**Recap of Second Precinct CAC Meeting of November 13, 2024**

The Citizens’ Advisory Committee met in VBVRS Station #14 Conference Room on November 13. Nineteen (19) people attended in person. Long report today – thanks for reading.

After a round of introductions, **CAC President, M. C. “Connie” Agresti** offered some news and updates to those present:

He has been in communication with the offices of our local state representatives regarding the accumulation of trash and detritus within the median of I-264 between Parks and First Colonial, as well as the illegible highway sign just west of the Birdneck Road exit, the purpose of which is to direct arriving visitors to the convention center. Mr. Agresti opined that the optic these eyesores present to arriving visitors, detracts from the City’s stated intent of casting Virginia Beach as a “world-class vacation destination.” **State Senator Bill DeSteph** agreed and engaged the Virginia Department of Transportation to replace the sign (which had been previously identified for replacement) and increase attention to reducing the accumulation of trash along the highway.

Mr. Agresti read an email from our former Community Liaison Officer, **MPO3 Frank Been**, thanking Karen Burns of the Virginia Aquarium and our own **Lisa McDonnell** for their assistance in hosting and chaperoning youngsters through the aquarium’s learning centers.

Mr. Agresti announced that the CAC has helped purchase a plaque In Memory of **MPO David Nieves**, who benefited our community and precinct in extraordinary ways before his untimely demise. The plaque will be unveiled in the Second Precinct Headquarters on Monday, November 18.

Mr. Agresti then said that the CAC General Fund is growing a little light and asked for solicitation of donations from our organizations and local businesses. **The CAC is a 501(c)3 organization**, therefore **contributions are tax deductible** and will be acknowledged. Contributions can be made out to “Community Advisory Committee” and sent to Lisa McDonnell - CAC Treasurer, c/o VBPD Second Precinct, 820 Virginia Beach Blvd, VB, 23451.

**Adopt-a-Muster Coordinator Ms. Jenny Perry** could not be present for the meeting but shared that she has begun the 2025 Adopt-a-Muster calendar. If any organizations desire a specific date, please contact her at [rhclpresident@gmail.com](mailto:rhclpresident@gmail.com) .

**The Community Advisory Board (CAB)** meeting or all CAC presidents, precinct commanders, and chiefs was held on Monday, November 4. Among the takeaways is that police will be increasing patrols of shopping mall parking lots, but Mr. Agresti stated that personal safety remains the responsibility of the individual. In that regard, he offered the following advice and suggestions which can be shared among your communities:

* Situational Awareness – avoid cell phone use while walking to/from vehicles.
* Keep your head “on a swivel” to observe your surroundings. Beware of those loitering, looking into vehicles, or testing vehicle handles. Notify police and/or mall security of suspicious actions.
* Shop in pairs – two heads are better than one; four eyes are better than two.
* Keep One Hand Free – don’t get so burdened down by shipping bags that both hands/ arms are encumbered.
* Keep your purse latched or zippered closed and on your person or with a companion at all times. Cross-body straps are better than over-the-shoulder straps. If you can manage without a purse, do so. The more fashionable the purse (e.g., Prada, Coach, Fendi) – the more likely you are to be targeted.
* Park in well-lit areas whenever possible. Locate car fob/keys before leaving mall so that you’re not distracted searching for them outside, where you’re more vulnerable.
* Lock your vehicle as soon as you exit or enter.
* Do not unlock from a distance because the beep or flashing lights alert potential thieves.
* Keep Valuables Out of Sight – in trunk, under sunshade, etc.
* If you feel you are being followed – return to the mall and notify police or mall security.
* If confronted or threatened with a weapon, give up the goods. **Nothing you buy is worth your life**.
* Regrettably, mass shootings do occur, and malls are “soft” targets. If you hear gunshots and cannot readily exit the mall, go to the deepest part of the store and shelter in place. **Silence the ringer on your phone and text 911**.

**Deputy Chief Zelms** stated that the **Police Aides** program is open to 18 – 21-year-olds with a desire to serve as VBPD police officers. This is a paid program that has demonstrated success in recruiting officers, for example: 30% of the January 2025 Police Academy class are former Police Aides.

**Deputy Chief Wilkerson** spoke of the **Safety Net** program provided by the Animal Care and Adoption Center that is designed to assist pet owners in keeping their animals. Safety Net offers behavioral training for both pets and owners who may be unfamiliar with the responsibilities of pet ownership. **Lisa McDonnell** added that **Safety Net** also aids homeless persons whose pet is their only companion. The program finds foster care for the pets if the owners are hospitalized or incarcerated and can provide food assistance if the owners are destitute.

**Chief Neudigate** congratulated the CACs for their support of his department’s officers and for helping reduce crime throughout the year. (See more below)

**Officer Melissa Rideout** was then recognized as the CAC Second Precinct **Officer of the Quarter**. She is an accomplished ambitious, and unassuming young policewoman and U. S. Coast Guard veteran who serves in the **Oceanfront Community Oriented Policing (OCOP)** unit that requires her, inter alia, to ride a bicycle at least four hours a day.

**Ms. Nancy Bloom, VB Communications Public Engagement Manager,** spoke and highlighted several programs underway soliciting public response.

* The **Annual Count of Unhoused Individuals** (formerly: homeless) is conducted in January, but ***SpeakUpVB.com*** will have a reporting link available as of Monday, November 18, to begin gathering information from the public.
* Alternative plans for **Rudee Loop** redesign – overwhelmingly voted on by citizens to keep as open space – will also be available for public input on ***SpeakUpVB.com***.
* Ms. Bloom also addressed public meetings and input for the **City’s Comprehensive Plan** and **Focused Action Plan**, but I was unable to capture the date, time, and other pertinent information and will have to submit an addendum to this report.
* I did capture that she spoke about signing up for **Be In the Know** (link on <https://virginiabeach.gov> homepage) to receive the type of community information that I failed to capture.

**Second Precinct Commander Captain Bradley Wesseler** gave some details on Chief Neudigate’scrime reduction briefing (provided to City Council on October 9).[[1]](#footnote-2) The data are year-over-year data as of 30 September 2024:

* Criminal homicides down 54.9 percent.
* Shooting incidents down 47 percent.
* Overall Violent crime down 15.3 percent.
* Rapes down 22.9 percent.
* Aggravated assaults down 18.9 percent.

Property crime was also down with significant reductions noted in thefts of motor vehicles (down 27.9 percent) and larcenies from motor vehicles down 40 percent. So, despite the woe and despair that one reads on social media (think: Nextdoor), the safest city for its size is getting safer – due, in no small part, ***to citizen involvement*** augmented by increased technology (e.g., Shotspotter).

Commenting on the **Adopt-a-Muster** efforts, Capt. Wesseler said that where large oceanfront events used to be from April – September, they’re now year- ‘round, starting around St. Patrick’s Day and Ending New Year’s Eve, following the month long parade of lights.

Other data that Capt. Wesseler provided was that this past year, the City of Virginia Beach hosted 14.1 million overnight guests who spent $2.5 billion dollars. This revenue translates into a tax offset of almost $1,800 per household.

**Deputy Commonwealth Attorney Michael Defricke** spoke of the conviction of a former VB police officer on child pornography, attempting lewd acts with a minor, and other charges of moral turpitude. VBPD Special Investigations and the FBI worked together to identify this individual, who pleaded guilty and is awaiting sentencing.

This was Mr. Defricke’s last regular meeting supporting Second Precinct CAC as he will be moving to the DUI and Traffic Fatality Team on January 1, 2025.

**Ms. Ruth Ann Steenburgh, VB Crime Solvers,** announced a successful golf tournament and indicated that for the months of September and October, Crime Solvers received 166 tips leading to eight arrests and 15 charges. Their anonymous reporting hotline (all callers are given a number) is **1-888-LOCK-U-UP (1-888-562-5887)**.[[2]](#footnote-3)

**Mr. Mark Stevens, Human Rights Commission,** mentioned that the VB Human Rights Awards will be presented on December 12.

**Mr. Worth Remick, District 6 City Councilman** – Mr. Stevens mentioned that Mr. Remick will be holding his monthly town hall on **Thursday, November 21 (6:30 – 8:30 PM) at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA),** 2200 Parks Avenue, VB, 23451

**Mr. Mike Leigh, Great Neck Recreation Center,** commented at how impressed he was at Board of Elections officials, et al, in their employment of the Rec Center as a satellite voting location. They efficiently processed 6,302 voters through that facility. Subsequent to the meeting, he sent me the following holiday schedule:

* CLOSED – Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day
* Open 6:00 AM - 5:00 on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve
* Open 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM on November 29 and January 1.

**A resident** (name withheld to prevent potential retribution) expressed concern that DPW (Highways) (Mr. Brian Proctor was named) has taken down the “Resident Only” parking signs and painted parking spaces on her street that block her driveway and has led to unimpeded abuse by patrons of dining and drinking venues in the neighborhood. She complains that Mr. Proctor’s office (DPW - Highways), as well as and that owners of the establishments, have been unsympathetic and unresponsive. Her property has become vulnerable to litter, refuse, vomit, etc. Capt. Wesseler promised to look into it, as the Second Precinct has a good relationship with most alcohol beverage establishments.[[3]](#footnote-4)

**Late note:** Subsequent to the meeting, I was informed of road closures to be expected in the vicinity of S. Birdneck Road and Bells Road. This is a common cut-through to/from Oceana Blvd., so, if you use it, plan an alternative route. These closures are due to Dominion Virginia Energy wind turbine grid work and will continue into the Spring of 2025. Visit [Coastal Virginia Offshore Wind Project Interactive Map](https://geovoice.powereng.com/dominion/cvow/#close) for the comprehensive information.

**Final note:** We’re finally getting some rain. **Beware of driving on wet leaves** – they’re slick as ice.

**Have a Happy Thanksgiving, religious Holidays, and New Year.**

The next CAC meeting will be **Wednesday, January 8, 2025, at 7:00 PM** in the conference room at the VBVRS Station #14, 740 VB Blvd (17th St), VAB, 23451. Please park on the east side of the building.

1. The briefing is available via YouTube at [Shootings, Violent Crime Down in Virginia… | City of Virginia Beach](https://virginiabeach.gov/connect/blog/shootings-violent-crime-down-in-virginia-beach) . [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. I was invited to attend Crime Solvers November 18 meeting. I left amazed at the international nature of their network and dedication of their volunteers. Anyone interested in helping should contact Ms. Steenburg. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Per <https://virginiabeach.gov> website accessed on the night of our meeting (11/13/24), her property is still in the “Resident Only” parking district. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)