

# LMOA Operational Deficiencies for Large Scale Events

4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks

# Parking/Traffic

- Approximately 135 spaces at Ashlawn (13 handicap)
- No way to create enough parking to resolve the problem
- Roadside parking restricts traffic flow
- No Parking on one side of the street ensures a usable travel lane, but further limits parking
- People park on Jefferson causing more hazards
- Pedestrians and vehicle interaction creates a safety hazard
- Roads have no lighting
- Congestion and reduced travel lanes limit or impeded emergency vehicle access
- No barriers to prevent vehicles from driving into crowd
- No lighting in parking areas or roadways

# Access Control & Credentialing

- Only access control is standard gates
- 4600 lots nearly 12,000 people
- Members called 725 guest on July 6, 2024
- Guest may have car with 4 more unknown people
  - No requirement/means to log everyone in the car
- No LMOA Member ID
- No “stadium” style perimeter with access control points
- No way to know who is a residents, guest, or unknown in the field
- It’s a free for all

# Physical Location – 41 Ashlawn Overall

- Not designed for large events
- Event area in middle of residential
- Area not set up to properly manage crowds
  - No “stadium” type area, cannot establish proper perimeters to monitor/screen spectators
- Large venue wide open venue - hard to monitor with limited staff
- Parking interspersed with events and spectators
- Two sub-venues
  - Pool
  - Beach 1
- Pool and beach are low ground – Deck, high ground, unsecured

# Pool

- Has secured perimeter
- Does have credentialing via tickets
- Lacks proper second emergency exit or entrance (rear gate is hidden & is locked with limited key access)
- Better monitored
- Has appropriate lighting

# Main Beach

- Estimated max occupancy is 2,100 people
- Only 2 points of entry/exit
  - Would be extremely difficult to evacuate
  - Would be extremely difficult to get 1<sup>st</sup> responders in
  - General safety guidelines for a venue that size, should have 4 exits
- Edgewater stairs are not illuminated, too narrow, and too steep pitch at the bottom, three different pitches make navigation difficult
- No lighting
- No video surveillance
- One boundary is water, add to drowning risk in the dark

# Staffing

- Limited police staffing
  - Chief plus 3
- Limited security ( gate staff plus 1 rover)
- Contracted with Sheriff for 1 deputy (may or may not be able to contract for more, OT hard to fill)
- 5 LEOs is insufficient to properly cover needed posts
- Nonevent calls still occur during event
- No comms with security
- If arrest made, at lease one officer will be gone to process for 2-5 hours
- Sheriff's Office has limited number of deputies covering the rest of the county
  - May be no calvary to call if and significance incident happens

# Crowds

- Simply more people than we can safely handle should any negative event happen
- 10-20 people walking in
- Bigger issue is residents calling in guest who bring others
  - Resident not with who they call in
- No means to vet people in the field (no tech and staff)
- 350 in pool
- 800-1,000 on/around Beach 1 (estimate, no way to tell)
- If group is removed no way to enforce they don't come back



# Violence Issues

- 2022 – we had one incident that was domestic related during the day the beer garden. We can handle those incidents. About a year later, one of the men involved in that incident shot the other man involved at a residence in the lake. Both are lake residents.
- 2023 – we had several groups of adolescent males causing minor issues throughout the day. Some were residents and some were guests. We had some leave and broke up groups of other. As the fireworks were ending, and I sent all the officers to their traffic posts, I was the lone officer in the crowd, an altercation involving 5-10 of what appeared to be the same group of males began. I believe 1 or 2 involved parties assaulted each other. Luckily, as I approached the group, I had several firemen behind me, was able to quickly summon additional deputies, and we were able to calm the situation and break up the parties.

- 2024 – Due to the extreme heat, the area was not busy until around 7PM, then everyone came at once. Traffic was uncontrollable and parking on Jefferson quickly got to be a hazard. We had obtained information that groups/gangs from Charlottesville were at the event and were going to have an altercation on or near the basketball courts. At 8PM, we cleared the courts and padlocked them shut. There were several groups of unknown persons loitering in the area that did not appear interested in the fireworks. Several were advised to leave. Two advised they were called in as guest, but the resident was not present. The rest of the night there were a few groups we were monitoring, and no major incidents were reported. We had one resident shot with a gel blaster, and Officer Mooney and I heard gun shots in the area at different times.

# Summary

- The fireworks portion of the event draws the largest crowd
- Many non-residents come to the event
  - By deceit
  - By getting called in by a resident
- Not enough staff to handle crowd should an emergency occur
- May not be able to summon enough help quick enough
- Concerns about increase in group violence
- Density at the beach would lead to mass causality situation if shooting occurs
- Venue is too open and spread out
- Poor parking traffic
- Darkness complicates the issue
- Large liability to LMOA

# Conclusion

- LMOA's primary objective is to maintain and maximize members property value
  - How do fireworks impact property values?
  - What adverse impact would a critical incident have on property values
  - Look at Charlottesville pre and post AUG 17, 2017
- We lack the resources and the infrastructure to continue to hold the 4<sup>th</sup> of July fireworks
- There may be some risk mitigation efforts but...
  - Costly
  - Require infrastructure upgrades
  - Further reduction in parking
  - Displeased members as not all will get to attend due to attendance caps
  - May not be able to hire enough sworn staff to be effective or cover key points
    - Fireworks contract must be signed months before we would know if staff could be secured