



April 21, 2021

The Honorable Robert M. "Bobby" Dyer
Mayor, City of Virginia Beach and
Members of City Council

Dear Mayor Dyer and Members of City Council:

The marketability of the Virginia Beach Resort Area to citizens and visitors alike is a critical component of our local economy. The recent public shootings at the beach combined with those of the past, threaten to damage our image as a family friendly, safe resort environment. Initiatives such as Something in the Water and most recently, the Resort Area Advisory Plan, represent major steps in addressing this challenge but, alone, they are insufficient.

It is most critical that City Council provide the financial resources necessary during the current budget cycle to fortify our public safety tools and staffing sufficient to meet the challenge.

In recent years, the police department has been left behind technologically. Officers are still doing written reports or must type them up while sitting in their patrol cars. Likewise, the use of body cameras needs to be expanded. Currently the department has 425 cameras for 800 officers. Funding is necessary to allow 100% coverage of all officers. There is also a deficit of cameras in cars. Funding must be sufficient to equip all marked patrol cars with cameras.

Another key deficit is in the recruiting, hiring and retention of officers. The department has authorization for 813 positions. That number has remained virtually unchanged for ten years. This equates to 1.8 officers per 1,000 population and does not account for the influx of visitors during the tourist season. Norfolk, by comparison, like most major cities, has authorized staffing equal to approximately 3.19 sworn officers per 1,000 population. Further exacerbating the problem, today 100 of the positions in Virginia Beach are unfilled. Resignations are on the increase, attributed in part to competition for officers nationally and diminished public support. Sufficient funds must be allocated to meet these ongoing demands in the upcoming fiscal budget.

More immediately, it is necessary to immediately allocate additional funds to allow for public safety staffing in the Resort Area during the 2021 summer season. Following the economic consequences of the Coronavirus Pandemic, we must ensure the safe return of citizens and visitors to our oceanfront.

We thank you for your consideration and encourage your allocating additional financial resources to our Police and Sheriff's Departments as necessary to meet current and ongoing needs.

Respectfully,

Ann K. Crenshaw
President