**Recap of Second Precinct CAC Meeting of April 10, 2024**

The Citizens’ Advisory Committee met in VBVRS Station #14 Conference Room on April 10. Fifteen (15) people attended in person with another three attending virtually through a Zoom link provided through the Atlantic Wildfowl Heritage Museum, **CAC Secretary Lynn Hightower**, Director.

Following a round of introductions, **CAC President, M. C. “Connie” Agresti** mentioned that Virginia Beach was seeking citizen input to the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget. Directions are on the <https://virginiabeach.gov> home page. Input is sought through Tuesday, May 14.

**Lt Brian Strouse, Night Lieutenant, VBPD Second Precinct,** sat in for Captain McBrien, who was speaking that evening at Old Dominion University. Captain McBrien will be with us throughout command transition to Captain Wessler at least through July.

Lt. Strouse said that the increased seasonal visitation to the Oceanfront has begun and that the Second Precinct has already been “up-staffed” to deal with the crowds. Lt. Strouse addressed recent crowds of upwards of 500 young adults who were drawn to the beach by “Meet-Up” social media posts. While usually well behaved, any accumulation of that size is ripe for altercations and violence.

Lieutenant Strouse said that VBPD intelligence staff was able to trace the IP address of the originator of the “Meet-Up” postings. Captain McBrien visited the individual’s home in Norfolk, spoke with the youth and his mother, learned that the young man was seeking a football scholarship and alerted him to potential consequences to his scholarship chances were something tragic to happen at one of these “Meet-Ups.” Capt. McBrien and the young man’s mother were able to convince him to cease his postings. (I’d have loved to have been a fly on that wall).

Lt. Strouse, Mr. Agresti, and **MPOII Frank Been, 2nd Precinct Community Engagement Officer**, spoke of the bi-weekly WAVES report on crime statistics and how Virginia Beach is the safest city of its size in America (comparable cities include Oakland, California and Atlanta, Georgia) and the second safest city regardless of size (we’re the largest) among the seven cities that comprise Hampton Roads. Citizens are more likely to become victims of property crime than violent crime and all were again cautioned to lock vehicles and remove valuables, especially firearms, from them, walk in pairs at night, and keep one’s head on a swivel. If possible, only take the valuables you need for your sojourn.

Discussion ensued about the professionalism of the VBPD officers and **Deputy Mayor and District 5 City Councilwoman Rosemary C. Wilson** added that City Council has recently approved a raise for first responders as well as providing millions of dollars to support recruitment and training, build a Real-Time Communications Center (RTCC) within the newly renovated police headquarters, and purchase and emplace many modern and automated tools and systems to assist police in performing their duties. She was awed that police have removed 1,000 illegal firearms from city streets in each year for the last two years.

Mr. Agresti mentioned that many of these are stolen from vehicles thereby enforcing earlier comments. Lt. Strouse mentioned new technological tools that enable VBPD to identify whether ejected shell casings or recovered bullets were associated with weapons used in previous crimes.

**Adopt-a-Muster Coordinator Ms. Jenny Perry** reported that all weekends, but six, throughout that “the season” have sponsors for the Adopt-A-Muster support to our folks in blue. Special thanks to all civic leagues, homeowner’s associations, and businesses for their support. We will publish the list of sponsors so that citizens may patronize them and mention that they learned about their support to the Adopt-A-Muster program, as word-of-mouth and patronage sell the program.

**Deputy Commonwealth Attorney Mr. Michael Defricke,** mentioned the recent conviction of Cola Beale IV on two counts of aggravated murder, two counts of arson, abduction, torturing an animal causing death, and gun charges dating to a multi-day crime spree beginning in March 2022.

**Mr. Mark Stevens, Human Rights Commission,** stated that HRC is working with state and local governments to increase the number of mental health counselors available for individuals who may be in crisis – a frequent liability among our homeless population. He also mentioned that HRC will be seeking volunteer Observers for College Beach Weekend, April 26 & 27. A solicitation will appear on HRC website soon [Human Rights Commission | City of Virginia Beach](https://hr.virginiabeach.gov/human-rights-commission) .

**Messrs. Matt Lighthart and James Giangregorio, VB Public Library - Oceanfront and Great Neck, respectively,** stated that the moratorium on late return fines, originally implemented for youthful borrowers, has been extended to all library users. Mr. Lighthart spoke of efforts to emplace small lending libraries in nearly trailer parks and Section 8a housing facilities to encourage reading among youngsters. Meanwhile, Mr. Giangregorio spoke of English language reading classes for those learning English as a Second Language (ESL). The mantra of these programs is that “learning to read, yields a lifetime of learning.”

 **Ms. Nancy Parker, Old Beach Civic League,** mentioned that she is a long-time member of **Friends of the Library**. The Friends has donated more than $100,000 for book purchases and both gentlemen mentioned that the libraries also accept “gently-used” books from the public.

In the open forum, **Ms. Mary Souther**, (apologies if misspelled), **North Beach Civic League**, asked about two recent incidents on 70th Street involving a man approaching young women. **Lt. Strouse** and **Officer Been** stated that these incidents were investigated but that the young women declined to make an official complaint. Discussion ensued about the need to follow-up on police reporting and lodge official complaints, so that if the perpetrator acts again, including elsewhere, police can associate incidents of the same modus operandi.

Discussion further ensued over excessive speed during the summer. Mr. Stevens addressed motorcycles racing along 21st and 22nd Streets. Lt Strouse said that for safety reasons, VBPD will not chase reckless motorcycle operators because of the excessive speeds (well over 120 MPH) at which the bikes are ridden. They can only hope that the absence of blue lights will lead the motorcyclists to reduce their speeds and not further endanger other motorists. The officers mentioned that they employ other tactics identify the motorcycle operators.

 The use of speed cameras also arose, with the primary question being why Virginia Beach has not installed speed cameras in school zones, despite reportedly being authorized to do so by the General Assembly. This issue has been posed to police many times before and Lt. Strouse said that it was a political issue that citizens should address to their elected representatives (read: City Council). This is the same answer that I and several others heard from **Chief Paul Neudigate** during a recent tour of the new police headquarters building. Apparently, there remain some communities that feel that cameras are an intrusion into privacy.

The next CAC meeting will be **Wednesday, May 8 at 7:00 PM** in the conference room at the VBVRS Station #14, 740 VB Blvd (17th St), VAB, 23451.