

VIRGINIA BEACH
VISION

May 9, 2016

The Honorable William D. Sessoms, Jr.
The Honorable City Council
City of Virginia Beach
2401 Courthouse Drive
Municipal Center
Virginia Beach, VA 23456

Dear Mayor Sessoms, Vice Mayor Jones and City Council Members:

Last May Virginia Beach Vision, Inc., on behalf of its Board of Directors comprised of 120 community leaders, implored City Council to adopt a budget that would allow the city to move forward with plans to improve our transportation network by extending the light rail system to Town Center, incorporating a bikeway along the transit line and expanding feeder bus services. We applaud Council's forward thinking decision to lay this essential foundation for Virginia Beach that will attract future economic investment, accommodate future population growth in the planned Strategic Growth Areas and meet the diverse mobility needs of the future.

In review of the 2016/2017 proposed budget, we were pleased to note that no tax increase is recommended and that service reductions are not required. The City will continue to enjoy one of the lowest local tax burdens in the region while it lays a strong foundation for future economic growth by supporting such initiatives as the creation of a BioMedical industry cluster in the Princess Anne Commons area, the organic growth of the ViBe arts district, and the initiative to bring Broadband connectivity to the City. We encourage your full support of these funding priorities.

We would direct City Council's attention to a continued concern that sufficient emphasis and concurrent funding support has not been placed on creating and implementing a comprehensive parking strategy in the resort area. This critical infrastructure must be at the core of efforts to improve and sustain this SGA.

We noted that the budget includes the addition of 9 new full-time positions to staff the Body Camera program. These positions are necessary in large part because more camera footage necessitates more hours of review when a case is being prosecuted. It is recommended that the city administration consider a grant-based partnership with IBM's Watson Program to develop a review system that would require fewer hours of direct staff review. Use of body

cameras is a national trend and Virginia Beach could well become a model for electronic-based reviews.

We wish to commend City Council and the city administration on its recognition by the Government Finance Officers Association with its "Distinguished Budget Presentation Award" in 2015. This year the city took an additional step to make the budget process transparent by introducing its new interactive on-line budget process. Beyond its ability to improve public engagement, this initiative could have an offsetting financial benefit. To do so, we recommend the City expand the availability of public records and data through its website and concurrently pursue legislation to amend existing FOIA requirements so a jurisdiction would not be required to individually provide public information that is readily available electronically. By doing so, staff time required to respond to FOIA inquiries would be minimized while the transparency of public information would be enhanced.

I thank you for your consideration and continued efforts to sustain the "greatest city in the world."

Respectfully,

Gordon Parker

Chairman of the Board
Virginia Beach Vision, Inc.
757-499-7003

The logo for Virginia Beach Vision, featuring the words "VIRGINIA BEACH" in a small, sans-serif font above the word "VISION" in a larger, bold, serif font. The word "VISION" is set against a light blue, textured background.
www.virginiabeachvision.com