

# Transcript of March DNCL Meeting Minutes

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## **Speaker A (00:00)**

Well, thanks for joining last minute, you know, in virtual versus in person. Nice seeing everyone.

## **Speaker A (00:09)**

Sorry, looking at the camera there. But yeah, I'm happy everyone was able to pivot tonight due to the weather and jump online for this.

## **Speaker A (00:21)**

And just kind of as far as President's comments go, we've been making some progress, a lot of progress actually, on our getting access to the DNCL account at TowneBank. So huge shout out to, to Michelle over there.

## **Speaker A (00:36)**

She's been very helpful. And then Travis helped us out there today too to get the signatures all submitted and then get our online access set up as well too, so we don't have to go in person to get the balance there.

## **Speaker A (00:49)**

Natalie joined me on that little adventure as well, so she should have access online to our TowneBank account. Accounts here soon as well.

## **Speaker A (00:57)**

And then we also gained access last week to the GiveButter account as well too. So now we can see, you know, the current update as far as who members are and everything like that are for this year.

## **Speaker A (01:10)**

Another little quick word is just everyone's aware, we as board members, we meet every 4th Monday of the month. We do that virtually and then that's where we'll start discussing where we're at financially now that we have access to view all of those details, you know, now that Lorraine's gone.

## **Speaker A (01:29)**

So, and then the other piece to that as well too is I want to always remind everyone that we would love to have any volunteers out there that want to help out with us. I know that I was in Ghent a couple weekends back for the St.

## **Speaker A (01:45)**

Patty's Day thing that they do. And someone came up to me and said, "Hey, you love to participate, you know, in DNCL, and I live in the region and everything like that in the district." So all you guys, you know, on tonight's call and you show up on our Monday meetings every third Monday, you know, at the

## **Speaker A (01:59)**

main, you know, if you guys want to have a larger role or a role within the organization, we absolutely have room to accommodate and would love to have as much help as possible. So And that's what I have at the moment.

## **Speaker A (02:13)**

I know Matthew and I were talking a little bit earlier today about the mechanism to approve the minutes. Since we're on Google Meets right now, we weren't able to find like a little thing like we used to use in Zoom, you know, like a little quiz to approve those.

## **Speaker A (02:27)**

So I don't know if Andy has anything to approve or not tonight, but if not, we can— we're starting to post those items as well on our website, and we're making good updates and getting the website updated. I also want to have a quick shout-out as well too to Sean Murphy, who has been helping us out with

**Speaker A (02:45)**

the social posts and keeping us updated on Facebook. And he's also been helping every Tuesday morning.

**Speaker A (02:50)**

Every single Tuesday morning, the two of us meet at 10:00 AM and we talk about updates to the technology stack that we have for the DNCL as well too. So there's a lot of things going on behind the scenes to kind of keep our organization healthy and moving forward in the right direction.

**Speaker A (03:06)**

So that's all I have. Andy, if you want to jump on, I don't know if Andy's on or not.

**Speaker A (03:09)**

I guess I'll check the roster here, but I'll pass it off, and if not, I will give it to Natalie. Hey there.

**Speaker A (03:17)**

Yeah, without a mechanism to approve the minutes, we'll probably just post those directly to the website, but those will be available hopefully by the end of the week today. Awesome.

**Speaker A (03:25)**

Thanks, Andy.

**Speaker B (03:26)**

Thank you.

**Speaker A (03:37)**

Nally, are you there?

**Speaker C (03:38)**

Yep.

**Speaker D (03:38)**

Ready? Oh, I'm just not familiar with this.

**Speaker E (03:41)**

I had to find the mute button.

**Speaker D (03:45)**

All right, so for the Treasurer's Report, this is for the period ending February 28, 2026, and there's been no financial activities since I assumed the role, but the current balance on GiveButter is \$220. And the balance at Town Bank is \$1,142.47, and that brings us to a total of \$1,362.47.

**Speaker D (04:09)**

And that concludes the report.

**Speaker A (04:13)**

Awesome, thank you. All right, so we have our Downtown Norfolk Police Sector report is next.

**Speaker F (04:35)**

No officers in there.

**Speaker A (04:36)**

Oh, okay. Officer Manning's not there.

**Speaker D (04:40)**

Yeah, he was putting up—

**Speaker B (04:43)**

yeah, I'm here. Sorry, I was trying to get it unmuted.

**Speaker B (04:52)**

All right, so Officer Manning, for anyone who hasn't met me. So this month there was, there were 2 aggravated assaults that were on the stats.

**Speaker B (05:05)**

One of those was domestic in nature, and the other one is just on the very edge over near like where the new apartments are over on Church and East Brambleton. It was like just on the edge.

**Speaker B (05:27)**

Um, it was something that involved, uh, Young's Park. Um, but that is counted on there because of the address of where it took place at.

**Speaker B (05:39)**

Um, other than that, majority of the larcenies, um, unfortunately, as always, the ABC store, and, uh, was the vast majority of them. Followed by the 7-Elevens.

**Speaker B (05:55)**

There were a few package thefts, and with those, there was an uptick in package thefts for a little bit. I would like to thank the downtown ambassadors who, they had noticed someone with some packages and brought it to our attention., and so we were able to identify the person who was taking them, and, um, we were able

**Speaker B (06:21)**

to find one person out of all the packages, uh, that was willing to prosecute. Um, so she was— the, the suspect was taken into, uh, custody for that, and since she's been arrested, the number of package thefts has dropped.

**Speaker B (06:38)**

I think there's only been one since she was arrested. Um, I don't know what she was doing with them other than hoarding them.

**Speaker B (06:47)**

She was just carrying them around in a trash can that she had stolen from somewhere else. Um, outside of that, there were 3 stolen vehicles.

**Speaker B (06:58)**

One is listed as attempted, uh, where someone tried to steal a Kia. One, the keys were left in the vehicle and recovered a short time later.

**Speaker B (07:08)**

And then the other one, unsure how it was stolen, but it was recovered 2 blocks away from where it was stolen a few days later. And the larceny from autos, there were 11 of those total, and majority of all of them were left unlocked, um, and 3 of those 11 were attempted where someone went in and, uh,

**Speaker B (07:41)**

went through the car but wasn't able to, uh, or didn't find anything. And I think that is, is it?

**Speaker B (07:51)**

Does anyone have any questions for me or anything like that? Well, as always, I'd like to remind everyone to, um, block their doors and don't keep any valuables in their vehicles.

**Speaker B (08:06)**

Um, also, I will say majority of all of those larcenies from autos occurred near the edges of the green sector. Um, so they were all over towards, um, a lot closer to Young's Park area, right along the edges of the, uh, the green sector.

**Speaker B (08:29)**

Outside of that, I don't have anything. If anyone else— does anyone have any questions?

**Speaker G (08:37)**

Awesome.

**Speaker A (08:37)**

All right, well, thank you, Officer Manning. Appreciate it as always.

**Speaker A (08:41)**

Absolutely. And I know next up is the DNC report, and I believe Matthew told me earlier today that he was going to cover that for Audrey and Mary.

**Speaker F (08:49)**

Yeah, I got a couple of things that, uh, And then I think Mary's going to say a couple comments, I think, towards the end if she has anything. NEON met last week.

**Speaker F (08:58)**

Just want to remind everyone about the continuing of the traffic flow going down Granby Street there. We are the one-way in between kind of the yellow box area you see going on into the one-way going towards Virginia Beach Boulevard there.

**Speaker F (09:13)**

So if you are making your way through that section in NEON District, just obey the directional signage. Would be very appreciative.

**Speaker F (09:21)**

The best you can do that direction. A couple things for Neon, just a shout out that there is the glass tour that we'll be doing again at the end of March.

**Speaker F (09:31)**

That's the 29th, Sunday the 29th, for those that enjoyed that last year. A little glass circuit between the glass studio and all the areas of Neon down to the Glass Light.

**Speaker F (09:43)**

And then also May 9th, there actually will be a spring bazaar in the plot. So that'll be a fun activity to have kind of in the plot area, as you see there.

**Speaker F (09:54)**

Um, they did want me to mention, and Mary can chime in if she would like, the, uh, they are getting some new signage in the dog park area there that's, um, on Granby Street, and lighting, additional lighting. Um, new signage kind of giving some new dog rules and regulations will be installed on the fence side.

**Speaker F (10:10)**

I'm just part of the— see if we're part of the ARB stuff, but and then lighting. Do you have anything you want to say about that, Mary?

**Speaker D (10:18)**

Yeah, we're able to do this, as many of you know, Ambassador Dave Walker passed away unexpectedly in November, and the Downtown Norfolk Council was the beneficiary of a life insurance policy. So Dave was a lover of dogs, and we thought it would be nice to be able to use some of the funding to enhance this dog park.

**Speaker D (10:40)**

Our creative staff has developed the new downtown dog walk look, which we're going to rebrand the cans that we have throughout downtown, which have the doggie bags in. And Tyler, who's also on the call, has ordered little dispensers that we can hand out to the property managers in our residential buildings, particularly in the Neon District, to hopefully

**Speaker D (11:01)**

encourage people to pick up after their dogs. So we're trying.

**Speaker D (11:08)**

And then, and then, as all of you know, we're also continuing through renewal. We have what is expected to be the last steering committee meeting tomorrow, and then it should— and then it has to go through lots of processes for the DID to be renewed at the end of June.

**Speaker D (11:25)**

And don't forget First Fridays. We'll be back on April— oh gosh, 2nd, 3rd?

**Speaker D (11:32)**

April 3rd. Yes, that Friday, first Friday in April.

**Speaker F (11:38)**

And then you also have the, uh, work from downtown coffee meeting on March 25th. And then the plot cleanup— couldn't have me without having to talk about the plot cleanup on April 11th.

**Speaker F (11:49)**

So all the volunteers are much needed for that cleanup day and spruce up. Um, what else?

**Speaker D (11:56)**

And also Tyler's working on a, um, I don't know if that's on here, we talked about a public art project for the core of downtown, which is the traffic control boxes. So that's going along well and should be implemented by the middle of May.

**Speaker F (12:12)**

If you want to send those, I know we get the award winners or have been selected. If you want to send that over to me, I'll put that in the April, um, minute notes so that way people can see what's coming to brighten up the downtown.

**Speaker D (12:24)**

Yes, I definitely can do that. Thank you, Matthew.

**Speaker D (12:26)**

And I also, in just a minute, I'll drop the volunteer Hampton Roads link for the plot volunteer cleanup day in case anybody's interested.

**Speaker F (12:33)**

I appreciate that. Um, also just a couple things that I guess Selden Market has a couple of pop-up things going on in March.

**Speaker F (12:42)**

The 19th is the happy hour, and then also the cookie bar on March 20th. Just highlight those things that came out today so you see those.

**Speaker F (12:50)**

And then we can't get by without talking about the trees, as Mary looks at me sadly. Um, some of the trees down Granby Street were damaged and needed to be re— taken down, and so they are in the process of reevaluating the next steps on planting new trees, and they will be taken and planted during this proper

**Speaker F (13:13)**

planting times of the season, which isn't right now. That's a lot to say.

**Speaker F (13:17)**

So basically looking at the tree wells themselves and getting anything updated for new trees that will be back to make downtown beautiful.

**Speaker A (13:26)**

Good.

**Speaker F (13:26)**

Miss anything, Mary?

**Speaker D (13:28)**

No, I think we're good.

**Speaker C (13:30)**

Cool.

**Speaker D (13:31)**

Thank you.

**Speaker C (13:35)**

Courtney?

**Speaker G (13:36)**

Well, good evening. Thank you for having me today.

**Speaker G (13:38)**

I first want to pause and just acknowledge the horrific tragedy that took place at ODU last week. We never thought it would happen in our town, and it did.

**Speaker G (13:47)**

You never want to be one of those colleges or universities that's now part of that. Community that has had the active shooter drill and the active shooter taking place.

**Speaker G (14:00)**

And I wanted to share with you a few things. I hope Officer Manny is still on.

**Speaker G (14:04)**

So that day, as the events unfolded, at the end of the day, Chief Mark Talbot sent an email out to City Council, the City Manager, police chiefs, and this was his comment: Today I witnessed more vivid evidence that this is the finest police department in the country. I have so much pride and gratitude for our cops, supervisors,

**Speaker G (14:26)**

executives, and our dispatchers. ODU needed you, and as always, you delivered.

**Speaker G (14:31)**

Our collective prayers to today's victims, my sincere appreciation to all of you, Chief Talbot. I thought it was just wonderfully worded, well deserved, and he was great to take the time.

**Speaker G (14:43)**

I'll also say that I do know the ODU police chief, his name is Chief Garrett Shelton. So I texted him like he needed another text on his phone that day.

**Speaker G (14:52)**

But I wanted to acknowledge what he and the community were going through. And after I texted him, he later responded by saying, thank you, Councilwoman Doyle.

**Speaker G (15:01)**

Tough day, but very proud of the actions of the students and my staff. So I just wanted to share that with you to kind of ground us in, you know, the severity of the tragedy, but also the heroism that took place of those who came together, the fact that you had MPD, ODU, fire, FBI, Virginia State Police,

**Speaker G (15:21)**

I mean, you name the, the body, the entity, they all came together seamlessly. And again, a horrific tragedy.

**Speaker G (15:30)**

I'm so sorry for the losses and for the students that experienced that, but I also want to commend everybody that had such a hand in making it such a short episode so that no further deaths or tragedies took place. So I just wanted to open that up, and I'm wearing my ODU shirt here.

**Speaker G (15:50)**

I did graduate from ODU. I got my MBA there, and so I'm wearing it proudly today and just about every day until I won't.

**Speaker G (15:58)**

But I just wanted to share that with you all because I think that shows how strong Norfolk is and how we do come together well, especially when tragedy strikes. So there's really no good way to transition from that, honestly.

**Speaker G (16:11)**

But I will say this. Next Tuesday will be our City Council meeting where the city manager introduces his FY27 budget.

**Speaker G (16:22)**

So please stay tuned to that. That's the first introduction of the budget publicly.

**Speaker G (16:27)**

And from there, there will be many weeks of back and forth, back and forth public input.. And then we, of course, then vote on it, you know, in a few weeks from now.

**Speaker G (16:36)**

But just know that that's on the horizon. So do pay attention to that.

**Speaker G (16:40)**

Just, you know, if you all have an interest and there's something that you all advocated for that you want in the budget, make sure it's there. So that's next week.

**Speaker G (16:48)**

And then I've had many people reach out to me over the last several weeks, not that it's a new issue, but I think it's reached a crescendo, and that is the issue with our downtown alleys and their lack of cleanliness. And so there's a woman named Christine Gibson who's a resident from downtown who called me Friday, left

**Speaker G (17:05)**

a very lengthy voicemail, as appropriate. I sent it to the city manager's office, and then I spoke with her last night.

**Speaker G (17:12)**

And what she put in her email to me, or voicemail, as I said in an email, Mayor, you got this today, paled in comparison to what she was describing. We have homeless issues downtown.

**Speaker G (17:23)**

The homeless are taking upon themselves to defecate in public with no hesitation. And there are other issues in those alleys, and that just needs to stop.

**Speaker G (17:36)**

So after sending a very poignant email last night to our city manager's office, I got an email this morning that said that they are tomorrow going to be meeting to talk about what are the preemptive actions we can take and how can we respond quickly. Now, Mary, I hope you're not necessarily part of that other than maybe

**Speaker G (17:51)**

for informational, because it doesn't rely— it it doesn't rest on DNC to solve this problem. So, Mary, can I pause?

**Speaker D (17:56)**

Are you a part of the meeting or no? No, I'm not.

**Speaker D (17:59)**

I did— we, Tyler and I and Audrey, met with, uh, Deputy City Manager Debbie George and Ron Williams on Friday afternoon about this topic and others, and Ron confirmed today he will be in the meeting, which I appreciate because he can confirm at least some details for regarding DNC's involvement.

**Speaker G (18:18)**

Right, it's a city issue to solve. It's not DNC to solve.

**Speaker G (18:21)**

You're a partner, but you're not this— you're not the reliant soul that needs to fix all this. There's so many issues that go into this issue.

**Speaker G (18:29)**

So just know that it's caught my— it's not caught my attention, it's been on my radar for a long time, but it's again reached a pitch point and it's not acceptable. It just is not, period.

**Speaker G (18:40)**

Um, and then lastly, Matthew, I saw your recent reel on Instagram where you pointed out our lovely light pole that's been down for years on the, the Hague Bridge. So do you know, and I'll admit this, and as did John Stevenson, we have the pole to fix that light.

**Speaker G (19:00)**

John Stevenson thought someone was fixing it and reaching out to Dominion Tower and Dominion Energy. Someone thought Dominion— he was reaching out to Dominion Energy.

**Speaker G (19:06)**

So that was clarified after I emailed last weekend saying enough's enough, we to get this pole back into service. So they are now proactively coordinating, collaborating with Dominion Energy to get that pole back up.

**Speaker G (19:19)**

And as someone joked, we need to retire that poor little cone that's been sitting over that thing for years and memorialize it. I'll find it.

**Speaker G (19:26)**

Yes, I know. So anyway, that pole will go up.

**Speaker G (19:30)**

But this leads me to my final comment, and that is nothing like a good sale 250 to get the city's to get together and start cleaning up what we should always be cleaning up. And so I think our, our city is going to look very shiny leading up to June 19th, 2021-22, and even in advance of that,

**Speaker G (19:47)**

of all things that we need to do to really make our city look great as we have all these international folks coming in, or folks nationally coming in locally. And I think it's our opportunity to shine, so I look forward to that.

**Speaker G (20:01)**

But I want to thank you all because I know you're going to do your part in helping to 2:50 look good as well. And I look forward to a really great weekend.

**Speaker G (20:08)**

So with that, I'm going to pause and see if anybody has any questions, because I know we have some other guest speakers we want to get to.

**Speaker A (20:16)**

Yes, I see that Savannah wrote a question in here. She said, what's the typical response time for Dominion on light poles?

**Speaker G (20:27)**

Right, exactly. That's my answer.

**Speaker G (20:29)**

Yeah, Savannah, that's the problem. They have a service level agreement that they're not meeting, and when the lights don't work, then we get a credit back.

**Speaker G (20:37)**

I don't want the credit, I want the lights on. So Jeremy and I have been frankly very, very proactive in making sure these things get done.

**Speaker G (20:47)**

So unfortunately Dominion has been a little bit of a challenge. Any other questions?

**Speaker A (20:53)**

She said she submitted some, some polls that were down again in December and hasn't been addressed yet. And I know too, I think, Courtney, I think Nick had sent an email out or something too about, or submitted to Mindy and some light poles that he noticed that were out on our walk as well too.

**Speaker A (21:10)**

So I think it's great to hear that so many people are paying attention to that.

**Speaker F (21:14)**

Yes.

**Speaker A (21:14)**

And that so many people are submitting and adding pressure to the system to get these things fixed. So I think we should, like to your point, keep doing that.

**Speaker A (21:22)**

So that we all can play a role in making sure that we present really well, you know, when all of our visitors come to town this summer. Exactly.

**Speaker G (21:30)**

But I think we will have a ribbon-cutting ceremony when that one pole goes up on the Hague Bridge, and it's going to be the biggest party that Norfolk's experienced short of 250.

**Speaker A (21:38)**

Yes.

**Speaker F (21:38)**

Yeah, I know. I want the cone.

**Speaker F (21:43)**

Yeah, we're auctioning off the cone for future lights.

**Speaker A (21:49)**

Thank you all for having me. Yeah, thank you for sharing.

**Speaker A (21:54)**

All right, so we do have a couple guest speakers. Both of them are our school board candidates for Ward 2.

**Speaker A (22:02)**

We have Dr. Gatling and we have Michael Spencer.

**Speaker A (22:06)**

So we'll have Dr. Gatling go first.

**Speaker A (22:08)**

Now the other piece I want you guys to know about as well too is that we were initially going to have tonight you guys maybe are thinking or tracking this, but initially we're going to have the MacArthur Memorial speak about some of their plans. They have pushed that to April so that hopefully they can present in person,

**Speaker A (22:27)**

was kind of what they wanted to do. And we have seen their slide deck, there's a lot of great updates there, so we're looking forward to getting that update.

**Speaker A (22:36)**

But I'll go ahead and pass the mic over to Dr.

**Speaker E (22:42)**

Hello, good evening everybody. Um, can you hear me?

**Speaker G (22:45)**

Give a thumbs up.

**Speaker C (22:50)**

Yes, we can hear you.

**Speaker E (22:50)**

All right, um, I, I just put in because I did not want to forget at the very end to, uh, put in, um, the link to my website. On the website there, um, uh, when you get a moment to look at it, you will see a segment that I was featured on called I'm Hampton Roads.

**Speaker E (23:09)**

And to Councilwoman Doyle's point, I am proud to be a member of this community. Norfolk-born, Hampton Roads-raised.

**Speaker E (23:19)**

So I wanted to take a couple of moments just to introduce myself to you. For more than 30 years, I have had experience in public education and in higher ed.

**Speaker E (23:32)**

I began my career right here in Norfolk Public Schools as a classroom teacher at Little Creek Elementary School, and over the years I've served as an assistant principal, notably at Lochmont Elementary School, a principal in Suffolk, which just so happens today with this whole tornado watch thingy, I was the principal at Elephant's Fork in 2008 when we

**Speaker E (23:55)**

had the tornado. That was not in The textbook also served as a district administrator and also as a professor at Old Dominion preparing future school leaders.

**Speaker E (24:08)**

Today, I serve as the associate vice president for community relations at Old Dominion University, where I work to build partnerships and to connect our university with the broader community and create opportunities for students and families. So, um, When I think about what I would really like to see for our, our school board, there's really 3 things.

**Speaker E (24:30)**

And the first is strong student outcomes. So as a principal and a district leader, I worked with educators to improve instruction and student achievement through strategic planning and data-informed decision-making.

**Speaker E (24:44)**

As I mentioned earlier, I was a principal at Elephant's Fork Elementary School And I was a very proud principal of that school. I had the wonderful fortune of raising test scores exponentially at that school.

**Speaker E (25:01)**

Actually, it was the first school within the school division that was labeled, and I put in air quotes, a failing school. And after talking with my parents and talking with my community, about at that time the accreditation standards that we were working, were working with.

**Speaker E (25:20)**

We had to serve two masters. We had to meet federal accreditations and state accreditations.

**Speaker E (25:27)**

And this was before retakes at the elementary school level. We always had them at the high school level, but this was before retakes.

**Speaker E (25:35)**

And so it was that one test on that one day that was the predictor of whether we received accreditation. And so it was through working with my parents, working with my community, to be able to get our students to achieve the thresholds that would have us to meet accreditation standards.

**Speaker E (25:56)**

I also had the privilege of serving as the Executive Director for Exceptional Children in Virginia Beach City Public Schools, where I led efforts to ensure students with disabilities and gifted students had equitable opportunities to succeed. It was an awesome opportunity to be able to work with my community, and especially those parents who have students who are known

**Speaker E (26:19)**

as 2E students. So that's the student outcomes.

**Speaker E (26:23)**

The second one is to make sure that our schools reflect the values of our community. Norfolk is a city that values opportunity.

**Speaker E (26:31)**

We value collaboration. Cooperation, and we are, we're holding ourselves responsible for the achievement of our next generation.

**Speaker E (26:40)**

Throughout my career, I've worked to build partnerships between the schools and our community, both in Norfolk and Suffolk and also in Williamsburg, James City County, where I served as well, and I'll continue to do that. Today in my role at ODU, I continue to serve as a bridge between the university and the community, bringing partnerships that benefit

**Speaker E (27:01)**

our students, families, and our neighborhoods. I'm a proud member, board member of the Elizabeth River Trail, and actually serve as the co-chair of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Excellence, which is a state organization.

**Speaker E (27:17)**

Finally, effective governance, that is extremely critical. Our school board's role is to set clear priorities ensuring accountability, and that we work collaboratively with the superintendent while maintaining transparency with the public.

**Speaker E (27:32)**

So throughout my career, I've managed complex budgets, I work with teams, I'm a certified mediator, I am a facilitator of inclusive conversations, which means I bring skills that help to bring people together to solve problems and focus on solutions. Norfolk deserves a school board that works collaboratively, that communicates openly with our community.

**Speaker E (27:57)**

As I mentioned, I'm Norfolk-born, Hampton Roads-raised. Both of my parents served in Norfolk Public Schools.

**Speaker E (28:04)**

I fought it. I went into public relations at James Madison University, and then I switched to having a minor in education because I was worried about my my, my 15-year-old sister's development, and I really wanted to make sure that I knew everything that I needed to know about her.

**Speaker E (28:26)**

And then fast forward, also being a mom of a student who experienced special needs early on. So, you know, in closing, I believe that Norfolk can continue to be a source of pride and an opportunity, and I feel that focusing focusing on student outcomes, honoring our community values, and practicing effective governance, we can assure that every child

**Speaker E (28:53)**

in, in Norfolk has an opportunity to succeed. So when you vote in November, I hope you'll vote for Valika Gatlin.

**Speaker E (29:00)**

I went to James Monroe Elementary School, and in November of 1982, I was Student of the Month. And so, you know, it's where it's very appropriate for me to be, uh, the Ward 2, uh, successful candidate in, uh, November of 2026.

**Speaker E (29:17)**

So I'll pause there and see if y'all have any questions.

**Speaker A (29:24)**

All right, let's see if any popped up here. Um, I don't see any questions at the moment.

**Speaker A (29:30)**

If anyone wants to chime in, feel free, but thanks, Charlene.

**Speaker G (29:39)**

Good luck.

**Speaker E (29:40)**

All right, thank you.

**Speaker A (29:43)**

All right, and then I think I saw, um, I saw Michael Spencer on too, if you'd like to go.

**Speaker C (29:51)**

I am here tonight. Good evening, Jason.

**Speaker C (29:54)**

Thank you for allowing me to be part of your meeting. It's always fun to be with the Norfolk Downtown Civic I just wanted a chance to introduce myself.

**Speaker C (30:07)**

Some of you may already know me, I don't know. I am running for school board, Ward 2.

**Speaker C (30:14)**

Dr. Gatling, good evening to you, former colleague of mine. I am a Norfolk native also.

**Speaker C (30:24)**

I was schooled in Norfolk and like Courtney, Councilwoman, good evening. I'm saddened by Old Dominion's situation because I've got several degrees from Old Dominion University, but I know it as a resilient community member, and I know things will be all right for us all.

**Speaker C (30:46)**

I've been a member of what now is called Ward 2 for 62 years. I was raised in this community, went to school in this community, spent a little bit of time with the Marine Corps, but when I came back, I became a professional educator, and I've been a professional educator for over 50 years at this point.

**Speaker C (31:10)**

Um, began my career as a high school mathematics teacher. I had a number of positions throughout the school systems in this immediate area.

**Speaker C (31:22)**

Curriculum instruction director, a middle school principal, a high school principal, most notably Maury High School, which is again within our, within our board. I was a deputy superintendent for operations in Norfolk Public Schools overseeing all the operations within the school system.

**Speaker C (31:42)**

I served as the interim superintendent for Norfolk Public Schools during two of the gaps, if you will, in leadership. When I retired, I became an independent school head of school.

**Speaker C (32:00)**

I wanted to experience that role also, so I was the head of school of the Williams School, again in Ward 2. It's some wild hair my family and I decided to move to Morocco.

**Speaker C (32:16)**

We were there for 6 years, and while I was there, I principled 2 international British schools in Casablanca, which was a great experience for me. And currently I'm the head of school at the Hague School, which I could talk volumes about our journey there.

**Speaker C (32:38)**

I think For me, the best way I could describe my career is as committed to the cause of education. I'm a relationship builder, innovative in my approach to education.

**Speaker C (32:51)**

I promote inclusivity within the community. I am a communicator, and I believe that good things come from grassroots efforts.

**Speaker C (33:05)**

I did not mention at the beginning I've been very active in Ward 2 throughout the years. I was a long-term member of the Giddens Neighborhood League and served as a president more times than I probably should be able to talk about.

**Speaker C (33:21)**

So it's, it's been a great journey. I'll tell you that my passion for education is driven by the belief that education is probably the best leveler for opportunities for people in this country.

**Speaker C (33:38)**

A good education applied well allows people to take advantage of opportunities throughout this society, and to me, that's part of the key for us as citizens. I also believe that a populace that is educated grows a strong community, and we are a population that values that education.

**Speaker C (34:09)**

And I will tell you that in reflection, 20 years ago, Norfolk Public Schools was recognized by the Broad Foundation as being one of the outstanding urban school districts in this country. We were one of 3 that showed the best promise of practices, the best promise for opportunities for kids and outcomes.

**Speaker C (34:34)**

And it was a very happy day for this city. It was a great celebration.

**Speaker C (34:40)**

Fast forward to today, Felicia talked about all the the, uh, rubrics that the state uses to measure successful school systems, and Norfolk is one of the very few, uh, in the state, the only one in Hampton Roads that had no distinguished schools at all. And so the question is, what in the world happened to us in the

**Speaker C (35:12)**

last 20 years? Uh, the truth is there are a lot of reasons that the school system, in my opinion, is failing us as a city.

**Speaker C (35:24)**

Leadership, I think, is one. Community involvement is certainly one.

**Speaker C (35:28)**

Vision and the trust, uh, in the educators, uh, and what they need to be doing for our children. I believe that with collaboration throughout this city I believe that with hard work and determination with all of our stakeholders and a vision of what can be in the future, this will be our future to improve the schools.

**Speaker C (35:52)**

So I'm running for the school board for that reason. I think I have a voice that would be, uh, give experience, uh, give some guidance, and be able to promote the kind of conversations and efforts that we need to have at the executive level.

**Speaker C (36:08)**

I'm not running for the school board to oppose any individual or to blame anyone for where we are. We are where we are.

**Speaker C (36:19)**

I am running for the future of our children, and I'm running for the future of this city, my city, and your city, to make it a better place for all of us. And let me share, I guess, another thought with you.

**Speaker C (36:36)**

Our city needs to grow our middle class. Successful cities have vibrant, engaged middle class families to support it.

**Speaker C (36:50)**

Research is pretty clear on what attracts middle class. The— if you look at the research, there are things like Safety, safety for families, health care for all.

**Speaker C (37:04)**

Simple things like retail, particularly grocery stores. Middle-class families want grocery stores.

**Speaker C (37:10)**

They'd like to have a place to go to buy food. They may not always go to them, but they're there.

**Speaker C (37:19)**

But number one on that list is schools. And if you looked at the results of the Norfolk City surveys on climate and quality of life, citizens every time come back with number one concern are schools.

**Speaker C (37:37)**

And I believe that we can do better there. So this is what I'm running for.

**Speaker C (37:45)**

One is I believe that schools should be— I refer to them as risk-free places for all stakeholders. Our children should be able to go to schools and be able to think and express and be safe, risk-free in being in a school, to be able to have ideas and share those ideas.

**Speaker C (38:07)**

I think teachers ought to be able to be in classrooms and have it to be a risk-free place to, to practice their profession. The principals ought to be in buildings and have the support to do the things that good principals do, like Dr.

**Speaker C (38:25)**

Gatling, that they need to be risk-free across the board. And they need to be risk-free for our parents to be able to be comfortable to go into the schools, to be part of what goes on, to have a voice in what goes on.

**Speaker C (38:37)**

That's what's made us great in the past. That's what's going to make us great in the future.

**Speaker C (38:42)**

Number 2 is I believe Every school's got to be a quality learning center for students. And it really— we need to go through every school and work together to make sure that's the case, whether it's on the west side of the city or the east side of the city, whether it's in downtown Norfolk.

**Speaker C (38:59)**

We need quality centers for education. And then lastly, we need to have opportunities to engage all students.

**Speaker C (39:09)**

It's easy to say we have all our kids at school, we work on dropout, we work on attendance, but to truly have kids in a building that are engaged in what we're doing, have ownership in what we're doing. The fact of the matter is, and I experienced this firsthand, I loved my years at Maury High School.

**Speaker C (39:30)**

We had about 2,200 students when I left. Fact of the matter was, though, there was a good number of of students that sat in back of classes, uh, hoped that the teacher would never see them, that 60 minutes would be over quickly and they'd get the heck out of there.

**Speaker C (39:47)**

There are better ways to teach kids, and I've been on that journey for a long time. And one of the ways is you develop programs, and particularly for our secondary students, because they're getting ready to step out in the real work world, and we need to be having conversations about programs that will teach them up-to-date technology and

**Speaker C (40:08)**

opportunities in technology that'll make them prosper and be productive citizens. So this is what I believe in.

**Speaker C (40:17)**

I believe that I have something to offer with my experience, with my vision, and finally with integrity. And I would say to you that if If you believe like I do, I'm asking you for your support.

**Speaker C (40:32)**

I'm hoping to be selected to be on this school board. And I also share this with you, that this is not my quote, but education is the most powerful weapon in which we have to change the world.

**Speaker C (40:50)**

And I believe that, and I believe it soul. And that came from Nelson Mandela.

**Speaker C (40:58)**

And I believe that it's time for us to give attention to our schools, to our children, support for our teachers, and honestly, a fair and civil conversation at the executive level that's focused not on what I feel, what is good for me, what's good for my ward, but what's good for our city as a whole. And, uh,

**Speaker C (41:26)**

I'll leave you with that thought. Um, and again, thank you for the opportunity to be here with you tonight, and, uh, be glad to take any questions, um, if there are any.

**Speaker C (41:41)**

Cool.

**Speaker A (41:41)**

Thank you, sir. Um, yeah, I don't see any— anything in the chat yet.

**Speaker A (41:45)**

If anyone anyone would like to jump in, absolutely feel free to do that. But I just wanted to thank both of you for, you know, sharing your careers and your passion and your vision, you know, for the school board.

**Speaker A (41:57)**

So thank you guys. Thank you both for sharing that and being here present with us today.

**Speaker G (42:02)**

Thank you, Jason.

**Speaker A (42:07)**

Thank you. All right, if no one has any questions, Matthew, I think you're back up.

**Speaker C (42:12)**

Back up.

**Speaker F (42:13)**

Uh, we just have a few things to chat about. Speaking about education, I guess, uh, just nothing really to chat about, just so you know, they are getting some new signage, um, in the Montessori school down there, um, on Granby or off Granby there in downtown.

**Speaker F (42:27)**

A good, uh, relationship we have with them in the school downtown. Um, Brian is there, and I think Brian has a few things to say about what's going on with the Grandview Bistro?

**Speaker H (42:41)**

Yes, sir. That's my uncle's store.

**Speaker H (42:43)**

He had it— it was the Grandview Bistro, and during COVID after that, he tried to change it to a convenience store but still selling food. And he's about to retire.

**Speaker H (42:53)**

He's been doing that— he's been there for almost 25 years, I think, now. So I'm trying to take over the place and I'm not changing much, just make it a little bit more modern.

**Speaker H (43:05)**

I have more experience with, uh, convenience store. I had a gas station in South Norfolk for about 18 years.

**Speaker H (43:15)**

Um, so I tried to take that over and I filled out the application, the couple application, and, uh, had a brief meeting with, uh, Ms. Susan Pollack.

**Speaker H (43:26)**

And, uh, like I said, I'm not with my I might change the name just from Granby Bistro and Deli to Granby Bistro and Market, just because it's not just a restaurant, you know. I'll still be doing food, but I will concentrate more on the changing a little bit, the shelving, make it a little bit more modern, I

**Speaker H (43:46)**

guess.

**Speaker F (43:46)**

Cool. Anybody got any questions for Brian? We always love the continued support of having you downtown.

**Speaker F (43:56)**

Perfect. Um, I just went through these other things real fast, just the reminders of important dates coming up since we won't meet until after NATO Festival. Just a reminder about the street closure again on April 18th, that on that weekend, um, for that Saturday.

**Speaker F (44:10)**

So just a heads up on that. Everything else is kind of, uh, explanatory, but we can chat about those in the April meeting for the future May events.

**Speaker F (44:19)**

Um, and Then also, Jason, back to you on that.

**Speaker A (44:24)**

Oh, that is—

**Speaker F (44:25)**

Mary has her hand up.

**Speaker D (44:26)**

Oh, sorry, it's Mary. Yeah, I just wanted to— for the NATO Fest, we'll be sending out a Street Smart, but just a— if it hasn't come out yet, the parade's going to be later than it typically has been in the festival.

**Speaker D (44:39)**

There's a slight change to the parade route as well, and this is all because that very same morning, there's a cruise ship turnaround.

**Speaker F (44:49)**

Very festive downtown that weekend.

**Speaker D (44:50)**

It'll be festive. It'll be great.

**Speaker D (44:53)**

Just make sure you read and understand what streets are closed when.

**Speaker F (44:57)**

So yeah, because I think the festival and the park will start a little bit later too.

**Speaker D (45:02)**

It will be a Thursday.

**Speaker A (45:03)**

Yeah.

**Speaker F (45:04)**

Thank you.

**Speaker C (45:08)**

You're welcome.

**Speaker A (45:09)**

Great. And so We were talking about it. Matthew and I were talking about it.

**Speaker A (45:13)**

We'll bring it to our board meeting, virtual board meeting next Monday, but we're thinking that we might shift a little bit to doing socials quarterly. So hopefully we'll get that schedule out and then that way everyone can kind of know ahead of time when to block off their calendars for so many months into the future and it

**Speaker A (45:35)**

won't be kind of a couple weeks out before you find out about it. So we're hoping to see more participation from that, of course, and bring more new faces out and, and kind of do it maybe less frequently now that we're meeting in person, generally speaking.

**Speaker A (45:50)**

So we don't have to, you know, we're not asking for everyone's time, you know, twice a month, you know. It'll be once a month most months and then, and then a second time, you know, once a quarter.

**Speaker A (46:00)**

And then as far as who we're going to hear from next month from a speaker perspective. Babs from Grace Design is going to come out.

**Speaker A (46:10)**

She is at Assembly. Both of us work there.

**Speaker A (46:13)**

And she pulled me aside one day and she's like, you know, I have a new kind of a presentation that I'd like to share with DNCL. So I said, that sounds absolutely fantastic.

**Speaker A (46:24)**

So her presentation is titled The Invisible Drivers of Downtown Success: Why Active location doesn't equal attachment and what actually makes people return. So she liked this concept.

**Speaker A (46:34)**

She said she was a little inspired around everything going on with the cruise ship passengers and with the redevelopment of MacArthur Center. So she thought it was a great time to, to kind of share this insight that she has from an architectural standpoint.

**Speaker A (46:48)**

And then we heard from Julia as well today. She said that they're going to be in person for their presentation around updates to the Douglas MacArthur Memorial.

**Speaker A (46:58)**

And then Norfolk CASA reached out to us this morning actually, so Sam over there asked if she could do a presentation as well around the, her program to help benefit some of the young people in our region who need a court-appointed sponsor. So that's what that was, and I think that is pretty much everything we had for

**Speaker A (47:24)**

tonight. And then as soon as we find out about our social schedule, we will send that out. And we are, just so you guys know too, we're working with kind of a larger mix of candidates for the social.

**Speaker A (47:36)**

And we're very excited to kind of share what that mix might be in the coming weeks. But anyways, thank you all for attending tonight.

**Speaker A (47:45)**

And sorry we couldn't do it in person, but I'm just so thankful that everyone was here. So, oh, I noticed Eileen had a comment here.

**Speaker A (47:52)**

Please pass along to the Public Department, there's already Sail 250, will this event affect water pressure for downtown residents? In order to accommodate the many tall ships during Opsail 2012, water pressure was taken away from residential buildings.

**Speaker A (48:06)**

We're hoping providing water for the Sail 250 persons won't impact residents.

**Speaker C (48:12)**

Yeah.

**Speaker A (48:12)**

So I guess we could, we could probably send it over to Sail 250. Is that the right group to send the question to?

**Speaker G (48:19)**

Okay. Jason, why don't you send it to Karen? Yes, but then also can you CC me?

**Speaker G (48:23)**

Because I didn't know that happened either.

**Speaker A (48:24)**

It's just good for me to be aware. Absolutely.

**Speaker A (48:27)**

Yeah, will do. Thanks, Eileen, for sharing that.

**Speaker D (48:29)**

They said they're going to be supplying the ships from the water too this year to alleviate traffic issues. So they're going to be bringing barges around, and maybe that includes water.

**Speaker A (48:41)**

But yeah, yeah, we'll get an answer to the whole group once we find it.

**Speaker G (48:45)**

Yeah, I'll share that with the city manager. I don't know that there's— other than Ron Williams, I'm not sure there was anybody there, Mary, from city manager's office in '12 to know that.

**Speaker D (48:54)**

This is the first time I've heard of this too, and I was in 2012.

**Speaker G (48:57)**

But yeah, so thank you for letting us know.

**Speaker A (49:01)**

Yeah, absolutely. All right, everyone, well Well, thanks again for joining tonight, and we'll look forward to seeing you next time, hopefully in person.

**Speaker F (49:06)**

Have a good evening, everybody.

**Speaker B (49:09)**

Bye.

**Speaker A (49:10)**

Thank you.