

To the Honorable Mayor and Honorable Annapolis City Council.

Good evening.

Especially over the past 2 months, I have received an inordinate number of e-mails and verbal concerns from residents, from all over our City—in particular, regarding public safety here in Annapolis. From the Clay Street community and corridor, to Presidents' Hill, to Parole, to downtown, to Annapolis Gardens, to the Spa Creek area, to Germantown-Homewood, to parts of Ward 4, to all of Eastport—from African-Americans, Whites, Hispanics—frankly, the areas and communities that have been touched, and the comments themselves, have run the gamut. And practically no Ward has been immune. I have been approached with inquiries while in the line at the post office; underneath the hair dryer at the hairdresser; in the produce section in the grocery store; waiting for take-out at local restaurants; picking up my mail at my mailbox in front of my home; in the pew at churches that are open; at viewings, wakes, and funerals at our local funeral homes; and every other public place that you can imagine. These concerns are thought-provokingly riveting.

As your City Council Public Safety Standing Committee Chair, it is my obligation to answer all of these inquiries, especially those in writing, in great detail. Frankly, it has gotten to the point, where cutting and pasting has become my specialty; unfortunately, I have become much too adept at it.

After thinking about this, especially over the past 18 months, I indicated to our Mayor recently that it is time, and it is very appropriate for me, as soon as possible, tonight, in fact, to provide to my City Council colleagues and Mayor, as well as to our viewing audience, the very first:

“State of Annapolis Public Safety Address”

And I have titled it:

Who is Accountable?
What time is it?
What are we talking about?
What is our focus?
What are our priorities?
Where do we stand?
What do we stand for?

First, let me start off by saying: No police department nor police officer is perfect. In fact, no one who walks on this Earth is perfect. So instead, we all try to strive for excellence.

With that backdrop, I will highlight just some of the e-mails that I have received regarding public safety. These e-mails have been directed to me, and oftentimes to Ward 1 Alderwoman Tierney as our Finance Standing Committee Chair, and to Ward 2 Alderwoman O'Neill. And a couple of them to our Ward 8 Alderman Arnett.

Here are some snippets from some of the e-mails that we have received—not necessarily direct quotes. And they are extremely lengthy as well as very disturbing and troubling:

- As we all know, since this email string started, Annapolis has experienced another tragic shooting resulting in a 15 year old boy becoming paralyzed and a young girl seriously injured. In the meantime, City officials continue to discuss high dollar items for our City.

- I understand that the police recently told a citizens group that they could really use some funding to upgrade cameras that may help in catching and prosecuting these shooters. Why not propose that these funds be used to fund high priority items for our hard working police force? Maybe at next Monday's Council meeting! (exclamation point)

-I am sure you will get the usual rash of bureaucracy about "the color of money" (i.e. what funds can be used for what purposes), but it would be refreshing to see the Council and ideally the Mayor focus on something that may make a real difference to our community.

-Our efforts are very frustrating with many on the City Council appearing to not care and focusing their efforts on other priorities.

-I hear the gunshots coming over Spa Creek late in the evenings. My home was just recently broken into while we slept - he was arrested. Clearly, as others have stated, the City has changed. Our police force is well below adequate staffing levels for a variety of reasons. The crime and shootings continue. In the meantime, the City Council (with the exception of a few copied here) seems to turn a blind eye on this and focus on other issues. Some examples follow:

- A bill called the PEACE initiative that would have further handcuffed our police force in doing their jobs while duplicating the added paperwork and funds required by recent State laws to do the same. The bill was withdrawn but may come up again in the future... Our City has issues, but we are not Minneapolis and have a long history of our police and residents working hand in hand during tense times. I question the time spent by the Council debating what appears to be an exercise in frankly, nonsense.

- Repeated requests for noise ordinances, speed cameras, and stepped up enforcement of motor bikes and vandals on Main Street - all to no avail as it seems to be "too hard" and may give the "wrong impression" to our "One Annapolis" agenda. If we can endeavour (sic) to build a new garage and City Dock, why are these issues so difficult?

- A slew of ordinances that appear to continue to "give away" City revenues and limit regulations on restaurants and bars while our police are tied up dealing with bar fights and drunks at 2 AM.

- Most concerning are the tragic and continued shootings in the City so very near homes coupled with the serious drug issues many of our less fortunate residents deal with every day.

-I applaud the efforts by Chief Jackson and his staff, but despite all their hard work there is no question that for a City of our size and complexity (State Capital, USNA, etc) we are severely understaffed and the majority of our City Council seems to have other financial priorities in mind.

-I hope that Ald. Pindell Charles and Tierney will continue their good work in ensuring our Public Safety Departments are adequately staffed and that our residents, and respective organizations will continue to be very vocal about what is occurring in Annapolis. I would urge all of our residents to show up (live or virtual) at City Council meetings and testify about your concerns during the open comments period of the meetings.

***Rhonda:** “A resident even sent us an audio recording of the gunshots fired ~~tonight~~ recently. Yes, it’s very unnerving and frightening.”*

Return to:

Here are some snippets from some of the e-mails that we have received—not necessarily direct quotes. And they are extremely lengthy as well as very disturbing and troubling:

-Our neighborhood, our neighbors, are seeking an immediate response.

-Here are the people and groups that we will be contacting to follow up and alert of these issues:

- > - Ward One Alderwoman
- > -Mayor's Office
- > -Annapolis Police Department
- > -President's Hill Association

- > -Ward One Resident Association
- > -State Delegate
- > -State Senator
- > -Governor's Office

-We are becoming increasingly worried and alarmed about the increase in gun violence and the plan to address it.

-As a resident, I am dedicated to the success and safety of our community.

-Gun violence cannot become a new normal for our neighborhoods and we want to do whatever we can to implore the City to take immediate, decisive and major action to curb this violence. As residents, what can we do? Are there any steps or actions we can take to support the City's initiatives?

-This list below keeps growing, and if it doesn't start changing, residents are going to start moving. Our new next door neighbors have gunshots recorded on their cameras now twice since they moved in.

-Any advice is appreciated for us and our neighbors. We're worried and we don't know what to do.

-> Here is a list of recent gun violence that is affecting our city and our neighborhood:

- > June 29, 2021 - Graduate Hotel shooting from Pleasant St.
- > Oct 14, 2021 - Pleasant Street shooting
- > December 24, 2021 - Shooting on the corner of West St & Calvert Street
- > February 12, 2022 - Two shootings Sat night, Obery Court
- > February 17, 2022 - Two gunshots fired, Obery Ct/Pleasant St Vicinity
- > 7:35pm (Shooting Audio Attached)

-We have rising crime rates. We have camera systems not working in neighborhoods plagued with gun violence. This is a very poor way to manage priorities.

-Bullets will fly, kids will continue to die, community centers will continue to close early because of lack of funding, no police at the substations.

-At least 3 times in the past month, me and my wife (as well as multiple other neighbors) have heard a barrage of gunfire in the late evening hours, between 10pm and 2am (I use the term barrage because it sounds like a full magazine of bullets is being fired). Since we live off of West Street, it is tough to pinpoint the exact location of the incidents. They could be coming from our community, they could be coming from Eastport, it's tough to pinpoint just by sound. Also, we unfortunately only ever hear the faint wail of a single police siren sometime after.

-These may have been victimless incidents. But as you are well aware, that may have been luck considering the other recent events in our city. There was the incident of children being shot in the Robinwood community, young teenagers being shot in mid-February on Tyler Ave., gunshots on S. Cherry Grove last fall during an apparent drive-by shooting, the death of an incoming midshipman's mother in front of the Graduate before Induction day.....it's a troubling trend that seems to get immediate attention, but then no building pressure that results in tangible action.

-The point of the email isn't meant to disparage our law enforcement. We have the utmost respect for them and the increasingly difficult nature of their task.

-This message is to ask you what we are planning to do to subdue this seeming growing level of wanton violence in our city?

-My wife and I love our neighborhood and community. We want to raise our young daughter in Annapolis. However, this trend has us seriously considering moving to a place where we don't have to explain to our daughter that the sound she hears at night is not fireworks but gunshots. NOBODY should have to do that. And NO family or child should be put at risk because we're not holding people responsible for their actions.

-As residents, what can we do? Are there any steps or actions we can take to support the City's initiatives?

-Again: Any advice is appreciated for us and our neighbors. We're worried about ALL of our City and we don't know what to do.

-Should our neighborhood associations become more involved?

-What do you need from us as residents? Funding? Petitions? Testimony?

And now tonight, more gunshots. Where is the police? Who are the plainclothes officers?

-THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE.

-I will be forwarding you our neighborhood audio in a separate email. We must have change and action. Immediately.

-There has been a large uptick in violent crimes. There is a seemingly linear relationship of poor policies (including mitigated police funding/available actions over frivolous and fruitless priorities).

-Shooting is occurring 1-2X per week.

-We want to support your efforts to procure additional resources and your collaborative approach. As residents, we appreciate all that you and your department do to keep our communities safe and we will be contacting our representatives to request they support more resources to help address these issues now.

-Dear Major Brandford,

Thank you for the updates on the incident last year, as well as the overall actions the Police Department is taking to address this increased violence. Over at least the last year, it seems that there have been an increasing number of incidents and the number of incidents involving guns have increased dramatically.

-We keep telling our neighbors that it, quote, "didn't use to be like this", unquote, because we really never heard any gunshots until last year. But, with the two homicides and numerous shootings last year, this is becoming more pervasive. We want to support your efforts to procure additional resources and your collaborative approach.

-As residents, we appreciate all that you and your department do to keep our communities safe and we will be contacting our representatives to request they support more resources to help address these issues now.

-And from a different perspective, what programs are in place to prevent crime? While I do agree that our police force needs adequate funding, I believe prevention is the key!

Rhonda: “City Council, This ends momentarily what we have received in e-mails for now.”

Whether these descriptions are totally accurate or not, nonetheless, they certainly paint a grim picture of our City—a City where we have 40,000 residents and a million visitors per year. Nevertheless, these are in fact, our residents’ reality. Yes, perception can be reality.

We did receive the following e-mail—truly a glimmer of hope from two residents:

QUOTE:

Alderwoman Pindell Charles: We were blown away by your detailed response across so many fronts about what the city is doing, so much more than what we were aware. A lot of the root causes come down to what Chief Jackson talked about in his presser the other day, addressing social issues though we are also pleased to see most every arrest description end with "held without bond."

It's easy to criticize after every incident and I cringe at comments by some on social media that blame the mayor, staff, & police personally for every incident. Anyway, we are ready to make a personal sizable donation towards where ever it will address the biggest need, please let us know. We're not able to donate much of our time.

I challenge others to step up and help the city in tangible ways as well!

UNQUOTE.

Rhonda:

This e-mail being from some residents who obviously truly care, and in their own very tangible way.

The "OTHERS" that are mentioned in this e-mail include: All of us. And all of you.

This is just a snippet of what Alderwomen Tierney, O'Neill, and I have been receiving most recently.

So, these are the immediate questions that come to my mind:

Who is Accountable? What time is it? What are we talking about?
What is our focus? What are our priorities? Where do we stand? What
do we stand for?

So after more cutting and pasting, this is the e-mail that has gone out to
many City residents when requesting details to their 5 legitimate
inquiries and comments here:

1 - We are becoming increasingly worried and alarmed about the
increase in gun violence and the plan to address it.

2 - This message is to ask you: what we, as a City, are planning to do to
subdue this seeming growing level of wanton violence in our city?

3 - And from a different perspective, what programs are in place to
prevent crime? While I do agree that our police force needs adequate
funding, I believe prevention is the key!

4 - As residents, what can we do? Are there any steps or actions we can
take to support the City's initiatives?

5 - Any advice is appreciated for us and our neighbors. We're worried
about ALL of our City and we don't know what to do.

In order to adequately and fully address these inquiries and comments,
the following has been my response as your Public Safety Chair, and my
cc to Alderwoman Tierney as our Finance Committee Chair. My
response is very lengthy and detailed. And it needed to be, especially
based upon the very serious nature of the e-mails that we received, and
the perceptions of our residents as it relates to all 9 of us.

QUOTE from Rhonda:

Thank you for your e-mail and your understandable concern for the safety in our communities.

I have lived in the City--in the Parole community--all of my life (67 years), and my family has had a presence here in Parole since the Civil War. And I can truly say that it has never been like this. Ever!

We all remain very concerned about the recent incidents, resulting in the steps and efforts that we continue to take toward making our City as safe as possible.

Our Annapolis Police Department (**APD**) has become increasingly successful when it comes to investigating and solving crime in the City. For example, our County State's Attorney's Office has been involved in several of our more recent investigations--from the very start--from the beginning; and they work hand-in-hand with the police throughout the life of our cases. Investigations, of any type, can remain ongoing.

At an APD Eastport Civic Association (**ECA**) community meeting in December, and most recently, our extremely comprehensive and robust monthly Public Safety Standing Committee meetings (2/7/22 and 2/16/22), several approaches were mentioned and are in the process of hopefully being implemented, including the continued use of our federal partners, who have an inordinate amount of resources, but also possibly 2 new partners--namely, the USNA (federal) and the Maryland Department of General Services Police (State); we are working on, and hopefully (and prayerfully) securing MOUs with them. Also, a substation is being discussed which would be located in a space in the Ancient City Lodge #14 on Clay Street. As an aside, we are in the process of more aggressively recruiting officers so that we can bring our police force up to the size that is necessary in order to continue to combat crime, including hopefully fully staffing our 2 resource centers (Robinwood and Harbour House communities).

We are now following a protocol which is working wonderfully well: When residents have questions about police cases, investigations, community policing/community outreach, etc., then the APD leadership will immediately schedule a meeting with the community association, usually at APD HQ, Office of Emergency Management's Command Center, which usually lasts 2-3 hours since we want to be very comprehensive. We have done this for the NAACP and the Caucus of African American Leaders; Eastport Civic Association (**ECA**); and on a smaller scale, Ward One Residents Association. Also, the ECA's 3 1/2 hour meeting, which was extremely informative, can now be viewed on the City's TV and website, YouTube, APD Community Meeting: [APD Community Meeting December 14 2021 - YouTube](#)

Please feel free to take a look at the ECA meeting in December if you have not already done so. Here are the breakdown of the timelines of this 3 1/2 hour meeting:

Here is the link:

[APD Community Meeting December 14 2021 - YouTube](#)

And here are the topics with the time slots:

0:00-06:00 - Chief, Opening remarks and introductions

06:00-09:00 - Deputy Chief, Opening remarks and introductions

09:00-15:00 - Lt., Administration

15:00-17:00 - Crime Analyst, Data

17:00-35:00 - Lt., Criminal Investigations

35:00-59:00 - Capt./Commander, Patrol

59:00-1:07:00 - Chief, MD Police Reform/Accountability Act

1:07:00-1:15:00 - Det., Cold Cases

1:15:00 - Introduction to Community Policing:

1:15:00-1:27:00 - Re-entry/Positive Impact Program

1:27:00-1:45:00 - Community Outreach

1:45:00 - 3:22:00 - Questions and Answers, e.g., crime prevention and enforcement; community policing; recruitment and retention; substations/resource centers; funding; what's working; what can the City Council do to help; community outreach; getting the data information to residents; residents/the public can sign up to get City press releases;

press conferences; cold cases; shots fired; community working together cooperatively; etc.

Note: In between, along the way, the Chief and Deputy Chief insert their comments too.

The YouTube Public Safety Standing Committee meetings on 2/7/22 (2 hours) and 2/16/22 (2 hours) can be found:

[Public Safety Committee Committee Feb 7 2022 - YouTube](#)

[Public Safety Committee February 16 2022 - YouTube](#)

If you haven't seen them already, they are very informative and enlightening, and they provide a very wide-ranging and global view on many topics.

Bottom line: We want the bad actors to know that if they commit crimes here in our City, we will come after them and find them, and that we will seek justice. As a now retired Baltimore City prosecutor, after 20 ½ years, and as our City Council's Public Safety Standing Committee Chair, I support these efforts. (Just as a side note: In the Baltimore City State's Attorneys' Office, I was the first supervisor and trainer for our County's current elected State's Attorney. I also regularly trained recruits at the Baltimore Police Academy.)

Again, we have reached out to our federal partners—FBI, DEA, and the US Marshal's for assistance in which they have provided since Chief Jackson asked for assistance 2 years ago. [Chief Jackson arrived here in Annapolis less than 3 years ago.] Jointly we have made dozens of arrests seized money, drugs, and guns. Again, we are in the process of negotiating a MOU with the Maryland Capital Police to bring some additional resources to the area.

Additionally, regarding crime prevention, again criminals knowing that we will find them and hold them accountable, goes a long way toward prevention.

Nevertheless, on balance, regarding crime prevention, and taking a very holistic and comprehensive approach—

For example, the APD has partnered with our Annapolis Recreation and Parks Department (**ARPD**) on many initiatives and levels--with more to come to combat youth violence. For over 12 years, the Annapolis Recreation and Parks' mantra has been: "Healthy Living Starts Here.". In fact, just on February 24, I met with our ARPD Director Mr. Archie Trader, along with the Annapolis Waterfront and Sailing School founder, our APD representative, the Resident Services Manager from one of our subsidized housing communities, and 2 representatives from our Mayor's Office, to discuss summer 2022 sailing lessons for some of our children from our varied underserved City communities. We are very excited!

For example, on Thursday night, February 24, for 90 minutes, I met with the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra (**ASO**) staff and Board members at Temple Beth Shalom in Arnold where we will be starting, on or about March 8, music and instrumental (and later vocal) opportunities for our children, starting in Eastport Elementary, and then moving to Walter S. Mills-Parole Elementary. I will be arranging for the ASO to come before a Council meeting (probably in late April/early May) for no more than 10 minutes, with a video and introductions about this program. Again: We are very excited!

Much of our programming for our young people emanates from the ARPD (and their decades-long partnership with the Housing Authority of the City of Annapolis-HACA, among many other partnerships)--including the R.E.A.C.H. program; Little Free Libraries in neighborhoods; basketball; tennis; various Stanton Community Center and Annapolis Walk and the surrounding area's programming; boxing (as supported by USNA); over 40 parks, including Truxtun Park and Waterworks Park; new pool; trails; environmental; etc. ARPD publishes a wonderful weekly e-newsletter, and publishes a quarterly hard copy

newsletter for distribution. We have a plethora of programming, in a variety of formats and venues, that is ever evolving depending upon the needs of our community; we are not static. And we are always in search of new ideas from anyone.

See: (the weekly e-newsletter and the links provided here)

<https://cvcpl.us/yw87urg>

Please register on the new CivicReady site for communications from the City of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County! Go to <https://alert.myfreealerts.com>

For our Recreation and Parks Departments

I think that the extensive information that I have provided, including the over 7 hours of testimony/information from our APD and the links provided, the on-balance/holistic youth initiatives and opportunities and those links as well, is indicative of what we are doing as a City to combat violence and other issues and matters.

Additionally, we have an APD Crisis Response Team (**CRT**) that was trained by the best CRT in the entire world, as publicly determined and announced about 2-3 years ago--namely, Anne Arundel County Police Department's Crisis Response Team.

Again, if you or any communities, would like to meet with City administration, including law enforcement, and the Annapolis Recreation and Parks Department, then please let us know; we are happy to accommodate.

Also, we are very pleased with the formation of our City's Office of Community Services in November 2020. We have on staff a LMSW, Masters Degree (who was formerly with DSS) and a Community Services Coordinator who is a native Annapolitan. Their basic responsibilities revolve around knowing and familiarizing themselves with the services that are available in our area to our residents and

families, and making those necessary connections for and in support of our residents and families. Needless to say, they have been very busy.

If you will recall from our last Council meeting on February 14, as I briefly indicated, I, along with Alderwoman Tierney, and Senator Elfreth have been brainstorming about APD recruitment.

We came up with some brilliant ideas. In fact, I just e-mailed the Mayor, my colleagues, and our Annapolis Delegation (Senator and 2 Delegates Henson and Jones) with the details.

I stated it on the record on February 14, but here is what it is (and I plan to state it on the record at our February 28 Council meeting with more details):

We would like to recruit at least 15 new officers, and here's how—

An APD police foundation scholarship designation to a recipient who wants to become an APD officer (1); the APD Cadet program pipeline (1); each of our State Delegation recruiting via each of their scholarship programs, a police recruitment designation (3); an APD officer native Annapolitan who can recruit (1); and our Mayor and each Alderperson recruitment from their individual Wards (9): So we can come up with at least 15 new recruits. Officially, it is my plan to roll this out on March 1 (which I did). Hopefully, we will get there by July 1. If we get more, then that's even better.

I vividly recall when Dallas, TX had their mass shooting several years ago, Police Chief Brown asked/begged their "home grown" residents to come forward and to become a part of their police force. And not only that, but that the department would specifically assign them to the communities where they grew up--where they already had a connection and a relationship with the residents there--a community where they were already trusted. In my humble opinion, this is an ideal recruitment strategy; and it is a true testimony to, and the true definition of,

"community policing". Where some of us actually remember "Officer Friendly".

Again, we continually evolve and consider wide ranging initiatives that we believe are appropriate and timely on behalf of our City.

We continue to encourage our residents and businesses to:

1 - Tune into all of the meetings where these matters are being fully discussed on a variety of levels.

2 - Residents can certainly "refresh their recollection" by tuning into these meetings, including community meetings, anytime on YouTube or on Annapolis City TV.

3 - Request a community meeting at any time.

4 - Request from our Mayor's office, via our City's website (and they are on our City's website as well), to be added to the Press Release e-mail distribution list. Extremely informative and timely Press Releases come out at least daily, sometimes more than 1 per day.

Again, at a meeting, all of this can be discussed and explained with more information provided.

In my very humble opinion, I truly believe that we are doing much more than, quote, "we hear you", unquote. But that's just my opinion; I certainly could be wrong.

Frankly, I am just one "cog in the wheel", i.e., I am not able to answer all of your questions, nor provide you with all information and programming, so I would strongly suggest a meeting with our Annapolis Police Department and our Annapolis Recreation and Parks Department.

These are just a few of many initiatives that the City continues to implement toward crime prevention going hand-in-hand with youth and family opportunities.

Again, funding is key--for APD, as well as for these additional initiatives for young people, which will give them alternative opportunities rather than involvement in criminal behavior.

With that being said, I would encourage all of our residents to make your voices heard, loud and clear, especially since we are now in deep discussions and deliberations regarding our City's fiscal year 2023 budget, which takes effect as of July 1, 2022.

Therefore, we sincerely hope that we can count on you, your neighbors, as well as our entire city of Annapolis, to fully support our public safety budget (which includes our Fire Department and our Office of Emergency Management--both working hand in hand with our APD, especially when it comes to substance use disorder, especially), which we know, that public safety is a significant portion of our overall City budget.

Ward 1 Alderwoman Tierney (who represents the downtown and surrounding areas) is the Chair of our Council's Finance (budget) Committee, and I am cc her here; and the other 2 members are Ward 2 Alderwoman O'Neill (who represents the Germantown-Homewood area, which we somewhat split when it comes to representation--Ward 2 and Ward 3; and the Clay Street area/corridor), and Ward 4 Alderwoman Finlayson. They are the 3 City Council members who sit on our Finance Committee.

So feel free to contact--early and often--the persons that I am listing here and request that they do everything that they can to support our City's public safety budget, including all of our City Alderpersons (8):

- > -Ward One Alderwoman (Tierney)
- > -Mayor's Office (Buckley)

- > -Annapolis Police Department (Chief Jackson and Deputy Chief Brandford)
- > -President's Hill Association
- > -Ward One Resident Association
- > -Eastport Civic Association
- > -Germantown-Homewood Civic Association
- > -State Delegates (Henson and Jones)
- > -State Senator (Elfreth)
- > -Governor's Office (Hogan)

Additionally, during the last Maryland General Assembly session (2021), our Legislators passed the unprecedented Maryland Police Accountability Act. In a nutshell, our City's APD is mandated to fulfill all of the obligations that are outlined in this Act. We continue to assess the cost of compliance, which is now, at the very least, up to \$1 million. Likewise, we need support from our residents to include the cost of this compliance in our budget as well. While some components of the Act took effect in October 2021, no later than July 1, 2022, all components will be in effect.

Also, all of this includes the necessity to fully fund and staff our Annapolis Police Department.

After 16 years, as a very recent retiree (12/31/21) from Anne Arundel County Public Schools in the Office of Equity and Accelerated Student Achievement, I am very involved in as well as sensitive to what our children and families are in need of. The more positive opportunities and experiences that our youth and even our families have, the likelihood is that crime and negative behavior will decrease. As such, I work very closely with and am in regular communication with ARPD Director Trader and his staff and their programming.

Please feel free to "spread the word" about these presentations and offerings, etc.

Certainly we all can contribute toward making our community safe from violent crime again.

Feel free to keep me posted and cc on any and all correspondence.

And reach out to me at any time.

Thank you so much for all of your support and concern, and for the support of our communities on a holistic level--so very much appreciated.

Rhonda

And I have ended with this mantra for 3 years:

By law, the Public Safety Committee shall consider matters affecting public safety in the City. The Public Safety Committee shall review all proposed amendments to Title 11 (Public Peace, Morals and Welfare) and Title 12 (Vehicles and Traffic) of the City Code. First and foremost: The public's safety is paramount. Moreover, as this legal obligation relates to the community's residents, businesses, and visitors, **the public's safety, including the public's peace, morals, and welfare, is best assured when its residents are:** 1 - healthy; 2 - informed (i.e., educated); 3 - meaningfully engaged in the enhancement of our professional and volunteer workforce; 4 - good money managers of their finances; 5 - residing in safe and affordable housing communities; 6 - mobile (i.e., easily able to access adequate and affordable transportation when needed); 7 - pursuing social, community, entertainment, the arts, historical, and recreational activities; 8 - as well as possibly choosing to enlighten themselves spiritually. Therefore, the Public Safety Committee is committed to working as "One Annapolis"—an Annapolis that values everyOne; and where "HEALTHY LIVING STARTS HERE."

UNQUOTE from Rhonda.

And of note:

Since these e-mails went out, WORA has had a more comprehensive meeting, but is now requesting some additional information and meeting time.

So let's return to what seems to be the 3 most common themes here:

1 - Our efforts are very frustrating with many on the City Council appearing to not care and focusing their efforts on other priorities.

2 - The crime and shootings continue. In the meantime, the City Council (with the exception of a few copied here) seems to turn a blind eye on this and focus on other issues.

3 - The majority of our City Council seems to have other financial priorities in mind.

Again, whether these descriptions are totally accurate or not, nonetheless, they certainly paint a grim picture of our City—a City where we have 40,000 residents and at least a million visitors per year. Nevertheless, these are in fact, our residents' reality. Yes, perception can be reality.

Again: Who is Accountable? What time is it? What are we talking about? What is our focus? What are our priorities? Where do we stand? What do we stand for?

Nevertheless, as you can see by my e-mails in response, I try to be as honest as possible when it comes to accurately stating and balancing the priorities of our Mayor and Council—the actions of us as members of the Annapolis City Council.

And yes, I try not to make us look like we don't know what we should be doing.

But each one of us must answer directly these 7 questions that I have posed:

- 1 - Who is Accountable?
- 2 - What time is it?
- 3 - What are we talking about?
- 4 - What is our focus?
- 5 - What are our priorities?
- 6 - Where do we stand?
- 7 - What do we stand for?

So...

- What are we talking about?

We are talking about the NAACP and the Caucus of African American Leaders, who sat in on a 2 hour presentation by our Annapolis Police Department regarding what our APD is doing. And these two organizations, independently, each gave them a grade of “A”—and as we all know, these 2 organizations are tough graders. Arguably, these 2 “A’s” received are evidenced by our APD’s Chief Edward Jackson receiving the “We Share the Dream Award” at the 34th Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. sold-out Awards Dinner on last Friday evening.

- What are our priorities?

Our priorities were to solidly investigate all 5 of our homicides in 2021, which all resulted in arrests.

- What time is it?

It's time to recruit and retain officers where we currently have less than 1 officer per Ward per shift.

- Where do we stand?

We stand at Press Conferences where we ALL can participate and inform the public about how we are supporting our public safety team, what they are accomplishing, and what we are in need of.

- What do we stand for?

We stand for collaboration and partnerships in support of public safety—whether at Press Conferences with Pastors Craig Coates, Jerry Colbert, and Sheryl Menendez; our Anne Arundel County Board of Education President and Annapolis representative Joanna Tobin; our County Councilwoman and Council Chair Lisa Rodvien, among others; AND we stand for asking our residents to assist with investigations, and if they don't feel comfortable doing this directly, then we encourage them to ask a trusted intermediary to step in and to assist on our residents' behalf; AND we stand for increasing our positive and trusting relationships with our federal partners—the FBI, DEA, U.S. Marshal's, USNA; and the State's Capital Police; AND many, many others.

- What is our focus?

Our APD's focus is to be transparent. This can include providing information to residents and communities, via hosting 2-3 hour in-depth meetings. Additionally, for example, in the case where an APD officer failed to initiate and complete investigations in several felony cases: While some jurisdictions may have, and found an easy way to, quietly handle the case, our APD brought the case to light and to the public's

attention first, and continued to cooperate fully with further investigations. And when an officer was involved in a theft at a big box store in another jurisdiction, likewise, APD was fully transparent in that case.

Colleagues: Who is Accountable?

We all continue to respond to Ordinance O-9-22: The 82, and still counting, e-mails that we all have received regarding the support to eliminate off-street parking requirements for restaurants. While I, like everyone else, enjoy a good restaurant meal every now and again—

Are we talking about—

The sordid and unpleasant history of our City and County, where our educational, housing, and workforce systems—this “triumvirate” of life—the underbelly of every community—that were systematically removed, and that I personally experienced and lived through myself—that has directly resulted in 15 public and subsidized housing communities in Annapolis today?

Are we talking about that?

Are we talking about—

The child who lives in the Robinwood community, who is now paralyzed at the tender age of 15, and whose life has been changed forever? A child who was playing ball? Are we talking about that?

And the child who was seriously injured while walking her dog? Are we talking about that?

And the child who was running away from the shooting, and slipped and fell? Are we talking about that?

And the shots that were fired soon after the Robinwood shooting in the Bywater community:

Are we talking about that?

And next day's shooting, near the Georgetown East Elementary School, where children, some as young as 5, who are now traumatized:

Are we talking about that?

And our APD officers who have performed very well, and because of their professionalism here in Annapolis, too many of them who are now leaving for positions with our federal partners:

Are we talking about that?

Are we doing anything about that?

And how all of this is crippling the morale of our current officers:

Are we talking about that?

Are we doing anything about that?

And how it has become increasingly difficult to recruit officers to serve here in Annapolis since we are increasingly becoming more and more understaffed:

Are we talking about that?

Are we doing anything about that?

And how we don't even have 1 officer on duty per shift to cover each Ward:

Are we talking about that?

Are we doing anything about that?

And how our recruitment efforts are going:

Are we talking about that?

And are we doing anything about that?

And do we remember Planning and Zoning's Adequate Public Facilities where our police force is mandated to be a certain size, ratio-wise, depending upon our population, which has increased, as indicated by the 2020 Census:

Are we talking about that?

And are we doing anything about that?

And you've heard the e-mails tonight, colleagues. Shots being fired. Children are traumatized. Residents can't sleep. Violence abounds in practically every Ward in our City—

And are we doing anything about that?

Yes: Everyone wants a police department. However, the police nor the residents want the police to be occupiers in any of our communities. But what they do want is for our police officers to protect and to serve them with dignity and respect.

Are we talking about that? Are doing anything about that?

So, I ask: Who is Accountable?

Who are our residents holding accountable?

Let's return to Number 3:

Quote: And from a different perspective, what programs are in place to prevent crime? While I do agree that our police force needs adequate funding, I believe prevention is the key! Unquote.

Yes, preventative programs, which give our children and families opportunities and experiences that can provide them with alternatives that can lead them away from violent and criminal behavior. And where they can find their own pathway toward a successful future.

In other words, what time is it?

It's time, FOR ALL OF US—colleagues, staff, viewers, and the community-at-large, to find out about, and to promote and to assist with connecting our residents with local community programming, with a view toward looking at this through an “equity lens”—programming, partnerships, and/or assistance are offered by the following:

AARP;

ACT;

Ancient City Lodge #14;

Annapolis Anne Arundel Financial Education Coalition;

Annapolis Arts Council;

Annapolis Citizens' Coalition;

Annapolis City Marina;

Annapolis Gardens Leadership Academy;

Annapolis Recreation and Parks Department, including the Community Public Forum that is scheduled to be held on Saturday, April 2, AND the “Mayor’s Initiative on Recreational Programming to Reduce Crime and Juvenile Delinquency in the City of Annapolis, Maryland”—a \$150,000.00 program to be included in the FY23 budget, and as I have been assured by our City Manager that this program will be fully funded;

Annapolis Symphony Orchestra;
Annapolis Waterfront and Sailing Club;
Anne Arundel Conflict Resolution Center;
Anne Arundel County Chamber of Commerce;
Anne Arundel County Department of Health;
Anne Arundel County, especially The Partnership for Children, Youth
and Families;
Anne Arundel County Public Library;
Anne Arundel County Public Schools;
Anne Arundel Literacy Council;
Anne Arundel Medical Center;
Anne Arundel Women Working Together;
Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation;
Arundel Federal;
Arundel Lodge;
Asbury Church;
Banneker-Douglass Museum;
Bay Area Community Church;
BGE;
Blessed in Tech;
Boys and Girls Clubs of Annapolis/Anne Arundel County;
Charting Careers;
Chesapeake Children's Museum;
Chesapeake Crossroads Heritage Area;
Chesapeake Regional Accessible Boating;
Chrysalis House;
Clay Street CDC;
Community Action Agency;
Community Transitions;
Creating Communities with Rob Levit;
DSS;
Eastport Methodist;
FHHMO/FDO;
First Baptist;
Future History Now;

Grandmere's Touch;
HACA, including the Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant;
Historic Annapolis;
Juneteenth Celebrations;
Kingdom Celebration Center;
Kirwin Commission;
Kunte Kinte Festival;
Leadership Anne Arundel;
Little Free Libraries and the Rotaries;
Local Interagency Coordinating Council;
Maryland Coalition of Families;
Maryland Hall;
Maryland Re-entry Resource Center;
Men Aiming Higher;
Men of Courage;
Morgan State University;
Mt. Moriah;
Mt. Olive;
My Sistas Keeper;
National Park Service;
New Life;
OIC;
The Panhellenic;
Seeds 4 Success;
Serenity Sistas;
SoFo;
STAIR;
Street Angels Project;
Street Corner Ministries Coalition, including Annapolis Evangelical
Presbyterian, Calvary Community Church of Riva, Beacon Light,
Downtown Hope, First Christian, Fresh Start, Heritage Baptist, John
Wesley, Light of the World, Second Baptist, St. Anne's, St. Philip's;
St. John's College;
The Lighthouse;
Tunnel Vision, and Chase Your Dreams Initiative;

United Black Clergy;
United Way;
Universal Lodge;
USNA;
Watermark;
We Care and Friends;
Work Life Behavioral Health;
AND this is just a few of many, many more.

And it's time to learn more about:

One Annapolis;
Programs in the offices of our Public Safety Team: Annapolis Police Department, Annapolis Fire Department, and the Office of Emergency Management—I meet with all 3 of their leadership teams on a regular basis;
AND in our
Mayor's Office, especially Ms. Laura Gutierrez, our Hispanic Community Services Specialist

Frankly, if there is legislation that is presented, and it has an “equity lens” that can support our children and families, thereby providing meaningful experiences to them that can reduce the opportunities for violent and criminal behavior, then more than likely, I will support it.

Because NOTHING will matter—whether housing, or the environment, or planning and zoning, or traffic, or parking, or restaurants, will matter if this violence does not stop. And where our public safety teams are not our trusted and respectful partners.

And in my humble opinion, our Annapolis Police Department has overall proven themselves to be trusted and respectful partners, especially by 2 of the most notable and harshest critics around.

Which brings me to Resolution R-15-22: **The Police Accountability Board legislation, the PAB, which is a part of my “State of Annapolis Public Safety Address” tonight.**

As your City Council’s Public Safety Chair, I first learned of this Resolution in our Draft agenda from our Office of Law, which was e-mailed to the Mayor and Council on Monday, March 7, 2022, at 4:50 p.m., titled, “Resolution to Nominate appointments to Anne Arundel County Police Accountability Board”. That’s all that was said in the Draft.

Needless to say, I was shocked, especially by the fact that I was totally unaware of this legislation. Frankly, I thought that I was doing, at the very least, a halfway decent job as your Public Safety Chair. But obviously, I’m not.

So I started to make some inquiries regarding this Resolution. Surprisingly, no one from the City staff would provide me with any answers at all. In fact, no one would even speak with me at all. Yes, no one. I found this to be very disrespectful. Needless to say, as anyone would be, I was angry.

After several days, the Resolution was publicly published. Still no real answers were provided. Nevertheless, I persisted. Yes, I became a P.I.T.A.

And then I remembered:

About a year ago, at least one of my colleagues indicated publicly that he did not want anyone to know about any legislation that he was proposing until it appeared on the agenda.

So since that time, working collaboratively with colleagues on legislation, for me, has become almost non-existent. Instead, the

practice seems to be “working in silos”, “incognita”, “covert”, and “undercover”, which has become the norm.

Oh my, forgetful me, I happened to mention at a recent Council meeting publicly, that in December 2021, that my goal for the new term was to start working with each one of my colleagues on at least 1 joint project. As of today, based upon the edict announced about a year ago, this collaboration now seems to be impossible.

Since my tenure on the Council, I have often and regularly mentioned, privately and publicly, that each one of my colleagues brings a different skill set and litany of experiences to this body, which is extremely refreshing and helpful. And that I continue to rely on that expertise on a variety of levels. And there is one colleague in particular who I have consistently followed because of his professional and technical expertise. While we have at times, had some skirmishes, nevertheless, I continued to value his judgement.

However, on Monday, January 31, 2022, from 4-5 p.m., this colleague and I had a heart to heart chat, and at that time, we mutually agreed and decided to solidify our relationship and to acknowledge the mutual respect that we each have for each other’s areas of expertise. We talked at length; and I advised him on several different matters totally unrelated to the mutual respect issue. Along the way, we very cordially agreed to support each other when it came to his area of expertise and mine. I was overjoyed by this renewed collaboration, and yes, friendship.

However, needless to say, when I read Resolution R-15-22, I noticed who the 2 co-sponsors were: One is the one who expressed his mutual respect for our areas of expertise, and the other one was the one who has asked publicly that his legislation not be released until it appears on the agenda. I was totally surprised as well as deeply disappointed, and yes, even hurt, and saddened. And still, I have not heard from either of these 2 co-sponsors.

Truth be told: It didn't use to be this way!

Moreover, even for one of tonight's pieces of legislation on the agenda, specifically, O-38-21, "Illicit Discharges and Connections – Stormwater": One of my colleagues wrote this to his constituents about the legislation: Quote: "This legislation is fairly technical in nature and is an improvement recommended by our Director of Public Works, Michael Johnson. This is an area of expertise for Alderman Savidge, who worked with the Director to make some refining amendments." Unquote. Which begs the question: Is law enforcement, or even the practice of law, considered to be "technical in nature and is an area of expertise" for our Annapolis Police Department as well as our Office of Law? Mr. Johnson, our Director of Public Works, is a certified Professional Engineer.

Nevertheless, I continued on with my investigation of R-15-22. I finally spoke with our APD's Administrator.

I asked the Administrator about who had made inquiries concerning the Police Accountability Act over the past several months, especially since over the past 5-6 months, our City Council and Mayor have had many intense and regular briefings regarding the Police Accountability Act from the Annapolis Police Department and our Office of Law. And we were strongly encouraged to have private and solo briefings as well so that any and all questions, concerns, etc., would be directly and adequately addressed as we approached the implementation date of the entire Police Accountability Act on July 1, 2022. I was informed that only Alderwomen Finlayson, Tierney, O'Neill, and me, had asked additional questions. No one else.

Recently, I received an e-mail from 2 residents, independently, asking me to advocate for what I, first, as an attorney, second, as I had been professionally briefed on PAB over the past 6 months, third, as your Public Safety Chair, and later, on advice of counsel—I was asked to advocate for something that I did not believe that I could do in good

conscience regarding the Police Accountability Act. My response to one of the residents was: Without getting into any or all of the particulars, please be advised that respectfully, I will not be able to do what you are asking me to do. And I thanked the person for their advocacy. Since I sincerely and genuinely believe that whatever your advocacy is, excluding, of course, criminal activity, I can truly respect that, even when I don't necessarily agree. So part of that person's response to me, in response to me declining the request to support this PAB request, was: Thank you for your response and letting us know where you stand! Exclamation point!

Frankly, "where I stand" is based upon many different factors, and the varying issues that are presented, as you can readily and apparently see, which includes legal Opinions from our City's Office of Law.

With all of this being said, again: Everyone wants a police department. The police nor the residents want the police to be occupiers in any of our communities. But what they do want is for our police officers to protect and to serve them with dignity and respect.

And again, I go back to my original statement: No police department nor police officer is perfect. In fact, no one who walks on this Earth is perfect. So instead, we all try to strive for excellence.

But let me be clear here: As with any profession, those who have not upheld their oath of office or professional responsibilities should be subject to respond to whatever processes are put in place, and should be held accountable for their actions.

While serving as your Public Safety Chair, I meet and/or communicate with our Chief and Deputy Chief regularly. Again, Annapolis has been the home of my family for over 150 years. How many people here in the Annapolis area can say that? So I've seen a lot. And so I take personal pride in my town and in my role as our Council's Public Safety Chair; thus, my regular communication with our Chief and Deputy

Chief, especially. We have very frank and candid conversations. I offer my opinions. Sometimes they are acceptable, sometimes they are not. But in the end, I recognize that the final decisions are theirs, which are oftentimes based upon their combined over 70 years of very successful law enforcement experience and leadership. Again, I fully acknowledge and respect their areas of expertise.

Again, our Annapolis Police Department has overall proven themselves to be trusted and respectful partners, especially by 2 of the most notable and harshest (rightly so) critics around: The NAACP and the Caucus of African American Leaders. It doesn't get any better than a grade of "A" from each one of them independently.

Yes, I am frustrated. But more importantly, I am angry—angry about what is happening to and in my hometown, and the response, or lack thereof, from some colleagues and staff.

Especially over the past 6-9 months, we, as colleagues, we ALL know this: We have had extremely lengthy community meetings, work sessions, and briefings, and intensive Public Safety Standing Committee meetings, including an inordinate number of presentations and discussions regarding the Police Accountability Act—well over 15 hours' worth combined, where we ALL have been allowed and strongly encouraged to participate—ask questions (just review the videos), make comments, forward suggestions, etc., etc., etc. And as you ALL know, I am accessible, 24/7/366—I'm up all day and all night. And now, tonight, we have R-15-22. Well, just call me, as well as our Annapolis Police Department, the most covert group of individuals on this planet!

Again: Who is Accountable? What time is it? What are we talking about? What is our focus? What are our priorities? Where do we stand? What do we stand for?

Yes, it's Women's History Month.

The one woman worth quoting here is Harriet Tubman, a Maryland native, who would be 200 years old this year, and who, at a Suffrage Convention, in NY, in 1896, said:

Quote:

“I was a conductor of the Underground Railroad for 8 years, and I can say what most conductors can’t say: I never ran my train off the track, and I never lost a passenger.”

Unquote.

Well, to our Mayor and to ALL of us as Alderpersons: We are all railroad conductors on this Annapolis train toward providing a positive quality of life, with an emphasis on public safety, for every Annapolis resident and business, and for every visitor that comes to our City. However, as I see it today, we are running this train off the track, and unfortunately, we are losing too many passengers.

What time is it? What are we talking about? What is our focus? What are our priorities? Where do we stand? What do we stand for?

So, who is really Accountable?

Yes, first and foremost, we must start with the 9 of us here who sit on this dais!

Thank you.

And as I continue to remain your humble Public Safety Standing Committee servant leader, I respectfully submit this...

“State of Annapolis Public Safety Address”

Rhonda Pindell-Charles, Esq.

3/14/22