



Virginia
Beach
Vision, Inc.

"Looking Toward Tomorrow's City"

Comments to Virginia Beach City Council
City Budget Hearing
April 26, 2011

Last week, on behalf of V.B. Vision, I spoke of the need for public and private investment to build and sustain a tax base that will keep our tax rates the lowest in the region. We do so because we believe that Council has a fiduciary responsibility for the leadership and management of the municipal corporation. Fact is, that is your primary role, and we know that you know this and embrace that role. To do so, you must take into account strategic issues which affect our fiscal health. To ignore those issues would be the height of irresponsibility, and we encourage you to act as your predecessors have acted to balance growth and the conditions for prosperity.

Unfunded federal and state mandates, and reduced funding for critical services, are real challenges to our revenue streams. We know the City now has to pay for roads, bridges and highways as the Commonwealth has exited this role; we may soon have to take over dredging and sand replenishment; we must improve water quality entering our rivers and bays; we must prepare for triple the fees from SPSA for waste disposal; and, we face a retirement system so underfunded that it presents a fiscal challenge for which we must now prepare.

So what to do? We must not ignore these challenges by failing to budget for them. We know the cost of inaction now will overwhelm

our finances later. City Council is just too committed to our fiscal health to let this happen.

In the face of adversity in the past, you have rejected short term thinking in the development of the budget for the municipal corporation. Fact is, the Beach has been commended by the rating agencies because it has always taken a strategic posture in regard to stimulating quality growth and development, the keys to increased municipal revenues and prosperity in the future. Just because times are tough is no reason to take steps now that will lessen our future prosperity.

The city must maintain its infrastructure, prepare for federal withdrawals of support for dredging and sand replenishment, prepare for higher waste disposal fees, and prepare for further clean up on bays and rivers.

To ignore these requirements, or to put off preparation to some other time, is to adopt short term thinking about long term issues. Frankly, we at Vision know that you realize that the large majority of our citizens appreciate that strategic planning, preparation, and investment must be priorities in this and future budget cycles, and for this we commend you for your past, present, and future vision.