

North Virginia Beach Civic League News

JANUARY 2023

A LETTER FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

A BIG PROJECT FOR SAFETY IN THE NORTH END

Two years ago the city responded to our request to improve pedestrian safety, and today its proposal is now a \$1.16 million project that would start construction in summer 2024 and could be finished a year later. We're working with the city to get it right.

By Gary Sharpe
NVBCL president



I HOPE THIS NEWSLETTER finds everyone well and optimistically looking forward to a bright 2023. Reflecting on years past and looking toward the future, I am reminded of the role the NVBCL plays in helping to maintain the character and promoting the interests of our community, no matter how big or small.

Sometimes we are dedicated to helping one neighbor with a very specific issue, and other times we are engaged in projects that take many years to see to completion.

One of the larger issues we have been engaged with over the past several years is traffic safety. In July 2020, prompted by numerous pedestrian and bicycle accidents at the North End, our civic league submitted a request to the city for a traffic improvement study. Thanks to their prompt response, we were presented a comprehensive

proposal for pedestrian safety in November of that year. Sadly, since then, we have continued to see a similar number of incidents in our neighborhood, and the need for safety improvements could not be greater.

However, I am pleased to announce the Atlantic Avenue Pedestrian Improvements project has been approved and received funding through the city's Capital Improvement Program. In total, the project has received \$1,160,000 and will focus on "enhancing pedestrian facilities between 42nd Street and 83rd Street along Atlantic Ave."



more info

For a broad overview of the city's pedestrian-safety project, see our January 2021 issue of this newsletter. Find it online at nvbcl.org under "newsletters."

The construction phase is scheduled to commence sometime in July 2024 with a completion date set for a year later, in July 2025. The improvements will include 18 intersections and crosswalks along with various high-visibility pedestrian warning measures throughout the area. Those 18 intersections include adding sidewalk-type ramps that comply with standards set by the Americans With Disabilities Act.

Members of our board have already met with the city's assigned project manager to establish a dialogue and to ensure we are kept in the loop on all updates. We will continue to communicate with the city, update our members and add our input when necessary to ensure we end up with

Please see **PRESIDENT**, Page 3

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

Moratorium City puts a hold on requests to extend private property into sand dunes

By Skip Gibson and Jayna Eller
Government Affairs

Due to the number and type of requests for encroachments affecting dunes and waterways, the City of Virginia Beach has implemented a moratorium on such requests.

Most of the citizen encroachment requests are to extend past residents' property lines into the dunes to extend yards and create flower beds.

The moratorium will remain in place until the city develops a policy regarding encroachment requests.

An encroachment request and a variance request have different processes within the city. When a

variance request is submitted, the city posts a large, orange sign in front of the residence with an explanation of the request, a number for residents to contact city staff and a date scheduled for the review. For an encroachment request, no sign is posted, there is no opportunity for citizen comment and no dates are established; the encroachment request is reviewed by city staff and forwarded to City Council for approval.

The position of the NVBCL Board of Directors is not to support or approve any encroachment that extends past the individual property

lines into the dunes, easements, right of way or similar areas. The dunes serve as our first line of defense against hurricanes and rising ocean levels. We believe our position is consistent with the \$680 million federal funding establishing the dunes and the recent \$567 million Storm Water Bond Referendum.

inside

A history, and reflections, on our North End dunes/Page 2



Upcoming civic league general meeting dates (Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m., at A.R.E.)

Jan. 17, April 18

Speaker for the Jan. 17 meeting

Gina Benefiel, executive director of the Virginia Beach Rescue Squad Foundation.

Treasurer's report

Thank you to all members of the civic league who paid their 2022 dues. Our membership stands at 982, and our assets are \$45,541.44.

This newsletter includes 2023 member-dues envelopes. Our annual dues are \$20, for the calendar year. You also can pay through PayPal on the NVBCL website, www.nvbcl.org. Please include your North End address, your primary resident address and your email address.

Also, for those who made donations to the civic league, thank you so very much. Our projects continue to improve and grow.



NVBCL dues have allowed us to support landscaping, bus shelters, the neighborhood welcome signs and several organizations.

— Bonner Styles





Public safety phone numbers

2nd Precinct Police, 757.385-2700

Nonemergency police, 757.385-5000, option 3

Fire/police emergency, 911

BEACHES & RECREATION

Sand stories We didn't always have the dunes to protect our shoreline – today they need *our* protection

By Skip Gibson
Beaches & Recreation

IF YOU WERE STANDING on the North End sand dunes in 1960, you would see a beach that was less than half what it is today, and a significantly smaller dune line.

The beach shoreline was 80 to 100 feet at its widest point. In many places, there were not *any* dunes. The Ash Wednesday Storm of 1962 battered our shore for 36 hours, eliminated over 50 percent of the dunes, breached the sea wall (now known as the Boardwalk) and destroyed it in some areas, and damaged or destroyed properties behind it.

Thanks to extraordinary vision and efforts by the City of Virginia Beach and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the beach and dunes have become our first line of defense against hurricanes and flooding. In 1968, the Corps initiated a \$670 million project that widened the beach to over 200 feet and created additional sand dunes with a minimum elevation to 8.5 feet. An additional benefit to the dune growth is that much of the North End is no longer in the 100-year floodplain, and many homes do not require flood insurance.

Over the years, the Corps of Engineers also took several low-key, low-intrusion steps. In the 1980s it installed sand fences in the dunes, to capture sand and allow the dunes to grow. Today these fences are mostly submerged by the sand they helped collect, and the dunes continue to grow!

To replace sand pathways through the dunes to the beach, the Corps also built elevated walkways that terminated at the end of the dunes. They were made of synthetic materials that are virtually indestructible, and several decades later they still look good and function well. It's also interesting to note that when first constructed, these walkways were at the top of the dunes. Today, they are embedded in the dunes.

The city replenishes the resort area sand every five to seven years to protect the infrastructure behind it, such as the Boardwalk, sand dunes, pump stations and property that would otherwise be prone to flooding along the shoreline. The most recent beach replenishment deposited 1.4 million cubic yards of sand between 15th and 70th streets, widening the shoreline to 300 feet and raising it to



U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS



ABOVE, SKIP GIBSON; RIGHT, DON NADEN | NVBCL



▲ **Bulldozers** work the Army Corps of Engineers project to widen the beach and rebuild the Oceanfront dunes in 1968.

◀ **Charles Evans** of the city's Beach Operations staff clears sand buildup from a walkway in this undated photo. Beach Operations provides support to all city beaches and the many events that take place on them.

9 feet above sea level.

Over the last several months, we have experienced a number of storms impacting the beach and dunes. The Public Works Department's Beach Operations Division is constantly working to maintain beaches and walkways. Beach Operations has a small number of individuals – such as Charles Evans, shown in the picture above, clearing sand buildup from a walkway – who are constantly on the go. Beach Operations provides support to all city beaches and the many events that take place on them.

The sum of the dunes and beach

projects has created what I consider

a dune nature preserve. Trees, vines, grasses and wildlife are present throughout the North End dunes. Protecting our dunes is paramount to their survival. Frank Fentress of Public Works, describes the dunes as a system – a system of sand and vegetation. The native plant vegetation is referred to as a maritime dune grassland, and the best thing we can do to protect the dune line is to stay off and out of the dunes.

BEAUTIFICATION

Beauty Buddies Planting a tree or adding a bench to a city site can do more than beautify

By Jim Spruance
Beautification

I sometimes get questions about this as these trees have popped up here and there on the Atlantic Avenue median. This is straight from the city website:

Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation Foundation is offering local businesses, organizations and individual citizens the opportunity to buy a park bench or tree for a designated park facility.

With over 200 parks in our city, there are plenty of communal sites to place your personal mark. But most importantly, through your generous purchase of a park bench or memorial tree, we gain community support for parkland preservation and beautification.

Businesses and organizations that share Virginia Beach Parks & Recreation's values can gain positive exposure by purchasing a park bench or purchasing a tree that will help sustain our urban forest. The plaque can bear your business/organization name, address and phone number. Those that sit on your park bench or pass by your donated tree will know you are dedicated to community improvement and will appreciate the shade or resting spot.

Individual citizens can also pay tribute to the memory or honor of a loved one through the purchase of a park bench or tree. The honorary plaque can express your commemoration, and it will be shared with the rest of the community for years to come.



JIM SPRUANCE, ABOVE; DON NADEN, TOP | NVBCL



HERE'S THE DEAL ...

Purchase a park bench or a tree...

- ... in the name of your business or organization
- ... to commemorate/honor the memory of a loved one
- ... to help beautify our community parks

Bench Buddies
\$799 per new bench
\$499 per existing bench

The seat and back rest of these six-foot-long benches are made of 3"x4" recycled plastic. The frame is made with 3" square tubing, and the bench is surface mounted on a concrete slab to ensure longevity and no muddy feet.

Price includes the bench, installation, and a 2.5"x5.75" plaque placed on the bench bearing the message you wish to include. Benches and plaques will be maintained a minimum of 10 years. At the end of 10 years, you have the option to renew your patronage.

There are numerous existing benches in the system waiting for a sponsor! Please visit our parks or contact us at 757-385-1100 to find out where these benches are located.

Tree Buddies
\$349 per tree

Choose from a selection of beautiful native trees to place in our parks and other municipal properties. Species can include American holly, bald cypress, black gum, little gem magnolia, littleleaf linden, live oak, serviceberry, sweetbay magnolia, swamp white oak, or tulip poplar.

Price includes your choice of tree, a spring or fall planting, and a plaque. The tree will be in place and maintained for up to 10 years.

Contact us at 757-385-1100 to find out where new trees are needed.

PRESIDENT

From the front

the best result for our neighborhood. Ultimately, this project will leave our neighborhood safer and more accessible for everyone.

We also have continued our efforts to help protect our dunes system from any encroachments beyond private property onto city land. (See the story at the bottom of the front page.) We will continue to engage with the city as it works to develop new policies for handling such requests, and we will strive for appropriate notifications and opportunities for citizen comment before any future encroachment approvals.

Finally, at our latest meeting, your directors voted to bring on two new board members to fill current vacancies. Please welcome our newest board members, Andrew Cohen and Parker Hannahs.

Andy has been vitally helpful to our Government Affairs Committee, and we are grateful for his continued support.

Parker is a longtime resident of 80th Street and very engaged with our community.

Thanks again to you both, and we look forward to working with you. ■

HOSPITALITY



NVBCL members love a good Social

By Monica Stein
Hospitality

... and our Fall Social held at QUEMAR did not disappoint!

We gathered in late October and enjoyed reconnecting while enjoying live music by Liana Dagmar, special pricing on food and drinks, and the beautiful decor in the Bar Tranquilo.

We are planning our Winter Social for February, so stay tuned. We will email you information, and please check out our Facebook page for updated information.



MONICA STEIN PHOTOS | NVBCL

We're on Facebook

Just a reminder that our NVBCL Facebook page has been up and running since April. You may join by searching "North Virginia Beach Civic League" on Facebook. You must answer some security questions to gain access.

— Caroline Willcox

North Virginia Beach Civic League News

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Find more information on our website, nvbcl.org.

Annual dues for 2023 are \$20.

You can pay online, at www.nvbcl.org, or send a check (payable to NVBCL) to P.O. Box 1676, Virginia Beach, VA 23451.



VENTURE REALTY GROUP

Financing next up for surf park

Developers of the former Dome site's Atlantic Park project announced early this month that they expected to secure financing very soon. By deadline for this newsletter, Venture Realty Group had not announced it.

ZONING ISSUES

City, ZRC still setting priorities for development

By Billy Almond
Zoning Issues

The NVBCL Zoning Review Committee (ZRC) continues to work on several initiatives with City of Virginia Beach's Planning staff to revise current regulations as they pertain to redevelopment.

ZRC members met in person with this committee June 9 regarding the following redevelopment topics listed below. Those in **bold font** are advancing with the Planning Department.

1. Under study are remaining nonconforming parcel re-subdivisions into new nonconforming parcels.

2. Clarifications to the R5RNE zoning ordinance regarding the "Two Detached Cottage" options, graphic examples, and narrative revisions in the zoning ordinance

3. "Two Detached Cottage" option allowed on 7,500 square foot parcels or larger

4. Revisions the R5RNE zoning ordinance to allow garage apartments "by-right"

5. Establishment of the R5RNE Zoning/Civil inspector and contact

6. Public Works Real Estate participation and processes regarding public Right-of-Way (ROW) encroachments, including Oceanfront properties and associated dune systems,

and blatant privatization of ROW property frontage with site construction that takes away public parking; this is under study with Beaches and Waterways Committee as well.

7. The City of Virginia Beach's Zoning Ordinance definition of impervious cover with respect to permeable pavement systems

8. Interior Oceanfront parcels with no direct attachment to a public ROW – impervious-cover hardship

9. Property line vacation requirements for redevelopment

The ZRC continues to participate in the city Planning Department discussions and will report the outcome of the final resolutions to the NVBCL General Membership as soon as possible.

Construction at the North End is very active. Property owners are selling properties to developers who are tearing down older cottages and building duplexes or the detached-cottage schemes. We ask that before you sell your property to a developer, talk with the ZRC regarding your options for redevelopment.

We are seeing an increase in illegal, nonpermitted construction including driveway expansions, shed construction, decks,

terraces, fences and house additions. If you see construction on your street and do not see a visible City of Virginia Beach permit displayed on the property, please contact any ZRC member or call the city's Permits and Inspections office at (757) 385-8060.

We remind our neighbors that developers have three options for North End properties: a single-family house, duplex or two-detached cottages on one parcel. The two-detached-cottage option is an incentive-based design guideline, and a developer must comply with the design criteria in the overlay ordinance.

We remind our neighbors that any opportunity to determine what type of redevelopment happens on your street starts with the "Seller of the Parcel." Once the parcel has sold, it is in the hands of the buyer, who has the three by-right options listed above.

The ZRC continues to review applicants' requests for variances on the second Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. at the A.R.E. Visitor Center.

If you wish to attend a ZRC meeting, please contact Billy Almond at (757) 235-0731 or billy@wplsite.com for additional information in advance of our meetings.