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THE ST. AUGUSTINE RECORD

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PULSE NIGHTCLUB

10 YEARS LATER



Local and federal law enforcement work at the residence of Omar Mateen in Fort Pierce. Omar Mateen opened fire June 12, 2016, at Pulse nightclub in a mass shooting that left 49 dead and 58 injured. JEREMIAH WILSON/TREASURE COAST NEWSPAPERS

Shooter's ties to Fort Pierce recalled

Will Greenlee Treasure Coast Newspapers | USA TODAY NETWORK

ST. LUCIE COUNTY — Ten years ago this month, a 29-year-old Fort Pierce man fatally shot dozens of people at a gay nightclub in Orlando before dying in a confrontation with law enforcement officers. • Omar Mateen opened fire June 12, 2016, at Pulse nightclub in a mass shooting that left 49 dead and 58 injured. Of those who died, none were reported to have been living on the Treasure Coast at the time of the shooting. • Mateen's actions brought significant attention to the Treasure Coast and St. Lucie County, where he grew up, worked and worshipped at the Islamic Center of Fort Pierce. • An Orlando police dispatcher around 2:35 a.m. during the incident asked Mateen's name, and he said, "My name is I pledge of allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi of the Islamic State," according to a release from the FBI.

He later identified as an Islamic soldier in conversations with crisis negotiators.

Mateen, killed after a standoff with law enforcement officials, was buried in the Muslim Cemetery of South Florida in Hialeah Gardens. Toxicology results were negative for alcohol and a variety of drugs, including amphetamines and opiates.

After the shootings, the Islamic Cen-

ter of Fort Pierce issued this statement on its Facebook page:

"We condemn this monstrous attack and offer our heartfelt condolences to the families and loved ones of all those killed or injured. The Muslim community of Fort Pierce joins our fellow Americans in repudiating anyone or any group that would claim to justify or excuse such an appalling act of violence."

The former Pulse nightclub was de-

molished in March to make way for a formal memorial in Orlando. The memorial is scheduled to be completed in 2027.

Omar Mateen brings national attention to Fort Pierce

On June 13, 2016 — a day after the shootings — Mateen's father, Seddique Mateen, spoke to a host of reporters in a home in Port St. Lucie.

"As a father, I don't want any father to go through what we are going through. I don't approve what he did," Seddique Mateen said. "What he did was completely (the) act of (a) terrorist."

Mateen described the United States as his "house," saying the country "is the house that always (is) taking care of me, my family, all the people from my homeland." He said he came to the United States in the 1980s after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which he said is his homeland, and moved to Port St. Lucie from New York

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ST. JOHNS COUNTY

Candidate qualifying for elections is next week

Lucia Viti

St. Augustine Record
USA TODAY NETWORK

Candidate qualifying for the 2026 election cycle begins on Monday, June 8, according to the St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Office.

Candidates seeking to qualify for Congress, state legislature, and local elections for county, municipal, special district and community development district offices are currently cleared to submit paperwork.

The supervisor's office said in a news release that all required qualifying documents and filing fees must be submitted during the official qualifying period in accordance with Florida Election Law.

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City to build plaza in honor of civil rights leader

Lucia Viti

St. Augustine Record
USA TODAY NETWORK

Construction of a memorial to a leader in St. Augustine's civil rights movement has begun.

St. Augustine has begun construction in Lincolnville's Dr. Robert B. Hayling Freedom Park. The Hayling Plaza Project's masterplan, which was adopted in October 2023, is a multi-phase project inclusive of gathering areas, improved walking paths, sports courts, seating areas, a dog park, kayak launch and historic signage representative of individuals who were significant in the 1964 civil rights movement.

Funded through the area's Community Redevelopment agency, Freedom Park honors the legacy of Hayling, a prominent leader in St. Augustine's civil rights movement.

Community Services Director Jamie D. Perkins told the St. Augustine Record via text that she was excited to see this phase of improvements coming to fruition.

Upon completion, Hayling Plaza will be a space for reflection,

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