



CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH AGENDA ITEM

ITEM: A Resolution Reiterating Opposition to Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration and Seeking the Same Exemption Provided to the State of Florida

MEETING DATE: February 6, 2018

■ **Background:** In 2015, local business organizations and Council-appointed advisory agencies urged the City Council to oppose offshore oil and gas exploration, including the Resort Advisory Commission, the City's Green Ribbon Committee, the Virginia Aquarium Foundation, Lynnhaven River NOW, the Virginia Beach Hotel Association, and the Virginia Beach Restaurant Association. The Princess Anne Garden Club, the Virginia Beach Garden Club, the Sandbridge Civic League and the Resort Beach Civic League also expressed their opposition to offshore oil and gas exploration. These organizations oppose such exploration due to the vulnerability of the coast and beaches to catastrophes that could adversely impact the City's tourism industry for decades. The tourism industry is vital to the City's economic prosperity, accounting for \$1.4 billion in annual tourism revenue, nearly 13,000 tourism-supported local jobs, and \$55 million in tourism-related taxes

Concerns also have been raised that offshore energy exploration could conflict with the Department of Defense's mission requirements, including expanded weapon and sensor footprints and operations in the Mid-Atlantic Planning Area that includes areas off of Virginia Beach's coastline. Also, almost 3,000 commercial fishermen work in Virginia and make significant contributions to the state and the City's economic vitality, and an offshore energy exploration catastrophe could devastate their industry.

Based on these concerns, the City Council in June 2017 adopted a resolution opposing offshore oil and gas exploration, including seismic testing. Since then, the United States Secretary of the Interior has proposed opening nearly all United States coastline to offshore oil and gas drilling, but the Secretary recently promised to keep Florida "off the table" for offshore drilling.

■ **Considerations:** This resolution reiterates Council's opposition to offshore exploration and requests that the Secretary of the Interior extend to Virginia Beach the same protections that have been promised to Florida. The resolution also requests the assistance of Senators Kaine and Warner and Congressman Taylor.

■ **Public Information:** Will be provided through the normal agenda process.

■ **Attachment:** Resolution

Requested by Councilmember Uhrin, Mayor Sessoms, Vice Mayor Jones, and Councilmembers Davenport, Dyer, Henley, Kane, Wilson and Wood

REQUESTED BY COUNCILMEMBER UHRIN, MAYOR SESSOMS, VICE MAYOR JONES AND COUNCILMEMBERS DAVENPORT, DYER, HENLEY, KANE, WILSON AND WOOD

A RESOLUTION REITERATING OPPOSITION TO OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS EXPLORATION AND SEEKING THE SAME EXEMPTION PROVIDED TO THE STATE OF FLORIDA

1 WHEREAS, in 2015, local business organizations and Council-appointed advisory
2 agencies urged the City Council to oppose offshore oil and gas exploration, including the
3 Resort Advisory Commission, the City's Green Ribbon Committee, the Virginia Aquarium
4 Foundation, Lynnhaven River NOW, the Virginia Beach Hotel Association, and the
5 Virginia Beach Restaurant Association; and the Princess Anne Garden Club, the Virginia
6 Beach Garden Club, the Sandbridge Civic League and the Resort Beach Civic League
7 also expressed their opposition to offshore oil and gas exploration;
8

9 WHEREAS, these organizations oppose exploration offshore of the City's
10 coastline due to the vulnerability of the coast and beaches to catastrophes that could
11 adversely impact the City's tourism industry for decades;
12

13 WHEREAS, concerns also have been raised that offshore energy exploration
14 could conflict with the Department of Defense's mission requirements, including
15 expanded weapon and sensor footprints and operations in the Mid-Atlantic Planning Area
16 that includes areas off of Virginia Beach's coastline;
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18 WHEREAS, the City highly values the United States Navy and other armed forces
19 that conduct activities off of the City's coastline;
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21 WHEREAS, the tourism industry is vital to the City's economic prosperity,
22 accounting for \$1.4 billion in annual tourism revenue, nearly 13,000 tourism-supported
23 local jobs, and \$55 million in tourism-related taxes;
24

25 WHEREAS, almost three thousand commercial fishermen work in Virginia and
26 make significant contributions to the state and the City's economic vitality, and an offshore
27 energy exploration catastrophe could devastate their industry;
28

29 WHEREAS, for the good of all of our residents, the City of Virginia Beach must
30 continue to protect and build upon our status as one of the East Coast's premier resort
31 cities and a highly valued partner with the Navy;
32

33 WHEREAS, the speculative benefit of oil and gas exploration and drilling is not
34 worth the risk of a Deepwater Horizon-type incident that could cripple the City's economy
35 for decades;
36

37 WHEREAS, based on these concerns, the City Council in June 2017 adopted a
38 resolution opposing offshore oil and gas exploration, including seismic testing;
39

40 WHEREAS, the United States Secretary of the Interior has proposed opening
41 nearly all United States coastline to offshore oil and gas drilling, but the Secretary recently
42 promised to keep Florida "off the table" for offshore drilling.
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44 WHEREAS, the City Council seeks the same protections for Virginia Beach's
45 coastline, for all of the reasons listed above.
46

47 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY
48 OF VIRGINIA BEACH, THAT:
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50 The City Council hereby reiterates its strong opposition to offshore oil and gas
51 exploration, including seismic testing, off of the City's pristine coastline;
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53 The City Council formally requests that the Secretary of the Interior extend to
54 Virginia Beach and its residents the same protections and exemption that have been
55 promised to the Governor and residents of Florida; and
56

57 The City Council respectfully requests the assistance of United States Senators
58 Kaine and Warner, as well as Congressman Taylor, in securing these essential
59 protections for Virginia's coastline and its residents.

Adopted by the Council of the City of Virginia Beach this ____ day of
_____, 2018.

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:



Deputy City Attorney Roderick R. Ingram
City Attorney's Office

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January 25, 2018