



City of Virginia Beach

Cannabis Advisory Task Force

2025-2026 Annual Report to City Council

Chair

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Submitted

August 2026

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Chair's Letter

Dear Mayor, Members of City Council, City Leadership, and Community Stakeholders:

Fiscal Year 2025 to 2026 represented an important transition period for the Virginia Beach Cannabis Advisory Task Force and for cannabis policy throughout the Commonwealth.

The year began with continued uncertainty surrounding Virginia's adult use cannabis legislation. By the close of the fiscal year, the policy landscape had changed significantly. On June 29, 2026, the Governor signed the Commonwealth budget, establishing the framework for Virginia's regulated adult use retail cannabis market and moving the Commonwealth into a new phase of implementation.

CATF's work evolved alongside these developments.

During the first portion of the reporting period, the Task Force continued building its knowledge base and developing the foundation of the Cannabis Readiness Report. Following the leadership transition in January 2026, the Task Force continued that work while placing greater emphasis on structured municipal readiness, stakeholder engagement, zoning, public safety, education, and economic considerations.

I want to recognize former Chair Andrew Lock for his leadership during the first portion of this reporting period and the foundation established under his tenure. I am grateful for the opportunity to continue that work as Chair beginning in January 2026.

The Task Force also expanded its engagement beyond traditional cannabis stakeholders. CATF participated in discussions with City leadership, the Virginia Cannabis Control Authority, the Oceanfront Enhancement Committee, the Virginia Beach Hotel Association, and other community and government stakeholders. These conversations allowed the Task Force to better understand how cannabis policy may intersect with tourism, hospitality, zoning, economic development, public safety, and community concerns.

As Virginia moves from legislation toward implementation, CATF remains committed to providing City Council with balanced, research driven, and practical recommendations that respect the City's authority while recognizing the broader responsibilities of state regulators.

Respectfully,

LaTonya Warren

Chair, Virginia Beach Cannabis Advisory Task Force

Executive Summary

The City of Virginia Beach Council established the Cannabis Advisory Task Force by Resolution on October 20, 2022. During the fiscal year covering the period of July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026, the Virginia Beach Cannabis Advisory Task Force (CATF) met nine (9) times

The Cannabis Advisory Task Force continued its mission throughout Fiscal Year 2025 to 2026 by providing research based recommendations to Virginia Beach City Council regarding cannabis policy, zoning, public safety, education, workforce development, and community engagement.

This reporting period represented a historic turning point for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

On June 29, 2026, the Governor signed the Commonwealth budget establishing Virginia's regulated adult-use retail cannabis market. With state authorization now enacted, the focus shifted from whether legalization would occur to how local governments should responsibly prepare for implementation.

Throughout the year, the Task Force adopted a phased strategic work plan that aligned with its advisory mission and focused on municipal readiness within the City's authority. Discussions emphasized zoning, land use, public safety, community education, workforce development, business impacts, and long term implementation planning.

The Task Force also continued developing the Virginia Beach Cannabis Readiness Report, which is intended to serve as a comprehensive resource for City Council as regulations continue to evolve.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Cannabis Advisory Task Force is to serve as a balanced advisory group to the City Council regarding cannabis consumption, sale, manufacturing, and cultivation with respect to public safety, zoning, community, business, and educational concerns.

Historic Legislative Milestone

Fiscal Year 2025 to 2026 concluded with one of the most significant cannabis policy developments in Virginia history.

Following years of legislative efforts, Virginia officially established a regulated adult use retail cannabis market through the Commonwealth's budget process.

For Virginia Beach, this milestone shifted municipal conversations toward implementation readiness, local planning, and preparation for future state regulatory activity.

The Task Force adjusted its priorities throughout the year to ensure recommendations remained aligned with current legislative developments while remaining within the City's authority.

Major Accomplishments

Adopted a Strategic Municipal Readiness Framework

Rather than approaching cannabis policy as a single topic, the Task Force developed a phased work plan organized around municipal priorities.

The framework addressed:

- Zoning and land use
- Municipal readiness
- Public safety
- Community education
- Business impacts
- Workforce development
- Local implementation planning

Each phase was intentionally designed to remain within municipal authority while avoiding duplication of responsibilities assigned to state regulators.

Advanced the Virginia Beach Cannabis Readiness Report

Throughout the fiscal year, CATF continued developing its Cannabis Readiness Report.

The report provides recommendations regarding:

- Zoning and land use
- Public safety
- Community outreach
- Youth prevention

- Workforce readiness
- Business development
- Consumer education
- Economic considerations

The completed report will provide the City Council with a comprehensive implementation roadmap.

Expanded Government and Stakeholder Collaboration

The Task Force strengthened relationships across multiple levels of government and within the Virginia Beach business and community landscape. CATF engaged with City leadership, state regulatory representatives, local organizations, and community stakeholders to better understand the potential local impacts of cannabis policy and implementation.

During the reporting period, CATF participated in stakeholder discussions with:

- Virginia Cannabis Control Authority
- Virginia Beach Planning and Community Development
- Office of the City Manager
- Economic Development
- Oceanfront Enhancement Committee
- Virginia Beach Hotel Association
- Public safety professionals
- City Council representatives

These engagements provided CATF with opportunities to hear directly from community and industry stakeholders and to consider local perspectives as the Task Force developed recommendations for City Council.

CATF also participated in the Oceanfront Enhancement Committee meeting on March 19, 2026, at the invitation of OEC Chair Michael Mauch, and engaged with the Virginia Beach Hotel Association on May 4, 2026, providing opportunities to exchange information and hear stakeholder perspectives regarding the potential impacts of cannabis policy on Virginia Beach's tourism, hospitality, business, and community environments.

Expanded Scientific and Industry Knowledge

Members continued evaluating national best practices through engagement with:

- Licensed cannabis operators

- Laboratory professionals
- Public health experts
- Educators
- Industry associations
- Regulatory agencies

These discussions strengthened the Task Force's ability to provide objective recommendations grounded in science rather than opinion.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The Task Force maintained open public meetings while also seeking opportunities to engage with organizations and stakeholders whose work intersects with cannabis policy, tourism, hospitality, economic development, public safety, and community affairs.

CATF's stakeholder engagement included participation in discussions with the Oceanfront Enhancement Committee and the Virginia Beach Hotel Association, in addition to continued engagement with City officials, state representatives, business leaders, educators, and community stakeholders.

Strategic Priorities Addressed During FY 2025 to 2026

The Task Force organized its work around four primary advisory areas:

Phase I

Zoning and Land Use

Phase II

Municipal Readiness and Public Safety

Phase III

Community Education and Youth Prevention

Phase IV

Market Structure and Local Business Impacts

This phased approach ensured recommendations remained organized, practical, and aligned with City responsibilities.

Key Lessons Learned

Local Government Readiness Matters

Although cannabis regulation occurs primarily at the state level, local governments play a critical role in zoning, permitting, education, and public safety coordination.

Education Must Continue

As implementation progresses, public education will remain one of the City's most valuable tools for promoting responsible cannabis use and preventing youth access.

Collaboration Produces Better Outcomes

The strongest recommendations resulted from collaboration among City staff, regulators, law enforcement, healthcare professionals, educators, laboratories, and industry experts.

Workforce Development Will Support Economic Growth

Virginia's emerging cannabis industry will require trained professionals in laboratory science, compliance, manufacturing, retail operations, cultivation, and public health.

Membership and Attendance

CATF's work is supported through the volunteer service of appointed Task Force members and City staff support.

The attendance report and the Volunteer hours report are attached to this report.

Financial Report

The Cannabis Advisory Task Force does not maintain an operating budget.

Goals for Fiscal Year 2026 to 2027

The Task Force intends to:

- Present the completed Virginia Beach Cannabis Readiness Report to City Council.
- Continue monitoring implementation of Virginia’s adult use cannabis regulations.
- Assist City leadership with zoning and municipal planning discussions.
- Evaluate local policy considerations as state regulations are finalized.
- Expand community education initiatives.
- Support youth prevention efforts.
- Encourage responsible economic development.
- Continue serving as a technical resource for City leadership.

Recommendations to City Council

The Cannabis Advisory Task Force respectfully recommends that City Council:

1. Receive and review the completed Virginia Beach Cannabis Readiness Report.
2. Begin formal discussions regarding zoning, permitting, and operational considerations in advance of future retail licensing.
3. Develop a coordinated public education strategy focused on responsible use, youth prevention, and consumer awareness.
4. Continue interdepartmental collaboration to prepare for implementation.
5. Utilize the Cannabis Advisory Task Force as an ongoing technical and scientific advisory resource throughout implementation.

Looking Ahead

With Virginia’s regulated adult use cannabis market now established under state law, the next phase of the Task Force’s work will emphasize implementation readiness.

The Task Force anticipates continued collaboration with City leadership as state agencies finalize regulations, licensing procedures, and implementation timelines.

Virginia Beach is well positioned to become a model for thoughtful, science based, and community focused cannabis policy.

Closing

The Cannabis Advisory Task Force extends its sincere appreciation to the Virginia Beach City Council, the City Manager’s Office, City staff, appointed Task Force members, partner agencies, and community stakeholders for their continued collaboration and support.

Fiscal Year 2025 to 2026 represented a defining moment in Virginia's cannabis policy history. As the Commonwealth transitions from legislation to implementation, the Task Force remains committed to providing balanced, evidence-based recommendations that promote public safety, responsible governance, education, and sustainable economic development.

Together, we look forward to helping Virginia Beach successfully navigate this new chapter while ensuring that local decision making remains informed, transparent, and focused on the best interests of the community.

Should you have any questions or desire a formal City Council briefing from our agency, please contact the CATF Chair, LaTonya Warren, at 618-741-5956, warren001@armintia.com or CATF Clerk, Natacia James, at 757-385-6467, njames@vbgov.com

City of Virginia Beach
Cannabis Advisory Task Force (CATF)
2025-2026 Volunteer Hours

Name	Term Expires on:	JUL 14 th	SEPT 8 th	NOV 10 th	JAN 12 th	FEB 9 th	MAR 9 th	APR 13 th	MAY 11 th	JUN 8 th	Total Present
Blanchette, Jason	12/31/2026	1.5	1.5		1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5		1.5	10.5
Chick, Travis	9/30/2027				1.5	1.5		1.5	1.5	1.5	7.5
Clark, Michael	12/31/2027	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5		1.5	1.5	1.5	12.0
Dobbins, Adam	12/31/2027			1.5	1.5	1.2		1.5	1.5	1.5	9.0
Hackney, Brandon	12/31/2027		1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	12.0
Hague, Debbie Lou	1/31/2028						1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	6.0
Katsias, John	12/31/2026		1.5	1.5		1.5	1.5				6.0
Lock, Andrew	12/31/2025	1.5	1.5	1.5							4.5
Mauch, Michael	12/31/2027	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	13.5
McLeod, Michael	12/31/2027					1.5	1.5		1.5		4.5
Mollineaux, Cavelle	12/31/2027			1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	10.5
Netzel, Tamara	12/31/2026	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5		12.0
Padilla, Jairo	12/31/2026		1.5	1.5	1.5		1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	10.5
Smith, Stacey	12/31/2026	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	13.5
Stevens, Mark	12/31/2026	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	13.5
Suit, Ryan	12/31/2027		1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5		10.5
Tibbs, Letitia	12/31/2027		1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5		1.5	1.5	10.5
Warren, LaTonya	12/31/2026	1.5	1.5	1.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	19.5
TOTAL		12	19.5	21	22	23.5	22	22	23.5	20.5	186

The Cannabis Advisory Task Force met Bi-Monthly in 2025 and voted to meet monthly beginning in January of 2026 to prepare for upcoming legislation and potential policy changes. Some of the higher totals are for extensive presentation research and preparation. A total of 186 Volunteer hours through June 30, 2026.