

Hampton Senior Citizens Advisory Committee
Hampton Senior Center, 3501 Kecoughtan Road
August 2, 2021 ~ 10:00am

Present:

Board Members: Linda H. Kindred-Chair; Doris Farmer-Vice Chair; Martha Clark; Yvonne Gaynor; George Gwynn; Martha Johnson; C’Faison Harris

Lead Agency Reps: Dave McCauley-Director, HPRLS; Yolanda Clark, Social Services; Susan Elswick, HPRLS; Gloria Jones, HPRLS; Shaeron King (HPRLS)

Visitors: Chris Bowman, City Council; Alan Castanien, Josiane Melvin, Gloria M. Tyler

Guest Speaker: Karen Bowden, Hampton City Sheriff

I. Welcome

Ms. Kindred called the meeting to order by thanking everyone for attending and reminding them to sign-in. She asked everyone to invite friends and neighbors to the next meeting. An opening prayer was then given.

II. Roll Call

Ms. Farmer conducted the roll call; a quorum was present. Ms. Leary and Ms. Waldo were listed as excused.

III. Opening Remarks

Mr. McCauley discussed the City’s restart of the Community Improvement Plan that was put on hold during the pandemic. He encouraged members to become aware of the initiative and to become involved by providing input into shaping the future of Hampton. Plans are underway to pick up strategic planning again in September with seven teams discussing seven areas of priority. Click on this link for more

information <https://hampton.gov/DocumentCenter/View/23638/Hampton-Community-Snapshot>.

The PRLS Master Plan is also underway. PRLS will align its Master Plan with that of The City's Community Improvement Plan in an effort to alleviate duplication in all areas. Once meeting dates have been scheduled, he will advise board members so they may participate and offer input.

PRLS Updates

- a. Buckroe Beach - Seagrass and native grass planters are being cultivated and Phase 2 is almost completed with the new bike path. Phase 3 will begin mid-September and run through May 2022. It will include the boardwalk extension to the James T. Wilson Fishing Pier, seawall renovation, and new lighting. More interactive stations are also planned.

Ms. Gaynor complimented the work done on the beach thus far, saying that complaints are more often voiced and it's nice when compliments are made also. She said Buckroe is now a family-friendly place, but an eye still needs to be kept on crime. Mr. McCauley thanked her and added that Hampton Police and Park Rangers have been in force since the beach's reopening for the summer, and security cameras are installed.

Ms. Martha Clark stated that parking is still a challenge. Mr. McCauley said there are approximately 400 parking slots available; and when there's a big event, shuttles to assist with overflow to the Jones Magnet Middle School parking lot. He noted that although the pandemic occurred last year, beach attendance was still high because it was an outdoor event and people appreciated being able to enjoy it.

Ms. Yolanda Clark wanted to know about accessible parking, pick-up/drop-off points for the disabled and accessible restroom facilities. She noted that on a previous visit to the beach, she had to drop off an elderly parent at one location and then park in another. The only restroom facilities close to where they sat were port-a-potties, which were not in the best condition, and accessible restrooms were quite a distance away. Mr. McCauley stated that there are two handicap accessible parking lots with direct access routes to ramps, restrooms, and beach. He recommended that she use one of those lots on her next visit.

- b. Air Power Park - will undergo more improvements as the budget allows. Retrograding of the entire lot will be underway, and the artifacts (airplanes) are already placed on concrete platforms to keep them from sinking into any mud. There are also plans to relocate the playground. The Waterwalk Trail, from Air Power Park to Bluebird Gap Farm, will remain open during any construction and Mr. McCauley encouraged members to walk the trail and enjoy the surroundings.

IV. **Presentation: Karen Bowden, Hampton Sheriff**

Mr. McCauley introduced Sheriff Bowden by providing a little background on her career and accomplishments. Sheriff Bowden is the first woman elected to the office of Sheriff in Hampton, and one of only eight female sheriffs in Virginia. Sheriff Bowden earned her Bachelor's degree from Norfolk State University, majoring in Interdisciplinary Studies. She is an experienced auditor for the American Correctional Association, a Commissioner for the American Jail Association, and a Peer Reviewer for the Department of Justice. Sheriff Bowden serves as Vice President of the Tidewater Chapter of the National Association of Black Correctional Jails to support the goal of achieving equal criminal justice. She is also a board member of the American Heart Association, American Correctional Association, and the Hampton Roads Regional Jail Authority.

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Sheriff Bowden thanked the Ms. Kindred for the invitation to discuss new initiatives in place for the Sheriff's Department and to talk about elderly abuse, fraud, and scams.

Sheriff Bowden said that after the passing of Sheriff Roberts, she determined the department would have to answer the question, "What will Corrections look like." In order to answer the question and to move forward, especially post-pandemic, they created a two-phase process. A transition team was formed for Phase 1 to address the following dynamics:

- Internal stakeholders (judges from all courts, pre-trial services, probation/parole officers, police, fire, faith-based leaders, and even Thomas Nelson Community College)
- External stakeholders (citizens, businesses)

- Departmental operational needs

During the pandemic, the department was able to reevaluate operational procedures. They realized technology could have an even larger role than before, so in an effort to improve the quality of life for inmates, they purchased electronic tablets and created a better and more structured virtual platform for inmate visits with families and friends. Inmates are also able to use the technology for educational purposes and limited social contact.

Phase 2 involved a holistic approach to training to address law enforcement and corrections. She noted that it was imperative that deputies working in the correctional facilities be taken care of while on duty for 12 hours or more, and that they be able to work in the safest environment possible. Additionally, there is a need to insure that incarcerated individuals had the opportunity to become better when better leaving out of the system than when they came into the system. Business leaders also will be involved in creating a 'peer support team' to mentor former inmates to integrate them successfully back into society.

Sheriff Bowden stated that her staff recently went through an intensive two-day training on inmate manipulation facilitated by Andre Norman, a Harvard Graduate, Founder of the Ambassador Hope - and a former inmate. She added that the audience should Google Mr. Norman to find out more about him, the link can be found here: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/andre-norman>.

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A Peer Support Team is also being formed that will, on a quarterly basis, award both civilian and uniformed personnel for their commitment and efforts. She noted that showing gratitude to staff and letting them know you care goes a long way, and that she doesn't just talk the talk or walk the walk - she lives it.

During her first 60 days as Sheriff, she promoted four personnel to the rank of Sergeant, insuring that there will not be one in every court. She added that recruitment has seen a decline, particularly during the pandemic, so in an effort to correct that, she lowered the recruitment age to 18. Along with the age-reduction comes a mandatory intensive mentorship and training program that all 18 year olds must successfully complete before hiring. Sheriff Bowden stated that in order for these new departmental initiatives to be successful, it is imperative that there be community engagement and support.

Sheriff Bowden then addressed the topic of elder abuse, fraud, and scams, asking if anyone had attended the July 30 Senior Services Seminar hosted by Liberty Baptist. As one of the presenters at that event, Sheriff Bowden reiterated a phrase she told that audience: "Never be afraid - just be aware." She went on to say the FBI has estimated that seniors lose more than \$3 billion annually to fraud and scams. She stated that criminals sit all day in front of a computer devising numerous schemes to dupe seniors and others out of money. Sheriff Bowden then gave several personal accounts of how she had been scammed, noting that scammers had all of her personal information and her purchasing history. These scammers even threatened to come to her home to arrest her if she did not pay a large sum of money to them. She stated that if it had not been for the 'village of friends and family' she had created, she would have been scammed out of her money and could have been harmed in the process. Her advice was that if anyone ever felt like they were being scammed, or felt uneasy about a phone call, a transaction, or a request for donations, to please create their own village of family and friends with whom they could talk about the matter. However, if creating a village was not possible, they should then contact the police or the sheriff right away.

Members of the audience also provided examples of how very easily a scam or fraudulent act could take place, with one member stating that for those who use social media it is especially important for them not to be so quick to share or provide personal information. Scammers cruise social media like clockwork and look for any opportunity to hack into accounts and steal information - which could lead to someone losing their identity, their savings, and even their homes. The Sheriff was also a victim of a stolen identity scheme.

Sheriff Bowden also explained that oftentimes, people are called by persons who claim to be with the court system and who threaten them with arrest for missing jury duty. Scammers tell them the only way to avoid arrest is if the person pays them a lump sum of money. Sheriff Bowden stated that neither the Courts nor the Sheriff would ever call asking for payments or donations. If you are guilty of missing a jury duty appointment, the Sheriff, however, will appear at your door in person with a subpoena or *capias* to take you into court so you can explain, in person, why you did not appear for jury duty.

Sheriff Bowden reiterated the need for everyone, and seniors in particular, to take all the necessary precautions to protect their health, safety, and welfare. The Sheriff's Department will be reinstating its Community Relations and Citizens Advocacy Committees in the near future and encouraged all to participate in the review of policies and procedures. She will also begin a podcast called "Jail Talk" that will provide tips on how to detect fraud and scams and provide information on rehabilitation programs. She ended with, "Please understand that I don't stand behind you, nor in front of you - but I do stand alongside you."

Ms. Kindred thanked Sheriff Bowden for a most informative presentation and Mr. Gwynn congratulated her again on her accomplishment and continued success.

V. **Approval of July Minutes**

Ms. Kindred made a motion to accept the July minutes as written, which include corrections to the June minutes. Ms. Gaynor made a motion to accept as written; Ms. Farmer seconded, and the motion carried.

VI. **Old Business**

Board Vacancy Update: Tabled until September meeting.

Participation of Non-Appointed Members on Subcommittees: Tabled until September meeting.

Senior Center Renaming Contest: Ms. Kindred stated that Ms. Elswick provided a ballot box that will be in the main area of the Senior Center for ballot collection. The contest will run through September. Only one vote per person will be allowed.

Subcommittee Update: If they haven't already done so, all board members will be asked to sign up for at least one subcommittee during the September meeting. All subcommittee meetings must be held at the Senior Center. Once subcommittee meeting schedules have been established, Ms. Kindred asked that Ms. Elswick be notified so dates/times may be added to the Senior Center's Calendar of Events.

VII. **Public Comment**

Ms. Kindred thanked Sheriff Bowden again and thanked everyone for participating in today's meeting. Sheriff Bowden interjected that in reading the minutes she

wanted to address the comment made about Sheriff Roberts and the Senior Picnic, stating that the event would continue post-Covid. In closing, Ms. Kindred said, “Go out and be a rainbow in somebody’s cloud; and, if you have to look down on someone, be sure to lift them up.”

VIII. **Adjournment**

The meeting closed with prayer and adjourned at 11:13 a.m.