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**NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Commonwealth v. Warren D. Harris
Former Director of Economic Development Sentenced for Embezzlement**

Virginia Beach, Va. – Colin D. Stolle, Commonwealth's Attorney for the city of Virginia Beach, announced that Warren D. Harris, age 64, formerly the director of the Virginia Beach Department of Economic Development, was sentenced today by Circuit Court Judge Steven C. Frucci for four (4) counts of Embezzlement by a Public Officer. Judge Frucci sentenced Harris to eight (8) years in prison all suspended. Harris must pay back restitution to the City of Virginia Beach in the amount of \$79,479.50.

The guidelines in this case called for Harris to serve no active incarceration; however, due to the betrayal to the citizens of Virginia Beach, Stolle argued for Harris to serve some active period of incarceration.

Harris pled guilty on August 4, 2021. Had this case gone to trial, the Commonwealth's evidence would have proven that Harris used public funds for personal use during his tenure as director of the Department of Economic Development for the City of Virginia Beach between 2007 and 2018. The total amount of fraudulent expenditures was approximately \$79,479.50.

In 2018, the City Auditor conducted the initial investigation into the Economic Development Department and uncovered that Harris had been fraudulently utilizing city funds to facilitate personal travel to locations all over the world, including Dubai, Panama, Spain, California, Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Illinois. The audit further revealed that Harris utilized city funds to place advertisements in sports publications such as the NCAA Final Four official program. The placement of the advertisements brought with them tickets to sporting events, which were city property that Harris improperly used for personal purposes. The City Auditor turned its information over to the Virginia Beach Police Department and the Office of the Commonwealth's

Attorney, which began a joint investigation with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and U.S. Attorney's Office. A detailed Stipulation of Facts was entered into the Court's evidence during the guilty plea hearing and is attached to this press release.

"Economic development done right is vital for the city," Stolle said. "Mr. Harris used lies and deceit to betray the trust of the City, his supervisor, and most importantly the citizens of Virginia Beach. That broken trust is serious and must be repaired."

Commonwealth's Attorney Colin D. Stolle and Assistant Commonwealth's Attorneys S. Mario Lorello and Brandon C. Emery prosecuted this case. Please contact Macie Allen if additional information is desired.

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