samaritan House

**Lt. Strouse,** clarified the dates and time for the Wicked 10K and Monster Mile events. He also mentioned another Halloween event – VBPD Mounted Trunk or Treat – to be held at 2089 Indian River Road on October 21 from 4:00 PM until 8:00 PM. The goal is to fill the trunk of a police vehicle with candy for the less fortunate in our community while provide children (and adults) and opportunity to meet the horses, who will be costumed for the occasion. Children are encouraged to wear their costumes.

Lt. Strouse also commented that the officers of the Second Precinct continue to observe crimes in the Virginia Beach Boulevard corridor. Many of these (such as a recent stabbing on 24th Street) are homeless upon homeless crimes where the participants are known to each other; yet, despite efforts to provide mental health and substance abuse counseling, the crimes are inescapable. He also commented upon the September 28 armed robbery on the resort beach. Current investigations suggests that these people were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. Regrettably, at ocean’s edge, they were beyond the visual range of cameras.

**Capt. Fox**, who is a veteran of the Second Precinct, commented on her focus expanding efficiencies and programs at the Animal Care and Adoption Center (formerly: Shelter) – a name change she initiated to more accurately reflect the Center’s functions and services.

She cited a rabies and microchip clinic scheduled for December 12 and also a program – Shelter Buddies - that she is working to implement that allows volunteers with limited time to assist at the shelter for as little as one or two hours at a time exercising animals, folding blankets/towels, etc. Shelter Buddy volunteers must be at least 18 years of age.

Capt. Fox thanked the CAC for acting as the 501(c)3 conduit through which tax-deductible donations may be made to the Animal Care and Adoption Center. Regrettably, the Center’s staffing is below 70%, so she has been forced to curtail hours. New hours are from 8:00 AM – 10:00 PM.

**Ms. Nancy Bloom**, recommended that people sign up for “Be in the Know,” available through the <https://virginiabeach.gov> website. She emphasized the SpeakUpVB participation surveys mention by Mr. Agresti and requested that all civic organizations have at least one “G-mail” account that could be passed along as the secretary or officer in charge of correspondence changes from year-to-year without having to force the city to update its list of civic organizations.

**Ms. Ruth Ann Steenburgh, VB Crime Solvers,** stated that they paid out $490 in rewards between mid-August and mid-September based upon 70 tips that led to two arrests.

**MPO Frank Been** will be assuming full-time Community Liaison Officer (CLO) duties in November. He mentioned that VBPD had stepped up patrols and observations at synagogues and temples as a result of the war in the Middle East. He said that police had no specific credible threats.

MPO Been repeated that crime is down 20% with the exception of larcenies from motor vehicles. He repeated the mantra to lock and sanitize (i.e., remove valuables) vehicles. He said that VB had at least two motor vehicle thefts recently where keys/fobs were in the cars.

**Ms. Courtney Pierce** spoke on behalf of Sarmatian House. While technical difficulties prevented her PowerPoint presentation from being projected, she gave an eloquent extemporaneous presentation of the many functions that Samaritan House undertakes on behalf of abused women and children, homeless, and human trafficked individuals – be it through the sex, domestic, or agricultural industries. Ms. Pierce stated that so many males have been identified as victims of human trafficking, that they have had to dedicate one of their shelters to that gender. She provided a trifold (copy attached) to help recognize the signs of a victim or survivor and two hotline numbers: Abuse or Violence – 757-430-2120 and Homelessness – 757-587-4202.

Take-aways from Ms. Pierce’s presentation are:

* Samaritan House is the leading resource for housing and services to trafficking victims in SE Virginia;
* they have serviced victims from as young as 13 up into their 60s;
* average age for those being human trafficked is 12 – 14 years of age;
* human trafficking victims are usually introduced to the trade by family or other affiliated individual to whom they have emotional bonds;
* 26% of human trafficking victims are minors;
* Virginia rank 15th among states for reported cases of human trafficking.

The Hampton Roads Human Trafficking Task Force was formed in 2017 by the Virginia Office of the Attorney General, U. S. Department of Homeland Security, and the U. S. Attorney’s Office of the Eastern District of Virginia, local law enforcement, and Samaritan House. Samaritan House is a 501(c)3 charitable organization that accepts tax=deductible donations.

Training to identify the signs of abuse/trafficking victims is conducted for hotel and bar operators in Virginia Beach.

**Mr. Mark Stevens, Human Rights Commission [HRC],** elaborated upon the signs of abuse/human trafficking victims he sees regularly. His common tip-off is body language; which can include a frightened affect and posture, head down, confusion, halted movements, looking back or over a shoulder, “thousand-yard stare”, etc.

**Chaplain Steve Gray** mentioned VBPD Chaplains put in 524 hours during the month of September; 85 of those hours were in the Second Precinct. Chaplains also made seven death notifications – two of which were in the Second.

**Mr. Ben Green**, representing **City Councilman Worth Remick**’s office provided a phone number for citizens to text or call Councilman Remick on community issues – 757-719-5502.

One attendee commented on a panhandler on the Boardwalk interfering with the peaceful enjoyment of the Neptune Festival. Both Lt. Strouse and Capt. Fox mentioned how there is no legal prohibition in asking for money and therefore little the police can do unless the individual is violating some other ordinance.

Mr. Agresti and Ms. Susan Lichacz discussed efforts to bring a representative from the Virginia Attorney General’s office to Virginia Beach to further discuss combating human trafficking.

The next CAC meeting will be Wednesday, November 8, 2023 at 7:00 PM in the conference room of VBVRS Station #14 (740 VB Blvd). That will be the last CAC meeting of 2023. Attendees are asked to please park on the east side of the building.