



City of Virginia Beach

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April 24, 2020

The Honorable Robert M. Dyer, Mayor
Members of the Virginia Beach City Council

Subject: May 31, 2019 Tragedy

Dear Mayor and Members of Council,

Attached please find a copy of an e-mail that I sent to members of the workforce yesterday addressing two pending issues related to the May 31, 2019 tragedy: 1) a status report of the Police Department investigation, and 2) preparations to remember and honor the victims, survivors, families and friends impacted by the tragedy as May 31, 2020 approaches.

You should have received this e-mail as you are included in the "All Users" address group. I am including it in the Friday Information Package for your convenience.

Steve Cover and I are available to discuss the status report, and Julie Hill and I are available for the May 31, 2020 preparations. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please stay safe.

Thomas M. Leahy
Acting City Manager

From: [Tom Leahy](#)
To: [All Users](#)
Cc: [Millicent Gallagher](#)
Subject: The May 31, 2019 Tragedy
Date: Thursday, April 23, 2020 1:29:00 PM

Dear Member of the Virginia Beach Workforce,

As we approach May 31, 2020, I am sure that the tragic event last year will occupy your thoughts and memories. With that in mind, I wanted to make you aware of two important pending issues so that you will not be surprised if you see them in the media.

The first issue is to advise you that tomorrow's Friday Information Package to City Council will include a brief update on the Virginia Beach Police Department investigation. This update includes details of the scope, logistics, and mechanics of the investigation – in other words the size of the investigation and how it has been conducted. With respect to the horrific event itself, the update confirms information that was previously released by the City and the independent review firm (Hillard Heintze). Although the update clarifies a mis-perception or two that has circulated in the media, there are no new significant revelations.

The Friday Information Package may be found at:
<https://www.vbgov.com/government/departments/city-manager/Pages/friday-package.aspx> Documents are usually posted shortly after 5:00 PM.

The second issues deals with our plans to remember the victims and survivors, and support the friends and families devastated by the May 31, 2019 shooting. As I am sure you can imagine, the COVID-19 pandemic nullified our original plans. Now, instead of the in-person ceremony and other remembrance activities that were designed to bring people out and together, we have had to find other meaningful ways to honor the victims, survivors, and their loved ones while separated and at a distance.

These updated plans are still taking shape, but they will retain the essential goals established with guidance from employees and family members through surveys, meetings and discussions: to design a variety of opportunities for people to remember and reflect, and to create sustainable ways to honor the lives of the victims beyond a few official ceremonies.

Lighting the Path: Together We Remember is the theme of this year's remembrance activities, and the Forget-Me-Not flower is a centerpiece in the designs. Additional details will follow around mid-May, but I wanted to share some of the elements being planned for both Friday, May 29 and Sunday, May 31.

Friday, May 29

- Displays around Building 2 and in another location on the campus that is not in proximity or have sight lines to the building

Encouraging everyone to wear blue and light up buildings and homes with blue or white lights, display specially designed Forget-Me-Not arrangements on doors and windows

- Closing/curtailing operations of the four departments that formally occupied Building 2 at 2:00 so that employees may memorialize the afternoon in the way they think most appropriate
- Moment of silence
- A special lighting display will come on at night. The displays and lighting will remain through Sunday, May 31

Sunday, May 31

- A virtual ceremony beginning at 4 p.m.
- Announcement of special plans to honor the 12 who were taken from us on May 31, 2019

Though the pandemic has created challenges for us to find ways to come together, while we are apart we encourage departments, groups of friends and families to utilize our new-found virtual networks (Zoom, Messenger, Teams, Google Hangouts, Skype, etc.) to create additional opportunities for people to connect.

The VB Strong Center has also developed an array of virtual programs for the month of May that will provide information, education and support for you, your loved ones and your co-workers. Program topics include: Helping Children Cope with a Trauma Anniversary, Coping with Trauma Anniversaries in the Remote Workplace, and Understanding Resiliency. If you or a loved one needs individual support, please call The VB Strong Center (757-507-7200) as they are ready and able to provide support and navigation.

Thank you for all you do to make life better for our residents.

Please be safe.

Tom Leahy

Acting City Manager