

Larchmont-Edgewater Civic League Meeting
February 26, 2024

Call to order: President Michael Crockett called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Updates:

Crossing lights installed at Jamestown Cres. & Monroe; need for crossing guards (city-wide); city is continuing to research the complex stoplight proposal (5-way signal) at Hampton Blvd. and Jamestown Crescent; Hampton Blvd resilience project roadwork concerns; Lambert's Point City Park Steering Committee; Norfolk streetlight LED replacement plan (resolved); street light out?: call 866-366-4357 or use this [online form](#); Islamic Center Parking Expansion, 1442 West 49th Street; home on 5900 Hampton Blvd update: owner hopes to resolve the problem soon; Memorial Day Parade and Ceremony, 10:00 a.m. – noon, May 27, 2024; flyer, survey (what do you want the civic league to do?), social media; thanks to former Civic League President Nate Kinnison, who was our president for six years and remains on the Board as Past-president.

Program:

- Mayor Kenneth Cooper Alexander, Ph.D., with Mr. Pat Roberts, City Manager, Mr. Doug Beaver, Deputy City Manager, and Chief of Police Mark Talbott. This is budget season. Norfolk's budget: About \$1.9 – \$2.0B. Mayor asked the Manager to consider: no new taxes; continue to invest in our critical infrastructure; consider looking into reducing the property tax rate. Crime is down in the city.

Where does the \$\$ go?

- \$0.38 cents of every dollar goes to public education.
- \$0.14 goes to public safety.
- \$0.09 goes to debt payments.

Revenue: \$4 out of every \$10 in revenue is tied to DOD. We must diversify our economy, generate and diversify revenue because 35% of Norfolk real estate is non-taxable (owned by the federal government and other non-taxable organizations). We need tax-generating facilities. Norfolk is a resilient city – we must invest in people and infrastructure and be guided by data to make informed decisions.

- City Manager, Pat Roberts. Encouraged everyone to notify about streetlight outages. Traffic engineers are continuing to study the best solution for the 5-way signal on Hampton Blvd. In 4 weeks, Mr. Roberts will present his budget to City Council. There will be public input sessions – please participate.
- [NFK2050](#) is the “*process to create a new Comprehensive Plan for Norfolk, replacing the existing Comprehensive Plan, plaNorfolk2030. NFK2050 will create a framework for how our city will grow and evolve over the next 25 years and will include ... opportunities for residents and stakeholders to provide input ...*.” Please weigh in!

- Chief Mark Talbott, Norfolk Police Department. Ended the year with crime down significantly. Priorities: reduce violence and property crime; enable safe travel on Norfolk roads; focus on being a well-funded and well-run organization.

Audience questions:

- How are we repurposing Military Circle and MacArthur Mall? The city received three great proposals for Military Circle, but infrastructure issues proved to be extremely cost prohibitive. Developers “asked for the world, but we couldn’t give them the world.” MacArthur: Norfolk purchased the entire mall for about \$25M. The city manager will present mall transformation ideas to Council in a few weeks.
- Issue of individuals on off-road bikes: Dangerous, threatening. What can we do about it? Considering legislation to give city officials more tools to manage the problem. Treating traffic problems like other quality of life problems.
- Is funding available for a Lamberts Point “passive park”? Not yet but check back in about a month. Commentary about losing the Lamberts Point park to HRSD. City Manager commented that discussions with HRSD have been productive. The open space really lends itself to passive space (concerns because the site was a [solid waste landfill](#), i.e. the land is polluted). Concern about ODU gaining control over the open space. The city does not want to lose that open space. Ian Munro a reporter for the *Virginian Pilot*, filed this [report](#) on the park on February 27th.
- Green infrastructure plan question: Using natural infrastructure to reverse harm done by previous practices. Norfolk has a tree canopy requirement for new development. The city hopes to add to landscape architect strength in the Parks department.
- Audience comments:
 - Norfolk Police Ride-Along Program. Very positive experience on the part of the individual who participated in that program.
 - Concern about tidal flooding and mitigation. City knows where the “hot spots” are – plan to go after ten more projects are in the queue and are prioritized. Two threats: coastal storms and stormwater management. For example – size of outfall pipes will be increased; Hampton Blvd will be raised; bulkheads will be improved. Norfolk’s [Office of Resilience](#) will hold four open houses to discuss the resilience strategy. Jason Witt, owner of Waters Edge Winery expressed his concerns about these major neighborhood construction projects. Businesses at the corner of Lexan and Hampton Blvd. are very much affected by major projects as experienced on Lexan Avenue this past fall. Mr. Witt hopes that these projects aren’t at the expense of the businesses at Hampton and Lexan. Would there be tax deferral for business owners, for example? Reply: There will be strict traffic measures, including after-hours work. The Hampton Blvd project will be phased – and the city will work with these business owners.
 - Thank you for making city data more available. However, what about small issues that never really seem to rise to a level where they are taken care of? The questioner lives on Melrose Parkway, and, as an example, mentioned that there are problems with students living in off-campus housing.

- City manager: The 911 Call Center has been moved back to the Police Dept. In addition, Norfolk Cares has been moved out of Norfolk Neighborhood Services, and now reports to a Deputy City Manager. The city wants to remain focused on recurring smaller issues such as this one; they are relatively “low level” but are nuisances for residents – and raise them to manager level. The two changes he mentioned are intended to respond to the concerns the questioner raised.
 - What about plastic in the environment? Options are being explored now...what works best nationally or in the state...they know there is a lot of interest in this concern.
- Additional speakers:
 - LT Tim Breslin, Norfolk PD, introduced himself. Crime update: 13 incidents of larcenies/larcenies from autos. Teenagers entering unlocked vehicles – LOCK YOUR CAR DOORS!!
 - Officer Charles Dreer: Keep your doors locked; turn on porch and other exterior lights at night; criminals like the shadows. Officer Dreer’s cell phone: 757.353.1268.
 - Officer Adam Watson, Old Dominion University CRO: Since the beginning of the year the ODU PD has had reports of one loud party, one DUI, and two larcenies from autos. LOCK YOUR CAR DOORS!! [Officer Watson was on Zoom]
 - **School Crossing Guard Staffing.** LT Mike Felix: this is an area-wide concern. Authorized strength is 80 guards. We have 47 now, and three are out on long-term leave. Now have a guard at Bolling and Upper Brandon Place; Hampton Blvd. and Bolling Ave (2) and Bolling at Monroe. NPD is partnering with AARP to recruit guards; posting information on the city’s website; the PD’s Facebook page, sending information to civic leagues, partnering with Norfolk Public Schools. Pay is \$18.00/hr. now – hope to increase. There are two private companies who hire and manage crossing guards – that might be one possibility. Audience member question: What about a safety patrol? Reply: Not realistic. Slow down on Hampton Blvd! Their priorities are driven by data. They do want crossing guards to work in their own neighborhoods. Many of the crossing guards have worked for the city for 20+ years. They are doing their best to maximize the resources they have, because they have three different “stagers” (shifts).
 - **Elizabeth River Trail.** Morgan Willett, Assistant Director of the Elizabeth River Trail Project. Many neat upcoming events: Wishing Tree Walk and Brew release on March 1. March 3 “Tour de ORF.” Beautification Days. Botanical Walking and Bike tours. April 6, Fort Norfolk Historical tour. April 27, Celebrate Trails Day. There’s a new Pocket Park with a pollinator garden near Harbor Park now.
 - Jeff Robertson Park Trailhead update: Now has a hydration station, a new bench and a play structure. Working on a connection to the Virginia Beach Trail – want to connect the entire region with walking trails.
 - Save the date: April 23, Give Local 757! If you want to support the ERT, there are committees that are looking for help.

- The Larchmont Library Trailhead was funded through a Virginia Outdoor Foundation grant; this is the largest grant the Foundation has awarded. Norfolk Parks and Rec submitted the grant. Funding will allow for improving and widening the trail, including an ADA accessible kayak launch. *Virginian Pilot* reporter Ian Munro filed [this article](#) about the project on March 7th, 2024. Next steps: RFPs, contract, groundbreaking. All existing trees will be protected. Question: Any possibility for festivals or concerts? Reply: No; the space is designed for small community gatherings (about the size of a small outdoor classroom).
 - The organization's website: Elizabethrivertrail.org. Email: hello@elizabethrivertrail.org.
- **Reminder:** Your Civic League needs volunteers to help on any number of committees such as public safety, parks and rec, membership.
 - **Announcement:** Chris Melhuish shared information about The American Friends of Lafayette, which is celebrating Lafayette 200 – the Bicentennial of Lafayette's Farewell Tour. More information here: <https://lafayette200.org/>
 - **Civic League Meetings** are held on the last Monday of every month. The next meetings are at Elation Brewery on March 25th, and on April 29th, at Larchmont United Methodist Church.
 - **R.A.T. Race** update, emailed to Mike Crockett from Kelly Pierce, R.A.T. Race Chair: *I wanted to reach out to inform you that our tentative date for the 2024 Larchmont Elementary School RAT Race will be on Friday, September 27, 2024 starting around 5PM and ending around 8PM. We are in the process of initiating the permitting process with the city and transitioning the race to a new director this year. We will reach back out once the event gets closer and more details become available. Feel free to reach out to this email (lesratrace@gmail.com) with any questions or concerns. Thanks again for your support during the planning process.*

Respectfully,
Gail Nicula, Secretary

Attendance: 100 in person and 10 on the Zoom call.