

Daily Press

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By Sandra J. Pennecke | Staff writer

After 13 years, countless pints and the release of more than 150 unique styles of beer, Smartmouth Brewing announced the impending closure of its original location in the Chelsea district of Norfolk by the end of this year.

Market dynamics led to the difficult decision, said Porter Hardy, Smartmouth president and co-founder.

“That location was originally built around a distribution sales model,” Hardy said. “As we’ve made the choice, over the last year or two, to pull further out of distribution, the space just doesn’t quite fit our business model anymore.”

Documented changes in consumer behavior and other nationwide macroeconomic factors have all played a role, he said.

Sales of craft beer fell 4% last year, according to the Brewers Association, the lobbying arm for small and independent brewers. And the New York Times reported that over the past 18 months, there have been more brewery closings than openings for the first time in 20 years.

“I think that, broadly, people

are going out less often and, specifically, brewery patrons want a broader experience with food and wine options in addition to beer,” Hardy said.

While both Smartmouth locations offer customers variety, including hard seltzers, frozen slushies, canned cocktails and nonalcoholic drinks, about 75% of the Virginia Beach location is dedicated to the tasting room where customers socialize, he

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LAST CALL

Smartmouth Brewing is closing its Norfolk location by end of the year



Above: Porter Hardy, co-founder of Smartmouth Brewing, outside the company's Norfolk location in 2017. **STAFF**
Top: Smartmouth announced the impending closure of its original location in the Chelsea district of Norfolk by the end of this year. The Virginia Beach location will stay open. **BILL TIERNAN/FOR THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT**

Gaza truce being tested

Amid slow return of dead captives, Israel cuts aid deliveries

By Sam Mednick and
Giovanna Dell'Orto
Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — Hamas hastened Tuesday to ease the pressure on a fragile ceasefire in its war with Israel by returning the bodies of more dead hostages. The move came after an Israeli military agency said it would slash aid deliveries to Gaza by half over concerns that the militant group was handing remains over slower than agreed.

The Israeli Prime Minister's office confirmed late Tuesday that authorities received four deceased hostages that the Red Cross handed over to Israeli military authorities inside Gaza. The bodies will be taken to the National Center for Forensic Medicine where they will be identified and the families notified.

This latest transfer of remains comes a day after Israel received the bodies of four other dead hostages. Despite the development, it was unclear if the Israeli military agency known as COGAT will follow through with its decision to allow into Gaza only half of the 600 aid trucks called for under the deal.

The United Nations' humanitarian office in famine-stricken Gaza received word of the cuts from the Israeli military agency in charge of transferring aid to the territory, according to spokesperson Olga Cherevko. U.S. officials

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VIRGINIA BEACH

Housing projects could be first with tax rebate grant

By Stacy Parker
Staff writer

VIRGINIA BEACH — Two forthcoming residential projects could be the first in the city to receive a financial incentive designed to encourage construction of low-cost housing in Virginia Beach.

The Silo Apartments and Grand Lake Senior Apartments meet the eligibility criteria for the Attainable Workforce Housing Performance Grant, Sharon Shoff, the city's housing development manager, told the Virginia Beach Development Authority Tuesday. The grant aims to encourage private development of safe, affordable housing the city is lacking. It helps developers qualify to borrow additional money, closing a gap that occurs when low rent is charged.

Grand Lake's developer would be eligible for a \$188,000 rebate in its first year and would have 19 units with rent as low as \$600 a month, a rarity in Virginia Beach where the median rent is more

than \$1,700 a month.

The grant is a rebate on a percentage of the real estate tax over a period of time. Developers will pay taxes only on the original value of the property, which allows them to secure better financing. The duration will be 15 years, with an option to extend for an additional 15 years.

“There's no impact to the general revenues of the city,” Shoff said. “It's only coming from the incremental taxes generated by the project.”

In 2022, the Virginia General Assembly authorized development authorities, in conjunction with their local governing bodies, to provide grants associated with the construction of affordable housing. Virginia Beach mirrored its program after a Richmond initiative.

On Tuesday, the Development Authority unanimously approved the grant for both of the projects. The City Council is scheduled to vote on them next

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INSIDE



CHINATOPIX

US port fees

The Trump administration began imposing fees on Chinese ships docking at American ports, broadening its trade war with China.

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TSA workers going without paychecks

Unclear if ongoing government shutdown has affected Norfolk International Airport travel

By Gavin Stone
Staff writer

All Transportation Safety Agency workers are working without pay as the government shutdown nears the two-week mark.

Some large airports across the country have reported delays and flight disruptions due to staffing delays, but it's unclear whether this has begun to impact travel at Norfolk International Airport. About 61,000 of TSA's 64,000 employees across the country are being required to work during this period, according to a TSA spokesperson.

“So long as TSA workers

continue to report for work, airports shouldn't experience checkpoint delays,” Norfolk airport spokesperson Chris Jones said in an email. “I won't speculate on what could happen if that were to change, nor am I going to compare this situation versus (the 2018 government shutdown).”

Meanwhile, the airport has joined some others that have opted not to play a Department of Homeland Security video that blames Democrats for the shutdown.

“The Norfolk Airport Authority's longstanding practice is to

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RESOURCES FOR FEDERAL WORKERS: Businesses, organizations seek to help ease the financial strain on federal workers who are affected by the ongoing government shutdown. **Page 2**

■ Virginia expected to furlough at least a dozen employees across several agencies as funding sources used for pay dry up. **Page 2**

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