



August 12, 2019

The Honorable Bobby Dyer
Mayor, City of Virginia Beach
2401 Courthouse Drive, Building 1
Virginia Beach, VA 23456

RE: Mr. Dave Hansen, Virginia Beach City Manager

Dear Mr. Mayor:

Members of our conference attended both listening sessions for the Virginia Beach independent investigation into the May 31, 2019 shootings. In both sessions, we were brought to tears hearing from current and former employees who courageously spoke of the toxic work environment that currently exists within the City of Virginia Beach. Therefore, we, the members of the Virginia Beach Interdenominational Ministers Conference, after prayerful consideration have concluded that Mr. Dave Hansen, the current City Manager of Virginia Beach must be immediately terminated from his position and the City should soonest announce a nation-wide search for a replacement. In the words of the late Fannie Lou Hammer, we and many in our great city are “sick and tired of being sick and tired”.

We have watched Mr. Hansen’s behavior, comments, and lack of leadership over the last three years. In any other reputable organization or major corporation managing billions of dollars, a fraction of Mr. Hansen’s actions would have been ample justification for termination. We have reached out to him, wrote to him, met with him and despite our outreach efforts, his performance has only deteriorated. In our form of government, Mr. Hansen, as City Manager, is the face of Virginia Beach more so than any other staff or elected official. He is responsible for the daily operations of the city and more importantly he is solely responsible for creating and maintaining a positive work environment for all employees of the City. The toxic work environment that currently exists within the City of Virginia Beach, which we believe contributed to the horrific event that took place on May 31, 2019 in Building 2 is a result of poor leadership at the very top echelons of the City.

From press reports you are aware of the laundry list of management, leadership, and communication blunders Mr. Hansen has made over the last few years. Insulting Aubrey Layne, a member of the Governor's cabinet, communicating with developers prior to ensuring all council persons were informed about economic development initiatives, participating in racially sensitive text messages with city employees about this organization and other marchers during the 2017 Faith, Freedom and Justice march, calling African American students "thugs" who were visiting Virginia Beach during College Beach Weekend, and making racially insensitive remarks at a community forum in the aftermath of the recent Floatopia event. And finally allowing city employees to be fired and arrested for speaking up and addressing the toxic and noxious environment that exists within city government is without excuse. These and other incidents have lead us to conclude that we are at a serious crossroads in our great City. And in our opinion, Mr. Hansen is incapable or unwilling to make the necessary changes to move our city forward.

But beyond his personal leadership failures, we are equally alarmed by the climate we believe he has created and fostered within all city departments.

We believe this climate led to the city rejecting our 5 point, 23 step plan to improve community policing within the city. And let's be clear, this was a plan requested by the previous mayor. We delivered that plan in September 2016 and to date only a fraction of the recommendations has been implemented. One of those recommendations was to create a Citizens Review Panel to look at citizen complaints against police officers. This recommendation was not implemented and as a result a local Pastor in Virginia Beach had no recourse when he was allegedly threatened by Virginia Beach police officers on his church property! The abusive language and attitudes allegedly exhibited by the officers and their sergeant was completely unacceptable and we believe it is correlated to the toxic climate that currently exist within city government.

Our conference members have congregations throughout the city of Virginia Beach. More than a few of these congregants are employed by the city or were formally employed by the city. From their testimony, we have heard harrowing accounts of the oppressive working environment across many city departments. We've heard about unfair hiring and promotion practices that tend to single out African American, minority and women employees. We've heard about unfair disciplinary processes where again women and minorities are singled out for performance problems, termination and forced retirements. We've been told how department heads, front line supervisors and middle management seem to be under-trained and unsuited to manage people and provide a safe, employee-friendly atmosphere where everyone is afforded equal opportunity to thrive and grow. Instead, we have persons determined to root out selected individuals and replace them with persons who fit some unstated but very real agenda. This toxic work environment would not exist with the right

manager leading the city. This is an unacceptable state of affairs and a new direction is called for.

We believe the lack of leadership displayed by Mr. Hansen in this critical position requires City Council to take immediate action. You and the City Council have the authority and the responsibility to do what is best for the City of Virginia Beach and its residents. Please know we stand ready and willing to work with you and pray with you on a successful conclusion to this matter. It is our sincere prayer that City Council will see the wisdom of this suggestion and act accordingly.

It is with humble hearts and love for humanity that this letter is submitted,,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'JA' with a stylized flourish.

Minister Dr. James Allen
President
Virginia Beach Interdenominational Minister's Conference

Cc: The Honorable James Wood, Vice Mayor (Lynnhaven)
The Honorable Jessica Abbot, Councilmember (Kempsville)
The Honorable Michael Berlucchi, Councilmember (Rose Hall)
The Honorable Barbara Henley, Councilmember (Princess Anne)
The Honorable Louis Jones, Councilmember (Bayside)
The Honorable John Moss, Councilmember, At Large
The Honorable Aaron Rouse, Councilmember, At Large
The Honorable Guy Tower, Councilmember (Beach)
The Honorable Rosemary Wilson, Councilmember, At Large
The Honorable Sabrina Wooten, Councilmember (Centerville)