

CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Legislative Agenda



2026 SESSION

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POLICY PRIORITIES

Affordable Housing

The City of Virginia Beach seeks to address the growing need for affordable housing with the goal to ensure that all residents have access to safe, high quality, and affordable housing and to promote inclusive and diverse communities.

- Because every locality has its unique challenges, the City of Virginia Beach encourages the General Assembly to provide funding, incentives, and policy flexibility to allow localities to tailor solutions that will fit their communities while maintaining the ability to control land use decisions at the local level.
- The City of Virginia Beach supports efforts to reform the eviction process to ensure that tenants have adequate opportunities to meet their rental requirements and remain in their homes while safeguarding investments made by landlords.
- The City of Virginia Beach supports increased funding for the Virginia Housing Trust Fund to expand and preserve the supply of affordable homes.
- The City of Virginia Beach supports efforts to establish, expand, and fund rental assistance programs and first-time homebuyer assistance programs.

Economic Development

The City of Virginia Beach aims to implement a dynamic and forward-thinking economic development strategy designed to foster sustainable growth, enhance economic diversification, and promote innovation.

- The City of Virginia Beach encourages the General Assembly to support local and regional efforts to attract and retain talent that will support the growing workforce needs of the Hampton Roads region.
- The City of Virginia Beach encourages the General Assembly to support initiatives that provide funding, incentives, and policy flexibility that aligns with the City's economic growth strategy.
- The City of Virginia Beach requests continued support from the General Assembly to increase access to affordable childcare.
- The City of Virginia Beach requests that the General Assembly provide funding for the recently created Sports Tourism Grant Program.



POLICY PRIORITIES

Education

The City of Virginia Beach continues to support the Virginia Beach School Board's efforts to enhance educational resources, teacher support, and student development to foster a robust educational environment and prepare students for future success.

- The City of Virginia Beach encourages the General Assembly to implement reforms to increase the Commonwealth's share of education funding as was identified in the 2024 JLARC study regarding Virginia's K-12 Funding Formula.
- The City of Virginia Beach supports efforts by the General Assembly to provide additional funding to support school construction, including efforts to ensure that Virginia Lottery Funds are utilized to enhance education funding, not supplant existing needs and allocations. As construction costs continue to increase, it is critical that localities have support from the Commonwealth to continue to modernize school facilities.

Energy

With growing power demand and rising electric bills, the City of Virginia Beach encourages the Commonwealth to seek common sense solutions that enhance energy sustainability, reliability, and affordability.

- The City of Virginia Beach supports efforts by the General Assembly to reduce the cost and administration of renewable energy interconnectivity at municipal facilities.
- While the City of Virginia Beach supports the Commonwealth's goals to increase the use of clean energy, it is critical to recognize the potential impact utility scale energy and battery storage projects have on communities and localities. Because of these potential impacts, the City of Virginia Beach encourages the General Assembly to continue to support the authority of localities to regulate the siting and development of energy facilities.



POLICY PRIORITIES

Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Impacts

The City of Virginia Beach seeks to address fiscal challenges and annual budgetary impacts in a responsible manner that effectively meets essential services and community needs.

- Federal Government decisions to realign its priorities, reduce the federal workforce, and reform federal programs, will likely impact the Commonwealth's economy and reduce available services. When resources are not available at the federal or state level, it falls onto local governments to provide resources for residents most in need, especially as it comes to health care, housing, and food insecurity. The City of Virginia Beach encourages the General Assembly to prioritize filling these funding gaps where possible and to partner with local governments to support those who will be impacted.
- The City of Virginia Beach requests that the General Assembly refrain from capping, removing, or restricting local government revenue sources without replacing the source with a sustainable revenue source of equal rate.
- City staff have identified more than 75 mandates from the state and federal governments that have created an unfunded burden of more than \$125 million annually with another \$110 million identified by Virginia Beach Public Schools. The City of Virginia Beach requests that the General Assembly refrain from creating additional unfunded mandates and provide financial support to fill the gaps created by these unfunded mandates.
- Maintain local option regarding collective bargaining for public sector employees

Flooding and Environment

The City of Virginia Beach aims to improve resilience to flooding, enhance stormwater infrastructure, and promote sustainable practices to mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events.

- The City of Virginia Beach requests that the Commonwealth develop a state funding program to support the non-federal match requirements of localities for federal grants that support large-scale flood relief projects.
- The City of Virginia Beach supports continued investment in the Storm Water Local Assistance Fund (SLAF) for improvements and installation of effective storm water management controls.
- The City of Virginia Beach supports increased funding for the Community Flood Preparedness Fund along with improved guidelines for the program that increases the project cap, extends the loan period, and delays interest accrual until project completion.



POLICY PRIORITIES

Land Use

The City of Virginia Beach aims to utilize a comprehensive land use and development strategy to guide sustainable growth, optimize land utilization, and enhance the quality of life for its residents.

- The City of Virginia Beach requests that the General Assembly refrain from passing legislation that would reduce or eliminate the authority of the Commonwealth's localities from making their own land use decisions.
- The City of Virginia Beach supports preserving local authority to regulate short term rentals and to enhance enforcement of those regulations, including greater authority to localities to enforce their zoning ordinances as they relate to short term rentals.

Public Safety

The City of Virginia Beach seeks to ensure a safe and healthy community for residents and visitors through proactive measures, enhanced technology, and increased resources.

- The City of Virginia Beach requests that the General Assembly prioritize increased dedicated funding to police, fire, and emergency medical services.
- The City of Virginia Beach requests that the General Assembly preserve existing local authority to implement public safety technology including expanding local authority to install speed enforcement cameras beyond school and construction zones and enable the use of noise abatement devices to better enhance the quality of life in our neighborhoods.
- The City of Virginia Beach requests that the General Assembly provide greater resources for localities and the Commonwealth's Office of Hemp Enforcement (OHE) to better educate the public, especially minors, on the risks of possessing and consuming intoxicating hemp products and to better enforce the laws regulating these products, with an emphasis placed on enforcement action plans for retailers who continue to sell intoxicating hemp products.



POLICY PRIORITIES

Transportation

The City of Virginia Beach seeks to enhance mobility, reduce congestion, and improve sustainability of transportation infrastructure through modernizing road networks, supporting public transit and multi-modal options, and ensuring safety and accessibility for all users.

- The City of Virginia Beach supports efforts to continue to improve highway and secondary roadway infrastructure throughout Hampton Roads.
- The City of Virginia Beach supports efforts by Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) to protect and enhance transit programs and funding including appropriate essential, consistent funding to meet HRT's capital and operating needs, including innovative transit options such as micro-transit.
- The City of Virginia Beach supports General Assembly efforts to continue investing in trail projects with a request that the Virginia Beach Trail be considered for any future funding opportunities.
- The City of Virginia Beach supports efforts by the General Assembly to protect vulnerable road users, including pedestrians and cyclists.
- The City of Virginia Beach supports efforts to promote micromobility options while also improving safety and user education related to e-bikes.



CHARTER AMENDMENT

Ten Single-Member Election System Approved by City Voters

Background:

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia (“the District Court”) previously ruled that the city’s 7:3:1 election system as set forth in the City Charter does not comply with Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, 52 U.S.C. § 10301 because it dilutes the voting strength of minority voting groups. This ruling was later vacated on appeal by the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit (“the Fourth Circuit”) on the ground that it was rendered moot by an intervening amendment to state law. That amendment changed the seven residence districts previously elected at large under the City’s Charter to single-member districts whose representative was elected by only the residents of those districts.

Although the District Court’s judgment was vacated, the case was remanded to that court for further proceedings. Subsequently, the District Court has indicated that any system other than the 10:1 system with three (3) Minority Opportunity Districts would likely be found to violate Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act.

On January 14, 2022, while the District Court’s order was still in effect, the City obtained preclearance of the 10:1 system ordered by the District Court from the Virginia Attorney General under the Virginia Voting Rights Act. The 10:1 plan was utilized in the November 2022 City Council elections.

In 2023, the City Council undertook a public input initiative that included duly noticed, public education and listening sessions in each of the ten districts. Two virtual listening sessions were also conducted. In addition, the City engaged the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia to conduct a statistically validated public opinion survey within the city, which showed 81% support for a 10:1 system.

On August 15, 2023, the City Council adopted its decennial redistricting ordinance. This ordinance uses the same 10:1 system and district boundaries that were previously ordered by the District Court. Additionally, the decennial redistricting ordinance uses the same schedule of elections that was recommended by the Special Master. It is desirable for the City Charter to reflect the decennial redistricting ordinance, and this request does that.

On May 6, 2025, the City Council adopted a resolution calling for the submission of a charter change question to the qualified voters of the City. At the November 2025 election, the voters of the City answered the referendum question in the affirmative with more than 53% of the votes in favor of the charter amendment. By operation of law the results of the referendum election are transmitted to the City’s General Assembly delegation.

It is the sense of the City Council that it is necessary and proper for the Council to join its voice to that of the voters.

Request:

City Council requests that the General Assembly amend the City Charter to adopt the ten single-member district system used in the 2022 elections, adopted by the City Council in its decennial redistricting ordinance and approved by the qualified voters of the City in the November 2025 referendum.

Language:

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 3.01, as amended, § 3.01:1, and §§ 3.02:1 and 3.02:2, as amended, of Chapter 147 of the Acts of Assembly of 1962 are amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 3.01. Division of city into districts.

A. The city shall be divided into ~~seven residence~~ ten single-member election districts of approximately equal population which shall be numbered one through ~~seven~~ ten. The council shall consist of eleven members, including the mayor, elected at large and one member to be elected by the city at large from the residents of each of the seven districts and three members and the mayor to be elected by and from the city at large and from each of the ten single-member election districts.

B. The boundaries and names of such districts shall be established by ordinance on or before March 1, 1996, and thereafter the boundaries shall be adjusted periodically as may be necessary to ensure that the populations of the districts remain approximately equal.

C. ~~The city council shall, no later than January 1, 1996, petition the circuit court to order an advisory referendum to be held on the question of whether the council member elected from each district shall be elected by the qualified voters of that district rather than at large. The wording of the question shall be determined by majority vote of the city council and shall be included in the petition. Upon the filing of the petition, the circuit court shall order that an advisory referendum be held on the question in the city at the municipal elections to be held in May 1996.~~

§ 3.01:1. Implementation of districts.

A. ~~At the May 1996~~ November 2024 general election, ~~three~~ the members representing district 1, district 3, district 5, district 7, and the mayor shall be elected by the city at large from the residents of the Blackwater, Princess Anne, and Virginia Beach boroughs as such boroughs existed on January 1, 1995. The terms of the members so elected shall commence January 1, 2025, and expire on July 1, 1998 December 31, 2028. ~~The terms of the mayor and council member elected by and from the city at large in May of 1996 shall expire on July 1, 2000.~~

B. ~~At the November 2006~~ November 2026 general election in May of 1998, the members representing district 2, district 4, district 6, district 8, district 9, and district 10 shall be elected at large from districts numbered one through three shall be elected for terms of two years and the members elected at large from districts numbered four through seven shall be elected for terms of four years. The terms of the two council members elected by and from the city at large in May of 1998 shall expire on July 1, 2002 members so elected shall commence January 1, 2027, and expire on December 31, 2030. ~~Thereafter, all~~

C. All members shall be elected for terms of four years.

§ 3.02:1. Election of council members.

~~Pursuant to an ordinance adopted by city council on June 27, 2006, city~~ City council regular elections shall take place during the general election in November 2008, and during the November general election in even years thereafter, for council members whose terms expire at the end of December of that year. Council members, including the mayor, whose terms expire as of June 30, 2008, or June 30, 2010, shall

~~continue in office until their successors have been elected at the November election and take office on January 1. The term of office for each council member shall commence on January 1 next following the date of election and shall continue until his successor has been duly elected and qualified~~ at November general elections. Each candidate shall state, at the time of filing, whether he is running ~~at-large~~, from the district of his residence or for mayor. Candidates for council shall be nominated only by petition in the manner prescribed by general law.

§ 3.02:2. Election of mayor.

The mayor shall be elected at the general election in November 2008, and each fourth year thereafter, to serve for a term of four years. Candidates for mayor shall run ~~for one of the at-large seats~~ at large. A candidate running for mayor shall not run for any other seat.

In the event any ~~councilman~~ council member, including the mayor, shall decide during his term of office to be a candidate for mayor, he shall tender his resignation as a ~~councilman~~ council member not less than ten days prior to the date for the filing of petitions as required by general law. Such resignation shall be effective on December 31, shall constitute the ~~councilman's~~ council member's intention to run for mayor, shall require no formal acceptance by the remaining ~~councilmen~~ council members and shall be final and irrevocable when tendered.

In the event the mayor shall decide during his term of office to be a candidate for one of the single-member election districts, he shall tender his resignation as mayor not less than ten days prior to the date for the filing of petitions as required by general law. Such resignation shall be effective on December 31, shall constitute the mayor's intention to run for one of the single-member election districts, shall require no formal acceptance by the remaining council members and shall be final and irrevocable when tendered.

The unexpired portion of the term of any council member who has resigned to run for mayor or mayor who has resigned to run for one of the single-member election districts shall be filled at the same general election.

2. That § 3.02:3 of Chapters 127 and 762 of the Acts of Assembly of 2020 is repealed.



CHARTER AMENDMENT

Protecting the Blue Line

Background:

In 1979, the City of Virginia Beach established a growth boundary, known as the Green Line, to both safeguard rural and agricultural property and limit local spending. The Green Line was adopted, but not formally named, in 1979 to distinguish zoning districts, with residential zones north and agricultural ones south. The 1985 Comprehensive Plan formalized the Green Line and has remained in the same location. The City continues to recognize the role of the Green Line in limiting development south into the City's rural areas and limits costs of expanding infrastructure and services.

In 2004, the City's Public Utilities Department introduced the Blue Line as an urban services boundary, which established a hard stop for further southernly expansion of City water and sewer services. While the Green Line has historically been the primary growth management tool in the city's Comprehensive Plan, the Blue Line serves as an important additional tool.

Recognizing the Blue Line will help ensure a predictable gradient between the City's urbanized areas and its protected natural, rural, and agricultural areas.

Request:

The City of Virginia Beach requests that the General Assembly amend the City of Virginia Beach Charter to require an affirmative supermajority vote of three-fourths of all members of City Council to rezone property south of the Blue Line to a higher density or a more intense zoning district.

Language:

Amend City Charter to add Section 2.03. Procedure for Land Use Approvals South of the Blue Line

- a) As used in this section, the "blue line" shall be a line running along North Landing Road to Indian River Road, then extends eastward to New Bridge Road, then proceeding north until it intersects with Sandbridge Road, then proceeding eastward tracing the eastern and southern boundaries of the Sandbridge Special Service District until such boundary reaches the Atlantic Ocean.
- b) No application to rezone property to a higher density or a more intense zoning district south of the blue line shall be approved, except by a recorded affirmative vote of three-fourths of all of the members elected to the City Council.
- c) No extension of public water and sanitary sewer ("public system") shall extend south of the blue line absent a public hearing conducted pursuant to Virginia Code 15.2-1427 and a finding by the City Council that:
 - i. There is adequate capacity in the public system at the point of connection to accommodate the additional flow;
 - ii. In the written opinion of the Virginia Department of Health, the existing on-site utilities are failing, or likely to fail, and there are no alternatives that would be approved and permitted by the Virginia Department of Health;
 - iii. The principal use of the property served by the existing on-site utilities is not changed; and

- iv. The extension is to serve (a) an existing development, (b) the reconstruction or expansion of an existing commercial development consistent with its zoning resulting in a total floor area no greater than double that of the development prior to the expansion or (c) the reconstruction or expansion of an existing residence by no more than 10% of existing floor area or residential development where no additional dwelling units are constructed.





CODE AMENDMENT

De-listing Short-term Rentals

Background:

The short-term rental (STR) market in Virginia Beach is a vital part of the city's tourism and lodging network. Because of this, the City of Virginia Beach has taken steps to improve the process to register as an STR operator while strengthening safety and preserving the character of neighborhoods.

There are more than 3,000 STRs operating in Virginia Beach at any given time. However, only about half operate within the state and local regulations. A major loophole in enforcement is that the owner of a non-compliant property can maintain their listing on STR platforms despite not adhering to regulations. Currently, localities do not have the authority to compel STR platforms to remove listings of non-compliant listings without time-consuming and costly court action.

To improve enforcement, public safety, and peaceful enjoyment of neighborhoods, the Commonwealth should grant localities the ability to require STR platforms to delist non-conforming STR listings.

Request:

The City of Virginia Beach requests that the General Assembly adopt legislation that grants localities the authority to require an STR platform to remove a nonconforming STR listing and refund/cancel bookings for that listing.



CODE AMENDMENT

Establish the Emergency Responder Grant Fund and Program

Background:

Firefighters and emergency responders are regularly exposed to toxic chemicals, carcinogens, and hazardous materials while on the job — even with protective gear. Research has shown alarming evidence indicating that firefighters are at a significantly higher risk of developing cancer compared to the general population. Studies from esteemed organizations such as the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) have consistently documented the relationship between firefighting and an increased risk of various cancers.

A state-funded cancer screening program would ensure early detection, which is critical to improving survival rates and reducing the long-term costs of treatment.

Request:

The City of Virginia Beach requests that the General Assembly establish and fund a grant program administered by the Virginia Department of Fire Programs to provide funding to localities for cancer screenings for first responders.



CODE AMENDMENT

Expanding the Allowable Expenses Under "Four for Life" Funding

Background:

Expanding the allowable expenses under the "Four for Life" program is a necessary and timely adjustment that recognizes the evolving needs of emergency medical services (EMS) agencies across the Commonwealth. While the current statute limits the use of "Four for Life" funds to training and the purchase of equipment and supplies, this narrow scope fails to account for the ongoing operational and logistical demands faced by EMS providers. Modern EMS operations require not only up-to-date equipment and properly trained personnel, but also safe and functional facilities, properly maintained vehicles, and adequate funding for essential day-to-day operations that ensure agencies can respond effectively to emergencies. Broadening the statute to include maintenance, facility improvements, permitted vehicle support, and other necessary operating costs would provide localities with the flexibility to meet their unique needs and ensure a stable, sustainable EMS infrastructure.

Furthermore, the proposed revision maintains the core intent of the "Four for Life" funding—to enhance prehospital emergency medical services—while providing localities with a more realistic and practical toolkit for using these funds. Local leaders are best positioned to assess their own communities' needs and granting them the discretion to allocate funds for operational expenses deemed necessary ensures that resources are used where they are most impactful.

Request:

The City of Virginia requests that the General Assembly adopt legislation that expands the allowable expenses under the "Four for Life" program.

Proposed language:

Amend Virginia Code Section 46.2-694 Fees for vehicles designed and used for transportation of passengers;

e. Twenty-six percent shall be returned by the Comptroller to the locality wherein such vehicle is registered, to provide funding for training of volunteer or salaried emergency medical services personnel of nonprofit emergency medical services agencies that hold a valid license issued by the Commissioner of Health and for the purchase **or maintenance** of necessary equipment, **and supplies, facilities, vehicles permitted by the Virginia Office of EMS, and other operating expenses deemed necessary by the locality to ensure the provision of emergency medical services in that locality** ~~for use in such locality for emergency medical services provided by nonprofit emergency medical services agencies that hold a valid license issued by the Commissioner of Health.~~



CODE AMENDMENT

Increase the Fire Programs Fund

Background:

The Virginia Fire Programs Fund is derived from an annual one percent assessment of fire related insurance coverage. The Fund is used to provide an annual population-based allocation to localities throughout the Commonwealth, through the Aid to Localities Program (ATL). Funding supports the critical needs of Virginia Fire Departments, but with the significant rise in the cost of equipment and fire apparatus, the funding is no longer sufficient. According to a study conducted by the Virginia Fire Programs, across the Commonwealth calls for service have increased by 40% over the last three years while funding at the state level has remained relatively the same for 20 years. The last increase in the Virginia Fire Programs Fund occurred in 1995, going from .8% to 1%.

Request:

The City Council requests that the General Assembly increase the annual assessment levied on businesses that sell fire insurance premiums from the amount of one percent of the total direct gross premium income for such insurance to one and a half percent.

Proposed language:

Amend Virginia Code Section 38.2 Insurance, Chapter 4.

38.2-401. Fire Programs Fund:

The Commission shall annually assess against all licensed insurance companies doing business in the Commonwealth by writing any type of insurance as defined in §§ 38.2-110, 38.2-111, 38.2-126, 38.2-130 and 38.2-131 and those combination policies as defined in §38.2-1921 that contain insurance as defined in §§ 38.2-110, 38.2-111 and 38.2-126, an assessment in the amount of **one and one half percent** of the total direct gross premium income for such insurance. Such assessment shall be apportioned, assessed and paid as prescribed by § 38.2-403. In any year in which a company has no direct gross premium income or in which its direct gross premium income is insufficient to produce at the rate of assessment prescribed by law an amount equal to or in excess of \$100, there shall be so apportioned and assessed against such company a contribution of \$100.



CODE AMENDMENT

Low-impact Utility Markings

Background:

Members of City Council and community stakeholders have previously shared concerns regarding the number of unsightly utility markings on sidewalks and streets, especially within the resort area, and have requested updates to regulations or policies to discourage the use of long-lasting paint/marketing products. State law currently requires all underground utilities be marked per American Public Works Association standards prior to commencement and for the duration of a construction/excavation project.

The City of Virginia Beach has made strides in trying to reduce and eradicate the markings, including developing new guidelines and investing in the additional staff and equipment needed to remove them, however, the number of utility markings remains a concern.

Request:

The City Council requests that the General Assembly grant localities the authority, by ordinance, to require the use of low-impact markings when identifying utility locations in officially designated tourism zones.

Language:

Amend State Corporation Commission Rule 20VAC5-309-110. General Marking Requirements.

J. If the use of line marking is considered damaging to property (driveways, landscaping, historic locations, **designated tourism districts**, to the extent boundaries are known), “spot” marking or other suitable marking methods shall be used.



CODE AMENDMENT

Marsh Terrace Project Permit

Background:

The City of Virginia Beach is leading an effort to design and permit marsh terraces within Bonney Cove, located in the Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge. The project will restore valuable habitat for Back Bay fish and wildlife species, improve water quality, and reduce flood impacts by reducing wave heights and water velocities.

Periods of sustained southerly winds push water from Currituck Sound into Back Bay, increasing water levels by several feet and flooding low-lying lands, homes, and critical roadways. Analysis has indicated that increased sea levels and marsh loss are significant contributing factors. The project site was strategically selected as it offers an opportunity to restore approximately 260 acres of marsh island habitat, utilizing a nature-based solution that both provides benefits to the natural ecosystem and in preventing flooding.

However, earlier this year the project was denied the required permit from the Virginia Marine Resource Commission (VMRC) due to the discovery of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV). SAV is a valuable resource for the watershed. But the Marsh Terrace project will create an ecosystem that will promote SAV and allow it to thrive, restore valuable habitat for Back Bay fish and wildlife species, and improve water quality while providing critical flood protection benefits.

The benefits of this project far outweigh the impact both for the environment and for city residents, but the regulations set out by the VMRC do not allow for that distinction. The General Assembly should take action to permit this project to move forward.

Request:

The City of Virginia Beach requests that the General Assembly authorize the Virginia Marine Resource Commission to permit the marsh terrace project and allow it to move forward.

Language:

Amend Virginia Code Section 28.2-1205. Permits for the use of state-owned bottomlands

“A local government whose borders are adjacent to the Back Bay and its tributaries who is intending to construct wetlands within the Bonney Cove section of Back Bay and its tributaries, for the purposes of marsh restoration and/or creation shall be authorized by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission when the acreage of restored and/or created wetlands together with acreage promoting regrowth of submerged aquatic vegetation equals or exceeds the total acreage of direct impacts to submerged aquatic vegetation, plus direct impacts to “vegetated wetlands of Back Bay and its tributaries” , and direct impacts to “nonvegetated wetlands.”



CODE AMENDMENT

Menhaden Fishing Regulation

Background:

Atlantic menhaden is a small, nutrient-dense fish that supports healthy marine and estuarine ecosystems in the Chesapeake Bay and throughout the coast. As a keystone forage fish, menhaden form a critical link between the bottom and top of the food chain.

Menhaden are largely regarded as one of “the most important fish in the sea.” When menhaden populations are unhealthy or unsustainably harvested, other vital fisheries, tourism industries, and the health of the Chesapeake Bay are negatively impacted.

The state of Virginia is allowed roughly three-quarters of the coastwide menhaden harvest limit (nearly 350 million pounds), the majority of which comes from inside and adjacent of the Chesapeake Bay. Despite the concentrated, high-volume menhaden harvests in Virginia’s waters, menhaden science in Chesapeake Bay is “woefully inadequate,” according to the Virginia Institute of Marine Science.

Recreational fishing is a tremendous economic driver in Virginia Beach, contributing to the City’s nearly \$3 billion tourism economy. The positive economic and cultural impacts of recreational fishing depend on productive fisheries, thriving ecosystems, and a healthy menhaden population.

Request:

The City of Virginia Beach requests the General Assembly devote additional resources to better understand the ecology of menhaden in the Chesapeake Bay region and to direct the Virginia Marine Resources Commission to implement additional conservation-minded management strategies for the Menhaden Reduction fishery for Virginia’s waters.

- Prohibit industrial reduction fishing in Virginia’s waters until adequate science is developed to determine the sustainability of removing large volumes of this key forage species from the Chesapeake Bay estuary.
- Implement quota periods for the Chesapeake Bay Reduction Cap, to mitigate impacts of concentrated industrial fishing effort in the Bay.
- Adopt time and area closures in order to protect important predator species, such as osprey.
- Require fisheries observers on all purse-seine fishing trips within the Chesapeake Bay. Funding to come from a Virginia reduction landings fee established by the Commonwealth.



CODE AMENDMENT

"Pop-up" Event Zones

Background:

Across the country, tourist destinations are facing a growing crisis: how to maintain public safety and essential government services in an era where anyone can use social media to rapidly organize large-scale gatherings. Again and again, cities and towns popular with visitors have been blindsided by well-intentioned but unpermitted events that spiral out of control—often with dangerous consequences.

One such example occurred in Virginia Beach, where a single weekend saw the police make 53 arrests, file over 200 charges, and confiscate 28 firearms—all while responding to multiple chaotic stampedes triggered by fears of gunfire. These are not isolated incidents—they are part of an increasingly frequent and unsustainable pattern that demands urgent action.

In response, several jurisdictions—including Maryland, Florida, and the District of Columbia—have enacted legislation empowering local governments to address these spontaneous social media-driven events. These measures include the authority to establish special enforcement zones, impose curfews for unaccompanied minors, limit occupancy on public and private properties, increase penalties for traffic violations, and recover costs from event organizers to cover the additional burden on public services.

Without similar tools, tourist destinations across the nation remain vulnerable to these unpredictable and potentially dangerous events.

Request:

The City of Virginia Beach requests that the General Assembly provide the authority for a locality to create a "Pop-Up Zone" that includes the following:

Pop-Up Event Zone Requirements

Definitions	<p>"Pop-Up event" means an unpermitted temporary activity or event organized or promoted via a social media platform where more than 50 people are expected to attend.</p> <p>"Pop-Up Event Zone" means a contiguous area on or along a roadway, street, or highway which is designated by warning signs. The term includes all parking structures, parking lots, and any other property, whether public or</p>
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	private, immediately adjacent to or along the designated area.
Advance Notification	Localities must provide a minimum of 24 hours' public notice before a Pop-Up Event Zone is activated.
Public Information Webpage	A dedicated webpage must be launched detailing all enhanced enforcement measures, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any reduced speed limits (with specific new limits clearly listed) • Curfew times for unaccompanied minors (with exact start and end times)
Zone Signage at Entry and Exit Points	Clearly visible signage must be posted at all ingress and egress points of the Pop-Up Zone, informing the public that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Pop-Up Event Zone is active • Traffic fines are doubled within the zone
Speed Limit Signage (if applicable)	If speed limits are reduced within the zone, additional signage must be installed to clearly indicate the new speed limit to motorists.

Pop-Up Event Zone Enforcement Powers

Enhanced Traffic Fines	Localities may impose increased traffic fines within the Pop-Up Zone, not to exceed \$500 per violation
Temporary Speed Limit Reductions:	Authorities may reduce posted speed limits within the zone to enhance pedestrian and vehicular safety
Occupancy Limit Enforcement	Localities may establish and enforce occupancy limits on both public and private property within the Pop-Up Zone
Cost Recovery from Event Organizers	Governments may recover all relevant costs and fees incurred from the designation and enforcement of the Pop-Up Zone directly from event organizers
Curfew for Unaccompanied Minors	A curfew may be imposed for unaccompanied minors, beginning as early as 6:00 PM. Minors must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian during curfew hours



Budget Request

City of Virginia Beach Budget Requests

Organization	Budget Language	Amount Requested
Virginia Beach Fire Department	Out of the first year of the budget, the City of Virginia Beach requests funding to support VBFD's Urban Search & Rescue Task Forces (VATF-2)	\$1,775,000
Virginia Beach Police Department	Out of the first year of the budget, the City of Virginia Beach requests funding to support gun prevention violence, of which funding will go towards the City's Parks After Dark Program and to upgrade equipment needs that will support safety in neighborhoods	\$1,000,000
Virginia Aquarium	Out of the first year of the budget, the City of Virginia Beach requests funding to support the Virginia Aquarium's Stranding Program	\$250,000
Virginia Aquarium	The City of Virginia Beach supports the creation of a General Assembly workgroup to evaluate the Virginia Aquarium's future renovation and expansion	Language-only request
City Manager's Office	Out of the first year of the budget, the City of Virginia Beach requests additional support for the renovation of Courthouse office space in Building 10	\$250,000



Budget Request

Empowering Local Governments: Funding Unfunded Mandates Through Partnership

Background:

Local governments across Virginia are burdened with significant costs from both state and federal unfunded mandates. In Virginia Beach alone, these costs exceed \$251 million annually*—equal to 30 cents of every 97-cent real estate tax dollar. Without new revenue sources, localities will face difficult choices: raise taxes or reduce essential services.

A key example is the Veterans Disabled Tax Relief Program, which reduces Virginia Beach's revenue by \$36 million annually. While the value of these mandates is undeniable, the financial burden is unsustainable.

Empowering local governments with targeted taxing authority will help meet unfunded mandate obligations without raising real estate taxes or cutting critical services. It's a fiscally responsible partnership that strengthens both the Commonwealth and local governments.

Request:

The City of Virginia Beach requests that the General Assembly expand taxing authority to generate new, sustainable revenue streams.

New Revenue Opportunities

1. Cannabis Marketplace

- 2025 Proposal: 2.5% local tax = \$20M/year by 2031
- Proposed Increase: 5% local tax = \$40M/year by 2031

2. Skill Games

- 2025 Proposal: 2.25% local share = \$15M/year
- Proposed Increase: 5% local share = \$33.5M/year

3. I-Gaming

- 15% state tax generates \$150M–\$400M/year
- Proposed Local Tax:
 - 5% = \$53M–\$133M/year
 - 2.5% = \$26.5M–\$66.75M/year

Existing Revenue Streams – Expand Local Share

- 4. Online Sports Gambling
- Current: 15% state tax = \$92M/year (no local share)
- Proposed: Add 5% local tax = \$30.7M/year

- Daily Fantasy Sports: If the General Assembly moves forward with regulating and taxing DFS similar to online sports gambling, then a local government tax should be included.

5. Tobacco Products

- State revenue: \$225M/year from cigarettes and other tobacco taxes
- Localities capped at 40¢ per pack or their current rate; no authority to tax other tobacco products
- Proposals:
 - Remove cap on local cigarette taxes
 - Add local tax on "other" tobacco that is equal to ½ state tax = \$27.5M/year

6. Modernizing the Sales Tax to Include Digital Downloads and Streaming

- State revenue estimates: \$200M - \$500M
- 1% local tax estimate: \$40M - \$100M

Summary of Local Government Revenue Potential:

Scenario	Annual Local Revenue
Low Estimate	\$198.2 million
High Estimate	\$364.7 million



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