

W12 – General news writing

Staff

The Virginian-Pilot

Virginia Beach mass shooting

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13 dead, including gunman, in shooting at Virginia Beach Municipal Center

https://www.pilotonline.com/news/virginia-beach-mass-shooting/article_777b737e-83e3-11e9-b1d0-dff7ad725d5e.html

VIRGINIA BEACH

A longtime city employee shot and killed 12 people and injured at least four others after opening fire Friday afternoon in the public works building, making it the country's deadliest mass shooting this year.

Police said officers killed the man, identified Saturday morning as DeWayne Craddock, a long-time engineer with the city, after he fired at them in the city's scenic Municipal Center in Princess Anne, a campus of about 30 brick Colonial-style buildings.

The four injured were all in surgery Friday, Police Chief James Cervera said during a news conference a couple of hours after the massacre.

One officer was shot during the exchange but was saved by his bulletproof vest, the chief said.

"This is the most devastating day in the history of Virginia Beach," Mayor Bobby Dyer said in the news conference. "The people involved are our friends, co-workers, neighbors and colleagues."

Friday's rampage is believed to be the worst mass killing in Virginia Beach's history. Prior to this week, a shooting on June 30, 1994, at the Witchduck Inn held that distinction: Four people — the business owner, two employees and a patron — were shot to death at the restaurant. It also came on the heels of a shooting in Chesapeake's Holly Cove community over Memorial Day weekend that left one dead and nine others injured.

In the U.S., it is the deadliest attack since the November 2018 shooting at Borderline Bar & Grill in California, when 12 people were killed.

The gunfire in Virginia Beach began shortly after 4 p.m. as workers were preparing to leave for the weekend. The shooting occurred in building 2, next to City Hall near the intersection of Nimmo Parkway

and Princess Anne Road. The planning, public utilities, public works departments and others are located there. The three-story brick building on Courthouse Drive houses about 400 workers.

Many of the employees work out of small office spaces along long hallways. The doors are typically unlocked and open to the public.

Craddock on Friday was a current employee of the public utilities department, Cervera said. He came armed with a .45-caliber handgun with a sound suppressor on it and shot one victim in a vehicle outside before entering the building. The rest were shot inside.

Cervera said police found victims on every floor of the building.

Four officers responded, found the gunman almost immediately and then initiated what became a long gunfight with the suspect, Cervera said. After an officer shot the suspect, they administered first aid.

Virginia Beach police are investigating with help from the FBI and state police, he said. They're still working to identify victims and contact family members. They're also still working to notify the suspect's next of kin. Once that is done, Cervera said, his department plans to name the suspect only once out of respect for the victims.

Cervera said the city offices now resemble a "war zone."

Megan Banton, an administrative assistant in the public utilities office where the man worked, said her supervisor heard a noise then shouted for everyone to get down.

The supervisor then pulled Banton and others into her office and shoved a desk against the door while Banton called 911.

"It felt like forever," Banton said.

Zand Bakhtiari was one of only five people left in the geographic information services department — located on the first floor of the building — at the end of the day Friday when his supervisor, who had left the office, texted to say there was an active shooter and to shelter in place.

Bakhtiari wasn't nervous until he heard the gunshots — lots of them, one round in quick succession. He said it sounded like an automatic weapon.

"It was repeated, rapid gunfire," he said. It sounded like it was coming from above or below him on the second floor or the basement, he said.

After a few minutes — Bakhtiari doesn't know how much time passed — the bullets stopped, but the fire alarm had been set off. And he could smell the gunpowder.

He assumed it was over when he heard the fire alarm, but he and his co-workers didn't know whether to evacuate or stay put, so they all came out of their individual offices and huddled together.

After about 10 minutes, officers and SWAT team members came in, told them to duck down and keep their hands up as they escorted employees out and checked every room.

Arthur Felton, an 18-year employee in the planning department, was also inside when the shooting started. He evacuated the building after a co-worker heard gunshots.

"I never thought this would happen in my building," Felton said. "The people who were shot — I'm sure I know most of them."

Employees' family members were sent to Princess Anne Middle School to reunite with loved ones.

Paul Swain's fiancée sent him a text message at 4:17 p.m. that said, "They are shooting on my floor." He said he drove to the Municipal Center so fast he was pulled over for speeding.

The officer let him go when he told him why he was driving fast.

Swain made it to the area but was directed to reunite with his fiancée at Princess Anne Middle School.

"My heart is just pounding," he said as he waited to see her again. Swain reunited with her in the parking lot.

Police did not allow media on the school's property. When he walked into the school, he said, he was greeted by staff who had a checklist of names. People were waiting for their families in the cafeteria, he said.

Amy Woody is trying to find her neighbor of 20 years who didn't come home from her job at the city. She said her neighbor always returns home around 4 p.m. but wasn't answering her text messages or phone calls. Woody arrived at the school shortly after 8:30 p.m. with her two dogs.

"I just want to make sure she is OK," she said. "It's definitely a very solemn feeling right now. It's hard."

Cheryl Benn rushed to the school after getting a frantic call from her husband, David, who is a traffic engineer and works in the building. At first all she could hear when he called was sirens.

She said her husband barricaded himself in a room away from the shooter and held the door shut until police told him it was safe to leave.

"He was definitely a little freaked out," Benn said.

While her husband gave detectives a statement, Benn waited outside the school with her dog.

"Some of those people could be his co-workers," she said.

Public Works spokesman Drew Lankford, who works in the building where the shooting occurred, left the office on Friday afternoon to get a haircut. While he was gone, his daughter called and said there had been a shooter in his work building.

His daughter, who works in the City Hall building nearby, said security told people to get under their desks. He rushed back to the office and saw police taking cover behind parked cars with their guns drawn.

City Councilwoman Barbara Henley had pulled up to the City Hall building just after 4 p.m. to pick up the agenda as she does every week when she heard sirens and saw police cars.

"I thought it was an accident," Henley said.

As she parked in the lot between buildings 1 and 2, she noticed city employees standing outside using their cellphones. Someone told her there was a shooting and she should leave. Henley had gotten back in her car when she heard a male voice shout, "Get down!"

People scattered.

"I was scared to death," said Henley, who quickly drove home.

Henley said she's never seen a situation like this before at the Municipal Center, adding that security has recently been beefed up in the City Hall building as a result of shooting incidents across the nation. Not all the municipal buildings at the complex take the same security measures, she said.

Late on Friday, Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam, who arrived in Virginia Beach a few hours after the shooting, said the people who died were heading into the summer weekend.

"That they should be taken in this manner is the worst kind of tragedy," Northam said. "Their families are facing painful loss and grief. They each leave a hole and a family in their neighborhood, in this community and in our Commonwealth."

Staff writers Marie Albiges, Gordon Rago, Stacy Parker, Mike Connors, Robyn Sidersky and Elisha Sauers contributed to this report.

Motive unknown in shooting spree at Virginia Beach Municipal Center; 4 still hospitalized

https://www.pilotonline.com/news/virginia-beach-mass-shooting/article_6ecef644-8468-11e9-bba2-d34b3bfff358.html

VIRGINIA BEACH

The day after a 40-year-old city engineer opened fire on dozens of co-workers, killing 12 and seriously injuring four others in the deadliest shooting in Virginia Beach's history, police and city officials were not ready to speculate on a motive.

DeWayne Craddock, who had worked in the public utilities department for at least nine years, stormed into his office building at the Municipal Center armed with two .45-caliber handguns and began firing as people prepared to leave for the day, officials said at news conferences on Saturday. The terror unfolded over 35 minutes, according to police scanner traffic archived online.

All but one of the victims was a city employee. The other was a contractor there to fill a permit.

"The lives of 12 people were cut short by a senseless, incomprehensible act of violence," City Manager Dave Hansen said. "I have worked with most of them for many years."

Seven were men and five were women. Their employment with the city ranged from 11 months to 41 years.

As of Saturday afternoon, three shooting victims remained in Sentara Virginia Beach General Hospital. All were stable, said Dr. Martin O'Grady, the facility's head of trauma. Two of the victims had "significant" injuries but are expected to survive, he said. He described the other person's wounds as "devastating."

A fourth patient at Sentara Norfolk General Hospital was in critical condition.

"We are all shocked and saddened by the tragic events that occurred Friday at the Virginia Beach Municipal Center," Sentara's president and CEO Howard Kern said in a statement. "We hear about shootings like this on the news, but for something like this to happen so close to home, where many of us live and work, it's truly horrific and heartbreaking. It's the day we prepared for but never wanted to see."

Dr. Janelle Thomas, who was Sentara Virginia Beach's attending emergency department physician as the situation unfolded, said good preparation and communication kept it from being worse. On-duty police quickly alerted the medical staff of the shooting, giving them about 30 minutes to prepare. Once the victims arrived, it was controlled chaos as staff mobilized and divided responsibilities.

"For a horrible, tragic event, it went as smoothly as it could possibly have gone," Thomas said.

The doctors, whose experiences exceed five decades, said it's important to focus on the task and not get emotionally involved during tragedies. Still, they were taken aback by Friday's massacre.

"It's senseless. It's tragic," Thomas said. "As much as Virginia Beach is a city, it has a small-town heart. This is taking a toll on our community."

Deadly attack

Friday's attack is believed to be the nation's largest mass shooting since a dozen victims died in a California restaurant late last year.

It began about 4 p.m. in the city's public works building at the municipal complex, a 110-acre campus of about 30 Colonial Revival-style brick buildings in Princess Anne. That building is only about 100 to 150 yards from police headquarters. The area is bordered by Nimmo Parkway as well as West Neck, North Landing and Princess Anne roads. About 2,000 employees work there.

Two detective supervisors rushed to Building 2 near City Hall, arriving within minutes of receiving the 911 call, Police Chief James Cervera said. Two K-9 handlers quickly joined them.

"They were out of the (police headquarters) building instantaneously," the chief said.

The officers engaged in a long gun battle with the suspect before killing him. One officer was shot, but was saved by his bulletproof vest. Cervera said he didn't know how long the gunfire exchange lasted, but said he planned to release a timeline on Sunday.

The suspect's handgun was equipped with a sound suppressor and an extended magazine, Cervera said.

After the shooting was over and the building secured, officers escorted the surviving employees out, occasionally passing the victims' bodies. One was found in a car outside, and the rest were discovered throughout the three-story building.

"I want you to know that these officers worked with compassion, they worked with caring, and they worked with professionalism escorting their brothers and sisters who work for our city," Cervera said.

Like most city buildings, the one where the shooting occurred is open to the public. It typically houses about 400 employees.

"It's an open government building," the chief said. "Citizens have a right to access open government buildings."

Before identifying the gunman, Cervera said it would be the only time that police will refer to him by name. Going forward, he will be known simply as the suspect.

Rumors that he had been fired from his job weren't true, the chief said, but he declined to say whether he'd been the subject of any disciplinary actions or troubles at work.

Investigators do not know if he had targeted any particular employees, Cervera said. He shot as he approached people in the building, said the chief, who emphasized that he would continue to focus on the victims.

Law enforcement recovered two additional weapons from his apartment Friday night, an official from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives said. Both guns found at the scene were obtained legally — one in 2016 and one in 2018 — the agent said.

Neighbors react

Craddock had lived in the region for years. He had enlisted in the Virginia National Guard in April of 1996 after graduating from Denbigh High School in Newport News, according to Cotton Puryear, a Virginia National Guard spokesman.

Since at least 2008, he has held a professional engineering license from Virginia, according to state records, but it's unclear when he started working for the city. As of Saturday evening, his work number and voicemail were still active.

From at least 2012 to at least this March, he held some public-facing responsibilities in the public utilities department, which provides water and sewer services.

His ex-wife declined to comment at her home on the eastern edge of Durham, N.C., on Saturday.

The gunman lived alone in an upstairs unit off Virginia Beach Boulevard, in the secluded Adkins Reserve neighborhood of about a dozen multi-family buildings. Many who live there knew either little or nothing about the gunman.

Dani Stewart and Cassetty Howerin rented the condo below him. Over the past year, both had had fewer than 10 brief conversations with him. "He was just quiet," said Stewart, 19.

In his apartment, he had at least three outward-facing cameras in the windows, which were visible from the street. He owned two nice cars, about which he was very particular, said Howerin, 23.

He was described as someone who always carried a book bag. Howerin said she learned from their run-ins that he worked out at a OneLife Fitness center. Sometimes, he came home right after work, but other times at 2 or 3 a.m., Stewart said.

They don't remember him being a loud neighbor but said he had a heavy step. They often heard him dropping things, and that would be followed by a long rolling sound.

When they got home last night and saw the crime tape, they were stunned and called the news "unsettling."

"He literally lives on top of us," Stewart said. "It was terrifying."

Other residents had heard his name for the first time on Saturday morning, when they learned that he was their neighbor.

Some spiraled with what-if scenarios and were shocked they had lived and slept so close to a man responsible for such a massacre.

"I said, 'Oh my god,'" Janet Saka, 48, recalled. "I'm shocked. I would never imagine something so close to home."

Help for victims

Hansen said the city will be providing assistance to the surviving victims, the families of those killed, and its employees. Building 2, where the carnage occurred, will be closed indefinitely. Some city services will have to be relocated in the meantime.

"That building is going to take a little bit of time to reopen," Hansen said.

Former Virginia Beach Mayor Will Sessoms, who served for nine years, mourned the tragedy with family and neighbors at his home on Saturday.

"I recognize every face except one," he said of the victims.

Sessoms said he is talking to businesses to help raise money to take care of those who were affected and their families.

"Everywhere there is a sense of sadness but a commitment to help," Sessoms said. "We are going to get through this, and this city will be stronger and better."

Gunman emailed resignation hours before killing 12 people in Virginia Beach's deadliest shooting

https://www.pilotonline.com/news/virginia-beach-mass-shooting/article_e15ea290-853f-11e9-aa50-93751bba3c3b.html

VIRGINIA BEACH

Before gunning down 12 people at a city building on Friday, a longtime public utilities engineer had emailed his resignation to superiors, giving two weeks' notice just hours before the tragedy unfolded, officials said Sunday.

They did not provide any details about the gunman's email or what else he did that morning.

"We're determining where that letter is," City Manager Dave Hansen said at a Sunday morning news conference. "He notified his chain of command that morning."

More details were revealed about Friday's mass shooting at the Municipal Center that left 13 dead, including the gunman, but many questions still remain about what led up to it. Officials said on Sunday four victims remain in critical condition after undergoing surgeries.

Officials still did not provide any motive behind the killings, declining to discuss any evidence that law enforcement recovered from the shooter's house. On Saturday, authorities said they confiscated two guns from his condo. Investigators are still looking into his personal and work life.

Police Chief Jim Cervera provided a minute-by-minute breakdown of how the tragedy unfolded, after again stressing that the gunman had not been fired nor was he in the process of being let go in the days leading up to the city's deadliest shooting.

Hansen described the suspect's job performance as "satisfactory," stating that he was in good standing in his department and had not faced any ongoing discipline problems.

It was only when directly asked by a reporter that Hansen revealed the gunman was in the process of resigning.

It's the first time officials have detailed any changes to the engineer's employment status after rumors circulated about him being disgruntled.

Several officials learned about the gunman's emailed resignation for the first time at the news conference. In an afternoon phone call, Virginia Beach Mayor Bobby Dyer said he didn't know about the email prior to Sunday.

A police spokeswoman also said she learned of the resignation email during Sunday's news conference, and did not know when other officials had the information. Julie Hill, a city spokeswoman, did not immediately provide answers to an email or text message seeking the same information.

Linda Kuehn, the police spokeswoman, said she could not answer why the information was not released earlier.

"So many things are going on, and all the questions so far have been focused on whether or not he was fired and whether or not he was in the process of being fired. That's a hard 'No,'" she said. "And there's a huge difference. People leave to go to other jobs all the time."

Most municipal offices in Princess Anne will be closed on Monday except for the schools administration building and the courthouse. Some essential personnel will still have to report to work to complete relocation plans, Hansen said. The rest of the Municipal Center will reopen Tuesday, except for Building 2, where the unthinkable unfolded.

"That will be closed until further notice," Hansen said.

A day after the shooting, officials released the names of the 12 victims. One, Herbert "Bert" Snelling, was a contractor. The other 11 were city employees whose total experience topped 150 years of public service.

They are: LaQuita Brown, Tara Gallagher, Mary Gayle, Alexander Gusev, Katherine Nixon, Richard Nettleton, Christopher Rapp, Ryan Cox, Joshua Hardy, Michelle "Missy" Langer and Robert "Bobby" Williams.

Nettleton was a supervisor in the gunman's chain of command, but not his immediate supervisor, Hansen said.

Cervera identified the shooter as DeWayne Craddock, vowing to only say his name once and to keep the focus on the victims moving forward.

Flanked by city and state representatives on Sunday, Cervera described how law enforcement reacted to the rampage just days earlier. The Pilot previously reported details about the incident from 35 minutes of scanner audio.

At 4:08 p.m. on Friday, Cervera said, emergency communications dispatched officers to Building 2 for a report of shots fired. It included police, fire, emergency medical services and Virginia Beach Sheriff's Office deputies.

Within two minutes, the first officers arrived outside the building — which Cervera described as a "honeycomb" with numerous staircases, a tunnel in the basement and many offices.

"We had no idea where the suspect was. We had no idea of the extent of the shots being fired," he said, explaining that law enforcement didn't have plans for the three-story building available.

The police chief called it "extremely chaotic."

Between 4:15 p.m. and 4:18 p.m., four officers, none of whom had body cameras, found the suspect on the second floor.

"They came from different commands, yet they formed a rapid-entry team and entered the building," Cervera said.

Cervera said investigators don't know if the gunman was targeting specific people.

The team swept through the building until it found the suspect on the second floor. Police then engaged in a gun battle with the suspect while other officers scoured the rest of the building. The shooter used two .45-caliber handguns, equipped with extended magazines and a suppressor on at least one of the weapons.

Once the suspect was cornered in an office, he kept shooting round after round through the wall and door at law enforcement. Police returned fire.

At 4:19 p.m., an officer was shot, spared only by his bulletproof vest.

Officers then breached the door and apprehended the gunman, who was still alive.

And so around 4:45 p.m., first aid was rendered, the chief said.

The shooter died on the way to a hospital.

It all happened in 36 minutes. Twelve dead. Four seriously wounded. And a city in mourning.

"He used to sit right there": Restaurant grieves for longtime customers killed in Virginia Beach

https://www.pilotonline.com/news/virginia-beach-mass-shooting/article_ad61165a-8498-11e9-9023-33f555ce3e8c.html

Mostafa Essabbar knew their faces. And he knew their orders.

And at Sal's Pizza, in a little shopping center next to the Virginia Beach Municipal Center, customers knew Essabbar simply as "Sal."

Mary and Katherine came in together a lot, says Essabbar: They were friends. Katherine always got a side salad and wings. Richard was the vegetarian, two slices and a salad. Ryan was a "big stromboli guy."

And Bobby? Two slices of pepperoni, every time.

"He was here I believe yesterday," Essabbar said Saturday. "He worked in that department 41 years. He was an engineer. And he used to sit right there, in that seat."

Essabbar gestured to the seat now occupied by a newspaper reporter.

He used to see some of them two or three times a week, he says. But now he won't see any of them again.

Mary Louise Gayle, Katherine A. Nixon, Richard H. Nettleton, Ryan Keith Cox and Robert "Bobby" Williams were among those killed in Friday's shooting at the Municipal Center that left 12 people dead. The gunman was killed by responding officers.

At least eight of his regular customers were among the victims, Essabbar said.

"It's like you lose a member of your family," said Essabbar. "You see them every day, every two or three days. You're working here 10 or 12 hours, more hours sometimes than you are at home. I feel so bad for their loved ones."

He has owned his little New-York-style pizza shop on Liberty Way for 13 years. The Morocco native has known some of his customers for just as long, after moving to Virginia Beach from New York City.

"I moved here because it was safe," he said.

But on Friday at 4:30 p.m., Essabbar says, he saw one of his regular customers sitting on the curb by North Landing Road, in distress.

"He got shot in the chest. I didn't know he got shot. I went out to him, and the cop said, 'Stay away.' He took off his jacket, and I saw blood all over his shirt. And the ambulance started coming. The fire department. The SWAT team."

Essabbar says no one knew then that a shooting was happening. And for a long time, they didn't know how many people had died.

"Families started coming here. They are trying to call their loved ones inside the building, to see if they're alive or not. A lady came here to try to call her husband, but her phone was dead, so she had to use the charger. I was glad he was alive."

Essabbar says he's arranged with the Virginia Beach Police Department to offer large donations of pizza for first responders today and on Monday, and possibly additional days. On Saturday, he said, he was already handing out free drinks and water.

"You have to stand up for your community," he said. "You do what you can to help."

But as for the customer he found suffering from a gunshot on the side of the road, Essabbar says he doesn't yet know what happened to him.

"He's still in the hospital," Essabbar said. "He came in here all the time. I hope I see him again."

“This will not define us”: At Virginia Beach memorial service, sadness and resilience

https://www.pilotonline.com/news/virginia-beach-mass-shooting/article_2e79ec9c-888d-11e9-a7e5-d32f6afce9be.html

VIRGINIA BEACH

Mourners arrived in the June heat, under a sky of thunder and lightning, in the pouring rain.

They filled row upon row in Rock Church on Thursday night to remember LaQuita Brown, Keith Cox and Tara Gallagher.

Mary Lou Gayle, Alex Gusev and Joshua Hardy.

Missy Langer, Rich Nettleton and Kate Nixon.

Christopher Rapp, Bert Snelling and Bobby Williams.

Twelve lives lost.

Many in the crowd never knew them in life. But they came to support a community in mourning — their own.

Like Robin Richards, who came because Virginia Beach is her city. Where she's lived for 30 years.

Like Patti Wainger, who didn't know the victims, but offered this: "I think anyone with a heart could not stay away."

Inside the church lobby, 34-year-old Kenick El made his way through the crowd, passing out wristbands made by the city's Human Rights Commission. "VB Strong," "#LoveForVB," they read.

"They're just simple gifts," El said. "Just a token of peace and love."

Wreaths of flowers sat perched at the front of the church in front of the stage, where a band played.

As the community memorial service, "VB Remembers," began, mourners stood. A procession of victims' family members filtered in through a door near the front.

The sanctuary fell silent.

Brian Heyward was among the first to arrive for the service.

He was close friends with Josh Hardy, one of the 12 killed last week by a gunman at the city's municipal center, in Building 2.

They graduated together from Lake Taylor High School in 1986.

"He was just a good guy," Heyward said through tears. "All around."

The two grew up on the same block. Hardy lived by "the maze," a phrase he and his friends used to describe the tight-knit homes.

Heyward remembers doing tumbling competitions as kids in the front and backyards of their friends. Back flips and front flips.

"He was nimble," Heyward said.

The two would see each other every so often after graduating. As a contractor, Heyward has spent time inside Building 2.

When he learned his friend died, Heyward got chills.

"What would make a person ...," he started.

He continued: "He hurt a lot of people."

Heyward walked off toward the church.

At the service, leaders of the Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities offered prayers. Performers sang "Amazing Grace." A high school wind ensemble played "America the Beautiful."

Mayor Bobby Dyer said there were no words to describe the city's sorrow, but Virginia Beach is resilient, he said.

"This has changed us," Vice Mayor Jim Wood said. "But this will not define us."

Gov. Ralph Northam told those gathered that all grieve with the community. One person committed an evil act last Friday, but there has been an outpouring of support since. The goodness of Virginia Beach is shining bright, he said.

"This Virginia Beach is strong," Northam said. "It is resilient."

U.S. Rep. Elaine Luria said she saw the city come together in a dark moment. She heard stories of heroism, she said, like that of Keith Cox, who died while saving others. Like the law enforcement officers who rushed into the building and stopped the attacker.

"This is such courage," Luria said.

The Virginia Beach community gives her strength, she said, and she wants to pay that forward: "Let's be good to each other. Let's always keep love alive in Virginia Beach."

Dentis Shaw, who lives in Atlanta, drove to Virginia Beach in his pink-and-red car to be there.

In 2007, Shaw lost his wife to breast cancer: "I was burying my wife, just when they had that shooting at Virginia Tech."

"I was hurting so bad that I went there to be with them," he said. "I came back and created this message."

Shaw travels the country to pray with victims of mass shootings and their families, and gives away rubber bracelets called "Honor Bands" to pay respect to victims.

He's given away 3,000 bands at the site of the shooting.

"I've been praying with a lot of the families," he said. "The general reaction has been thank you for being here, thanks for coming, and for doing what you do to honor our loved ones."

Jenni McFarland brought real estate signs with her to the service to stick in the grass at the church, each one bearing the face of one of the victims.

"I just thought it would be nice to see their faces as people walk in," she said. "I hope it unites their hearts and lifts their spirits, and that this event provides a little bit of hope."

McFarland has been a volunteer on the Virginia Beach Volunteer Rescue Squad for almost 17 years. The 47-year-old was working her day job as a realtor when she received the alert from her squad about the shooting.

"As the text came out that said 'Get to your stations, man up now, stay off the radio,' I knew at that moment that this was something much larger than we had ever seen," she said.

Although McFarland was not volunteering at the time, she immediately thought of her EMS partner, an engineer for a private firm in Virginia Beach. Her first concern was for his safety, but she also found herself wondering if he'd be ready to lend a hand along side her.

Seconds later, she got a call.

"My phone rang and it was him," she said. "And he goes, 'Where we going?'"

McFarland got in her car in her regular work clothes, stopped by Marshalls to buy a more comfortable pair of shoes, and immediately reported to an EMS station.

"There wasn't even a thought to it," she said. "You just go."

One by one, city and state officials read aloud the names of each victim. A moment of silence for each.

A large screen behind them displayed photos of the 12.

In the section of the sanctuary where family members sat, a man stood up.

The whole church followed.

Then, the large group of family members filed out, pins and flowers pinned to their blue "Virginia Beach strong" shirts.

Some held hands; many left in tears.

Keith Cox died like the protector he was his entire life, his family says

https://www.pilotonline.com/news/virginia-beach-mass-shooting/article_637a3c66-8794-11e9-8138-4b93a65fc08d.html

VIRGINIA BEACH

Keith Cox was always a guardian.

If someone fought his older brother Ervin when they were children, Keith would make sure it didn't happen again.

If his mom was late getting home, Keith was the one who suggested a search party to find her. He checked every door at his parents' house at night to make sure they were locked.

Even as adults, Keith would wait up late to make sure his brother got home safely from business trips before going to bed.

So it came as no surprise to Cox's family that witnesses said he led seven women to safety and was looking for others to help when he was gunned down by a colleague on Friday along with 11 others at the Virginia Beach Municipal Center. He died a hero to his co-workers and a faithful servant of God to his family.

"He died by helping others to live. ... He was doing exactly what I taught him to do — to love his neighbor, be helpful to people," his father, E. Ray Cox, said in an interview at his house. "That's the way he had his last days."

Keith, whose first name is Ryan, comes from a devout Christian family. His father is the pastor of New Hope Baptist Church, which he founded in 1970 when Keith was a toddler. The boy grew up in the church and sang his heart out to God during services.

One of his favorite songs was "Marvelous," a soulful song that praises the sacrifice of Jesus.

You gave that I might be set free. Exchanged your life for mine. What a marvelous thing you've done.

His family believed Keith was good enough to sing professionally, but he was a perfectionist who downplayed his own talents.

He kept his day job as an account clerk in Virginia Beach's public utilities department while he recently started preparing to become a pastor like his father.

To Keith, family and church were often one and the same.

He bonded with his brother and father over the gospel and sports. The family cheers for the Washington Redskins during church gatherings.

Keith, 50, and Ervin, 52, played basketball, kickball and Little League baseball together in Norfolk as kids and remained close. As adults they enjoyed watching action movies and sports and sharing meals together.

Ervin said Keith was like his right arm — a part of him always there to protect him and others.

"That's the way we were brought up. You love and take care of each other. You take care of your friends, you take care of strangers," he said.

Keith was divorced and never had children of his own, so he doted on his brother's kids, who are taking the loss of their uncle especially hard.

"He would do anything for them — anything at all," Ervin said. "Especially my daughter. He had a soft spot in his heart. They had a special bond."

The night he learned Keith died, Ervin stayed downstairs at his parents' house. Every time he heard the kitchen ice maker make noise or his parents walk around upstairs he jolted up and looked for Keith to come through the garage door like he had done so many times before.

"I kept looking for him all night, but he never showed up," he said. "Usually at night is when I grieve and just let go. I try to be strong during the day."

Keith's father misses little things, like having dinner with his son and tending to flowers together. He said Keith loved nature and did the yardwork around the house, always looking for ways to help out.

"He was a most precious son. He lived by the rule, the Golden Rule. Never harmed anyone. He was one who loved God's way and lived to be a wonderful example of what it means to respect his brothers and sisters," he said.

His mother Maxine has not spoken with reporters, but Keith was close to her, too. He enjoyed taking her out for her birthday and his parents' anniversary.

Their close relationship helped Ervin realize something was wrong when they learned about the shooting by watching CNN. His mother texted and called over but Keith — who always answered her calls — never picked up.

Ervin and his father drove to the municipal complex. About 10:30 p.m., more than six hours after the shooting, they learned of his death.

Ervin said the hardest part was watching his father tell his mother.

On Tuesday, he picked out a burial plot for his son. On Saturday, he'll deliver a eulogy.

But before that, the father needed to see his son. So after the FBI released his body he told the mortician not to touch it. He wanted to see it as it was, bloodied and broken. The medical examiner said Keith died from shots to his torso and neck.

"At that moment I gained knowledge of his being killed, it was as though the bottom of my stomach fell out. I have never experienced such pain," he said.

When he looked at his son, he also saw a bullet hole in his right hand and a bullet hole in his left. But it helped remind him of the peace he found in God.

"I saw the Christ on the cross. I saw nails in his hand, and where nails were driven into his hand, bullets penetrated my son's hand. And my son was doing exactly what the Christ did on the cross. He died that

we might live with nails in his hand. My son died after he had made arrangements for people to be safe."

In between visits from friends and family, police and reporters, Keith's father is reflecting on what he wants to say during his eulogy and during the Sunday service the following day. He already plans to thank God both days for his son's life.

"He lived, and he lived a wonderful life," he said. "God allowed him to live for a half century. During that time he loved people. He loved a woman. He married. They divorced. He learned to smile. He learned to love as opposed to hate. He was very much concerned about how he related to others.

"He was a giver."

Much like the song he loved to sing, his family described a marvelous life indeed.

Virginia Beach killer matched the cliché: quiet, polite, unassuming

https://www.pilotonline.com/news/virginia-beach-mass-shooting/article_e4c9bebc-87e5-11e9-9da9-836f25e1bc78.html

VIRGINIA BEACH

The mass shooter who killed 12 people and injured four more in Virginia Beach Friday was much like the others.

Like the 2015 San Bernardino killer, he targeted his colleagues.

Like the 2013 Washington, D.C., Navy Yard shooter, he was discharged from the military and prepared for battle when police arrived.

And like the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooter in 2012, many said he was shy and quiet.

"He would be selective in who he talked to," said Thomas Rountree, a former city employee that used to park next to him most mornings. "He never gave me the time of day."

Those closest to DeWayne Craddock, including his parents and former wife, have declined to speak to reporters.

His motive, like that of the Las Vegas shooter who murdered 58 people at a musical festival in 2017, remains a mystery.

Craddock used a .45-caliber handgun and brought multiple extended magazines that were emptied by the time officers shot him. He died a short time later. Virginia Beach and other Hampton Roads communities have been left reeling in the wake of the tragedy.

Experts say mass shooters almost always have a personal grievance. There are similarities, though no two are the same.

Craddock's motives remain unclear. Whether he shared some common characteristics of mass shooters, like a history of mental illness or a desire for notoriety, is unknown.

Police will spend the coming weeks and months trying to piece together why Craddock snapped.

He was born in New Bern, North Carolina, on Oct. 15, 1978. He went to Denbigh High School in Newport News and graduated in June 1996, according to a schools spokeswoman.

Around the same time he joined the Army National Guard, ending up in Fort Sill in Lawton, Oklahoma, for training, according to Daily Press archives.

He never deployed overseas and was discharged on April 15, 2002. That same year, he graduated from Old Dominion University with a degree in civil engineering.

At 19, he legally changed his last name from DeWayne Antonio Hamilton to match that of his mother and stepfather.

From 2003 until 2008, Craddock worked on site plans for utility systems like water and sewage as a civil engineer for a private company, MSA, said its longtime president Bob Miller. He was laid off along with about 35 other employees in 2008.

Miller described Craddock's work as "satisfactory," just like City Manager Dave Hansen did last Sunday.

After that, he worked for the City of Newport News until joining the Virginia Beach Public Utilities' staff on Feb. 1, 2010.

Miller would run into him in Building 2, where the shooting occurred.

"I'd always say hi to him," Miller said. "He smiled and say, 'Hey, how's it going?' He wasn't a run-up-and-hug-you kind of guy."

One of the shooting victims, Rich Nettleton, hired him for the city, said Scott Acey, a partner at MSA and Craddock's former supervisor.

"DeWayne apparently listed me as a reference," Acey said, noting that he gave Craddock a good review. "It's devastating. ... That entire building are people we know on a very personal level. We deal with these people on a daily basis. And then to throw on top of that the fact that our history with DeWayne ... it's unnerving."

As a project manager, Craddock often was out in the field and dealt with the public. He led efforts to replace old pump stations and put in new sewer lines, helping residents keep their homes dry and clean.

Rose Thornton talked to Craddock last week about a longtime problem with a water project.

She first met him in 2016, when he hosted a public meeting about the Diamond Spring project. She aired her grievances then, and Craddock was a good listener, she said.

"He was very, very nice," she said.

He willingly offered his business card to residents, Thornton said.

When a construction project started last fall, Thornton said it felt like an "earthquake," shaking her house, which is right next to the worksite.

And later that day, near lunchtime, Craddock was at her door, she said, asking if anything was wrong in her home. She mentioned that a ceramic angel on top of a shelf fell and shattered.

"Next thing I know, he's coming to my door with a little angel in his hands," Thornton, 77, said. "He brought me an angel, and here he is out killing people."

While members of the public described him as warm, his co-workers found Craddock to be quiet. Sometimes he wouldn't return greetings.

Kerry Reynolds, who left his job for the city in March, is one of the few people who said he got Craddock to open up.

Every day Reynolds smoked a cigarette outside of the building before work. He'd always greet Craddock as he walked by, but didn't get much of a response. Then one day Reynolds complimented the way Craddock dressed and carried himself. He said he looked like Tiger Woods because of his polo shirt and slacks. He was fit and always had pressed clothing and a tucked-in shirt.

"You are always dressed sharp," Reynolds remembered telling him. "You always look like you're ready to take over Microsoft or something."

That was the first time Reynolds saw him smile. After that, Craddock would make small talk and discuss projects they worked on. But Reynolds said he never shared any personal information about himself.

Some colleagues who worked closely with him did not even know he was married — and subsequently divorced.

His wedding was in Virginia Beach on Valentine's Day 2008. The couple finalized their divorce nearly a decade later, on Sept. 29, 2017, Chesapeake Circuit Court records show.

He kept the Virginia Beach home he owned, which is off Virginia Beach Boulevard, in the secluded Adkins Reserve neighborhood; she got the two dogs, Jackson and Carbon, court records say. His ex-wife declined to comment when reached at her home.

Craddock spent much of Friday, the day of the shootings, working.

At some point, he emailed a resignation letter. Exactly when is unknown because the city redacted the email's time stamp. Craddock cited unexplained personal reasons for putting in his two weeks' notice.

He reported to a job site at the intersection of Haden and King William roads and was there until 2:30 p.m. or 3 p.m., according to sources with knowledge of the meeting.

About an hour later, around 4 p.m., Craddock began shooting his co-workers.

Review of Virginia Beach mass shooting revealed problems with police communication, employee discipline

<https://www.pilotonline.com/news/virginia-beach-mass-shooting/vp-nw-virginia-beach-mass-shooting-follow-1117-20191116-7htxabsv2vdsxeezwnjvmyn7ga-story.html>

When a Virginia Beach employee started shooting colleagues at the Municipal Center, available SWAT officers kept preparing for the city's upcoming Patriotic Festival at the Oceanfront.

Members of the police tactical team had no idea a mass shooting was unfolding because they were never officially notified, according to an investigative report released this week. It noted that formal notification of such a team is "widely recognized" as a best practice during a major event.

Instead, information trickled in through informal channels.

One got word from a colleague. Another received a text from a friend. And an officer already at City Hall called a third, the report said.

SWAT officers didn't enter the building in the city's Princess Anne campus until 4:26 p.m. on May 31.

By that time, the gunman had shot all 16 victims — a dozen fatally — using a .45-caliber handgun with a suppressor, and other officers already inside Building 2 had cornered him in an office near a stairwell.

Those details were released in a 262-page independent report during a special City Council meeting Wednesday.

The review, which was largely positive about the police response to the tragedy, said the department's "swift and effective" actions helped prevent more deaths.

But it also identified several communication breakdowns that hindered officers' movement inside the building after the shooting had started. In some ways, the lack of information increased the danger first responders faced in Building 2, where nearly 400 employees worked.

The gunman, a longtime public utilities engineer, had resigned earlier in the day, and the report revealed that he had been stressed about a financial mistake he had made that week.

But DeWayne Craddock's downward spiral started long before that. His work performance had dipped around the time he got divorced in 2017. He had also become more isolated, he'd bought several guns and he had started researching mass shootings a year before the attack.

However, his demeanor at work hadn't required the city to intervene, said Hillard Heintze, a Chicago company hired to review the event.

Still, the firm's report was deeply critical of the city's administrative processes for dealing with employees.

The probe revealed widespread problems with human resources and protocols for issuing discipline. It recommended an overhaul of that department.

The majority of the firm's nearly 60 recommendations focused on improving the city's human resources department and urged leaders to be more proactive about preventing workplace violence in the future. It recommended a host of new city policies to bolster employee relations and security to prevent such issues in the future.

"The City of Virginia Beach has a workplace violence prevention policy," the firm wrote, "but we found no evidence that the City's leadership has actively focused on workplace violence prevention as an integral component of addressing the risks to its personnel and operations."

Limited information

As a gun battle ensued between the shooter and first responders, the police's incident commander on the scene didn't know which officers were inside Building 2.

The problem was caused by lack of effective communication, which included not properly using a second radio channel and inadequate evacuation plans, the report found.

The issue, though, was that Virginia Beach Police didn't establish a central hub to communicate with other first responders, like the Fire Department. That crucial step is vital to the overall success of the response to a critical incident, the firm said.

"Key personnel did not fulfill their command leadership and oversight roles in important functions," Hillard Heintze wrote.

Additionally, the city's alert system failed to effectively notify employees of the danger, the firm found, and the building lacked cameras on all three floors except for the basement.

Inside the building, police, which didn't have floor plans, repeatedly were blocked by doors that could only be accessed with key cards, hindering their movement and pursuit of the shooter. Their frustration came across police scanner traffic.

But the Fire Department, which was also at the scene, knew a universal key card was readily available in the basement of the building.

That information was never shared. If police and fire personnel had been working together, the outcome could have been different, Hillard Heintze concluded.

But in some ways, the most significant missteps occurred after the gunman died. Families of victims have repeatedly criticized police for how they communicated that a loved one had been killed in the shooting, saying it was conveyed in a cold and blunt manner.

Death notification can have a long-term impact on victims, research shows.

The notifications were delivered inside the family reunification center at a nearby school by a single police officer.

Virginia Beach police don't have a formal written protocol for how best to identify victims or notify the next of kin, the report noted. It recommended formalizing the process "as soon as possible."

A police officer didn't start notifying families until 9 p.m. because ensuring the accuracy of victim identifications "took longer than expected," the report said. All Virginia Beach employees are required to wear badges with their name, department and pictures, the report said. The notifications continued for hours until the last one was delivered at 1 a.m.

While they waited, families had to sit in a "very tense and apprehensive environment" as the crowd thinned.

Stronger employee protections

Employees interviewed for the independent report expressed feeling like they "have little recourse to address what they perceive as unfair or abusive actions" during disciplinary situations.

In response to an unfavorable performance review in 2018, the gunman said he felt like he was being treated unfairly, according to the report.

Human Resources-related issues are largely handled by department management and supporting staff who directly report to them. Most of these workers lack expertise in human resources and have other full-time job duties, making them ill-equipped to deal with problem employees," the report said. The city also does not have policies or training for supervisors on how to interact with difficult employees.

Department managers are responsible for deciding how to discipline employees who directly report to them and may issue up to 40 hours of suspension. This is far too large of a responsibility for supervisors to shoulder and can lead to inconsistent and ineffective management as well as unnecessary conflict between employees and managers, Hillard Heintze said. The city's human resources department only gets involved with serious employee issues such as suspensions over 40 hours, reductions in pay, demotions and dismissals.

The report said it is not a good practice for supervisors to act as investigator and adjudicator.

“Having untrained supervisors conduct their own investigations into allegations of employee misconduct, often without HR guidance or input, creates an opportunity for conflicts of interest and bias, particularly if the issues stem from operational requirements or unit rules and practices,” Hillard Heintze wrote.

The report recommended restructuring the city’s human resources department. It also suggested shifting discipline and investigations of employee misconduct to human resources.

Other conclusions from the report:

- The human resources department lacks a program for staff to report abnormal behavior and a code of conduct that outlines behavioral expectations for employees.
- Supervisors and staff are not trained to recognize warning signs such as behavioral changes, irritability, sleeping disturbances, withdrawal and worsening performance.
- There’s no training for how to refer employees to a program that provides free short-term counseling.

Craddock had not been told of this program even though he had “exhibited noticeable changes in his work performance” after his September 2017 divorce, the firm found. Hillard Heintze said at least one of his managers knew about this significant life event. A referral could have helped the city engineer cope with the emotional, psychological and financial challenges that a divorce can bring, the report said.

But the independent review found that the gunman did not display significant risk factors.

Finally, employees who were interviewed by Hillard Heintze said they felt personnel issues are not handled in a confidential manner. The firm determined that the city could foster a more supportive environment for workers to report information without fear of retaliation.

“Allowing ongoing office talk and rumors is not consistent with good workplace practice and contributes to hostility,” the report said.

Isolation, paranoia and a \$3,027 mistake: A Virginia Beach engineer’s path to mass murder

<https://www.pilotonline.com/news/virginia-beach-mass-shooting/vp-nw-mass-shooting-day1-shooter-20191201-15l2ssdi6vgqfgtiamexvludhq-story.html>

If the walls in DeWayne Craddock’s office could talk, they would tell co-workers as much about Craddock as he did.

Nothing.

They were bare.

And then, shortly before he died, a sign of life. Craddock, an engineer for the city of Virginia Beach, put up a poster for the zombie television show “The Walking Dead.”

He pointed it out to a co-worker shortly before he committed the most violent act Virginia Beach has ever seen. The colleague, Charlene, had joked previously that she was going to decorate his walls with engineering plans if he left them blank.

“Look Chene,” he said, calling her by her nickname. “I got something on my wall.”

“Well, that’s a start,” she replied.

Just days after that encounter, Craddock stalked the corridors of the city building where he worked, shooting 16 people and killing 12 of them before the police fatally wounded him.

Both the Virginia Beach police and the Chicago firm that conducted an independent investigation into the mass shooting have stressed that they haven’t uncovered a definitive motive for Craddock’s actions.

But while Craddock didn’t leave behind a note, his actions and words leading up to the shooting paint a fairly clear road map.

First, he suffered from paranoia, believed others were out to get him and wasn’t getting mental health treatment. He and his wife divorced. His performance at work had dropped to the point that he had a documented paper trail of his missteps.

And two days before the mass shooting, Craddock faced a crisis at work. He had screwed up again, so much so that he considered using his own money to make the problem go away.

Instead, he chose a path that appeared to have been on his mind for a while — murder.

“When I heard about the shooting, I just said, ‘You know, I bet that was DeWayne,’” said a former co-worker of Craddock’s at a private engineering firm, speaking on condition of anonymity. “We all kind of felt like he was a loose cannon. It made sense in my mind.”

Control and order

Try to find someone at his workplace who was close to Craddock.

You won’t.

Dozens of interviews with city workers who knew Craddock didn’t turn up a single close friend. And those who could shed light on who Craddock was as a person — including his mother and ex-wife — aren’t granting interviews.

So the portrait of the 40-year-old Craddock, like the story of his rampage, must be stitched together by people who only knew him a little and none who knew him a lot.

Charlene, who asked to be identified only by her first name, said she befriended Craddock because she felt like he needed a friend. He was one of the only black engineers in the city's public utilities department, she said.

A former co-worker, speaking on condition of anonymity, said he made a concerted effort to talk with Craddock, even though conversation didn't come easy.

"I kind of felt that he needed to be treated gentler than the others," the engineer said. "I just kind of felt that he was a little more vulnerable."

Craddock was the kind of man who liked things just so. He was a meticulous dresser and kept himself in tip-top physical shape. When police searched his Virginia Beach condo, it was in pristine condition.

That need for control might have played into the unraveling of his marriage. His ex-wife told police that Craddock increasingly kept her from seeing friends and family during their relationship, according to a source with knowledge of the investigation. Toward the end of their marriage, Craddock was "crazy" and "schizophrenic," the ex-wife told police.

If Craddock craved control and order, the last few years of his life were anything but. He and his wife separated in 2016. She got their two dogs in the divorce and moved to Durham, North Carolina.

He stayed in the condo, stopped attending family gatherings and began stockpiling weapons.

Though never a superstar at work, Craddock's work performance slipped a few years ago.

He got dinged in January 2017 for failing to deposit 13 checks from vendors, then got put on a performance improvement plan five months later. Among the issues raised that year with Craddock: making inappropriate remarks to co-workers, being insubordinate at times and not communicating well with citizens about city projects.

He successfully completed the improvement plan, but his work troubles continued. He received a written reprimand in July 2018 for poor performance. A month later, he got an "improvement required" on his annual evaluation, the first time he had ever received such a score.

Craddock believed he was being "railroaded" and "sandbagged," according to an investigative report about the mass shooting by security risk management firm Hillard Heintze. He felt he was being held to higher standards than others at his pay grade, that he was underpaid and didn't get the recognition he deserved.

He also expressed concerns about racism at work — not the first time he felt that way at a job.

“I feel that I am being placed at a different level of scrutiny than my peers,” he wrote in response to his 2018 evaluation, according to the Heintze report. “I [sic] clearly being asked in some cases to meet a level of expectation that did not exist with the performance of my job.”

Craddock filed a formal grievance but halted the process. It’s not clear why he didn’t follow through, but the Heintze report said the city’s grievance process might leave employees feeling like “they have little recourse to address what they perceive as unfair or abusive actions.”

The general take on Craddock by his colleagues is that he was somewhere between an average and subpar engineer. A former co-worker said Craddock took meticulous notes. Others said he struggled to find solutions when his projects had hiccups.

But he did have a hand in some of the department’s key projects, such as overseeing the massive Lake Gaston pipeline, which can deliver millions of gallons of water to Virginia Beach daily.

Most co-workers didn’t know that Craddock’s marriage had fallen apart. Only after the shooting did they look back and notice that the already standoffish Craddock had become more withdrawn around that time.

“Something started being off”

Even compared to other engineers — they consider themselves an introverted bunch — Craddock wasn’t a social butterfly. If his office door wasn’t closed, he’d keep it open only a crack, as if to tell co-workers, “Come in, but only if you must.”

Looking back, Charlene said she saw the change in Craddock. When she would joke with him, the most he would give her in return was a faint smile.

“Something started being off,” said Charlene. “He just seemed distressed. Something had changed.”

It got worse around the end of 2018 or early 2019. Craddock inexplicably stopped talking to her for months, refusing to even acknowledge her presence when she popped her head in his office to say hello.

“Finally, I just quit saying hi to him,” she said.

Beginning the year he and his wife separated, Craddock purchased a total of six firearms — four .45-caliber handguns and two rifles.

He also appeared to develop an interest in mass shootings. In the year prior to his death, he conducted at least five searches on his cellphone to websites that contained articles about shootings in places like Texas and North Carolina.

Armed to the teeth at home, Craddock still avoided confrontation at work — even eye contact. To some, he was just the oddball who ignored them when they passed in the hallway. But his cold behavior rubbed some the wrong way.

One construction inspector, speaking on condition of anonymity, said he had harsh words for Craddock on the first project they worked together.

He said Craddock wouldn't make eye contact with him or make any effort to engage in conversation about the project. Craddock would just stare at his computer while the inspector talked. The third time that happened, the inspector closed the door to Craddock's office and gave the engineer a piece of his mind.

"I told him that his mannerisms and attitude to me are telling me that you would just as soon wish I'd shut up and get the (expletive) out of your office," the inspector said.

Craddock told him he avoided eye contact because he didn't like confrontation, the inspector said.

"I said, 'It's not being confrontational to have eye contact. That's respect. Man to man, you talk to each other. I want to see that you're engaging in conversation and feel some worth in what I have to say,'" the inspector said.

He "believed everybody was against him"

In a September public briefing about the investigation, Virginia Beach police said they hadn't uncovered a motive for Craddock's actions, a deputy chief reported to the City Council.

But the deputy chief also told council members that Craddock's family members said he was paranoid. It was the most peculiar detail, plopped in the middle of the briefing, with no additional information.

Two months later, the Heintze report offered more about Craddock's paranoia. Someone close to him said Craddock had the type of personality "that believed everybody was against him."

At a restaurant once, Craddock believed other patrons "were talking about him and wanted to hurt him," according to the report.

One incoherent email that Craddock wrote, but never sent to anyone, shed some light on the demons in his head.

"Now the pattern is to first ingratiate new or remote employees (2 or so contacts) and then have them reject you," he wrote. "Same as usual, but they are running out of employees to reject you. Generally rejection is the stressor after making you fatigue through sleep deprivation."

Craddock's paranoia might have been festering for more than a decade.

About 15 years ago, he worked at the Virginia Beach consulting firm MSA. Just a couple of years removed from college at Old Dominion University, Craddock shared cubicle space with another engineer.

One day, that engineer returned to his desk to find a sticky note on his computer monitor.

“Don’t mess with any of my stuff,” the note read.

The engineer grabbed the note and turned to face Craddock, who was sitting in his chair.

“DeWayne, I didn’t touch any of your stuff,” the engineer told him.

“Yeah, you did,” Craddock said, according to the engineer. “All my stuff’s been moved.”

“DeWayne, I didn’t touch any of your stuff,” the engineer repeated.

Craddock’s paranoia might also explain why he had at least three cameras positioned in windows at his second-story condo, the Heintze report stated.

Adding to his stress might have been a difficult workplace.

During its investigation, the Heintze firm reported that it heard repeated concerns about a hostile work environment, specifically for blacks, who feel the playbook is different for them than their white colleagues.

Employees described the workplace to The Virginian-Pilot as cliquish, unprofessional and sometimes cantankerous. If you aren’t part of the in-crowd, well, God help you, they say.

Make no mistake, Craddock wasn’t an insider. Some people who worked alongside him would make derogatory comments behind his back or roll their eyes when his name came up, said one former department employee. At work-related functions, Craddock would be the employee that we’ve all seen before — the one sitting by himself.

Even the employees who contend the workplace is toxic say those issues don’t justify what he did. Nothing could. If things were that bad, Craddock could have just found a new job, one former co-worker said.

“It’s not hard to find a job [as an engineer],” she said. “Why did you choose death?”

The mistake, which Craddock believed could cost him his job, appears to have pushed him over the edge.

He had submitted an invoice for \$3,027 worth of work performed by a contractor without following the proper steps.

Craddock — who already had a pattern of not following financial procedures — was informed that he improperly authorized the work and had violated a city ordinance.

The night before the shooting, he was shaken up. He sought advice from a co-worker, saying he was too upset to meet with purchasing officials in person and discussed using his own money to resolve the matter.

That evening, Craddock had two other phone conversations that authorities viewed as goodbyes, with his ex-wife and his mother, according to a source familiar with the police investigation. He hadn't spoken to either of them for some time, ignoring his mother's attempts to communicate for several months.

Craddock told his mother he was suffering from insomnia and complained about his supervisors. He told his ex-wife that he wanted to remain friends.

Though Craddock might have feared the worst from his work blunder, he wouldn't have been fired. And his job performance was on an upward trajectory — he was expected to receive a “meets expectations” score on his evaluation this year and his emails showed some praise from supervisors.

But Craddock didn't see any of that. Whatever he was struggling with, in his mind, was much bigger. He wasn't going to just quit his job and go elsewhere. No, that wouldn't do. He decided that people needed to die. And they wouldn't see it coming, just as he wrote in the nonsensical email that he never sent.

“(Y)ou don't threaten when you actually plan to take action, you just do it usually by surprise,” he wrote.

Minute by minute, what happened inside Building 2

<https://www.pilotonline.com/news/virginia-beach-mass-shooting/vp-nw-virginia-beach-mass-shooting-inside-building-2-20191204-yjaw4ncvofhuvpjnxylj7i4ii-story.html>

Editor's note:

To explain how the mass shooting unfolded May 31 in Virginia Beach's Municipal Center Building 2, The Virginian-Pilot used the police department's timeline, the report prepared by security risk management firm Hillard Heintze, witnesses who were in the building that day, and other sources familiar with the investigations.

The Pilot has crafted this timeline with an abundance of sourcing and painstaking rigor. Indeed, reporters took so much care that they found and pointed out an error in the police department's timeline, which the police then fixed.

The Pilot also took the extraordinary step of sending its timeline to Virginia Beach officials. They replied that it contained errors but refused to point out what they found to be inaccurate.

After much consideration and debate, The Pilot is publishing its timeline. There is still much we don't know and the sequence of events within time frames may not be precise. Part of any newspaper's mission is to tell the stories of the people in its communities, and to reveal as much of the truth as it can find.

The families of the 12 killed and four wounded during the shooting had their lives shattered. The Pilot has treated them with respect and sensitivity. But they were not the only victims. Many city workers suffer PTSD. Some have found it difficult to return to work. Others simply left their jobs. Their voices deserve to be heard as well.

The moment when everything changed

As the city worker left for home, ready to start her weekend, there was her colleague DeWayne Craddock, standing in the empty hallway with his back against the wall.

She startled him — he pushed quickly off the wall — but she thought nothing of it at the time. Have a good weekend DeWayne, she said with a wave.

He didn't respond. Here we go again, she thought. DeWayne's being DeWayne. It wasn't the first time Craddock gave her the silent treatment.

So Charlene, who asked to be identified by only her first name, turned and headed for the door to the stairwell. Then she heard five "pops" and felt things whizz past her right ear.

DeWayne's messing around, shooting a confetti gun at her, she thought — the kind she remembered from her childhood. She swiveled around to give him a hard time.

But this was no toy. Craddock was standing in a crouch, pointing a real gun at her with both hands. The man she considered a friend was shooting at her.

Charlene doesn't know how she escaped through the stairwell door. She doesn't know if Craddock fired any more shots at her. The trauma of that moment was too much for her memory to bear. The next thing she remembers is flying down the stairs.

Hers is one of the many harrowing accounts from people in Building 2 when Craddock mowed down co-workers as if life was a meaningless video game.

Some, like Charlene, encountered Craddock while he carried out the May 31 mass shooting and lived to tell the story. Many others hid under desks, barricaded themselves in offices and sent text messages to loved ones not knowing if it would be their last. Some haven't returned to work.

Some are never coming back.

Premeditation and spontaneity

When Craddock left for work about 7 a.m. that day, there had already been concern at the office about someone bringing violence to Building 2. But it wasn't Craddock people were worried about. It was another man — a co-worker of Craddock's — who had been fired the day before.

Shortly before the shooting, the man stated that it wouldn't be surprising if "someone came in and shot up the place," according to an investigative report about the mass shooting by security risk management firm Hillard Heintze.

Kate Nixon, an engineering supervisor whom Craddock would kill hours later, had considered bringing a gun to work.

She didn't.

Neither did the fired employee.

The one who did is the one many didn't expect.

Though management knew Craddock thought he was being treated unfairly at work — and had gone through a divorce — the Heintze investigation concluded that he didn't exhibit any warning signs that could have alerted the city to the attack. He made no threats, displayed no violent behavior.

Building 2 is a three-story brick building located at Virginia Beach's municipal center in Princess Anne. Even for government, it houses some of the city's sleepier functions, such as managing stormwater drainage and providing water and sewer service.

Nearly 400 employees worked there. Craddock had an office on the second floor, in the public utilities department. He'd been an engineer for the city of Virginia Beach for nine years, making \$83,283 a year.

So far, no information has surfaced that pinpoints when Craddock decided he was going to carry out the shooting. But evidence indicates he had been planning it for some time.

Craddock ordered a bulletproof vest online about seven weeks beforehand. He searched for maps of Building 2 a week and a half before.

One could make a strong case that, around midmorning that day, Craddock decided that there was no going back. He resigned by email at 10:31 a.m., right after searching the internet again for maps of Building 2.

In an awkwardly written resignation letter, Craddock stated he wanted to "vacant [sic] my position" and, in the next sentence, "relieve" his position due to personal reasons.

Word of Craddock's resignation leaked. Craddock got upset when he found out that others knew.

A co-worker talked to Craddock about his future plans. Craddock told him that he wanted to take some time off before looking for another job. He also said Craddock became emotional, teared up and thanked him for supporting him during his divorce.

Somehow, though, Craddock went about much of his shift as if it was a run-of-the-mill Friday. He sent a handful of work-related emails and accompanied his supervisor, Randy Allen, and another co-worker to three project sites for routine inspections. The group returned to the office at 3:06 p.m., according to police.

Even Craddock's last work email, sent at 3:55, five minutes before he started shooting people, was all business. It was about a project to install a new pump station.

"We just swung by [the project site] ..." Craddock started off the email.

He went on to mention an aspect of the project that was ramping up the following Monday, with no indication he could very well be dead by then.

Then Craddock brushed his teeth, something he did every day at work. It might have been his final act of normalcy.

Joe Scott, an engineering technician, popped into the bathroom before leaving for the day. Craddock was at the sink. They made small talk. Nothing seemed amiss, Scott said.

"I washed my hands, told him to have a good weekend," Scott said. "He says to me, 'Have a good weekend.' And I walked one way, and he walked the other."

Craddock's actions leading up to the shooting reveal an odd mix of premeditation and spontaneity, as if he was spurred to act sooner than expected. The bulletproof vest hadn't even been delivered yet.

"It seems kind of weird that somebody would brush their teeth, go down to their car, get guns and start shooting people," said Bob Houseknecht, an engineering technician. "I think that if I was in that kind of mood, the last thing I'd be worried about is whether my breath was fresh."

45 minutes of terror

Craddock retrieved two handguns from his car, along with a backpack that had ammunition, around 4 p.m.

The former Army reservist knew how to use a gun. Craddock received weapons training with the Army National Guard and regularly practiced at local shooting ranges, mostly going alone or with a family member.

He shot and killed his first victim in a vehicle in the parking lot. The second was near an entrance to the building. A witness spotted a man bleeding on the ground and a man with a gun in his hand walking into Building 2.

Then Craddock killed administrative assistant Missy Langer, who previously played with Craddock on a beach volleyball team, in a stairwell.

Langer's killing proved particularly traumatic for many who fled the building that day because of how visible she was. Her body, at the bottom of a stairwell, was unavoidable for those descending the steps, as they had to step over her to get past.

If Craddock's actions were fueled by grudges against people with whom he worked closely — he did shoot several engineering supervisors — it's notable he went to the third floor first.

Some initially said that Craddock had been passed over for a job in the Public Works Department, which resides on the third floor, and was exacting revenge on those who prevented him from getting it.

Craddock hadn't applied for any jobs, The Virginian-Pilot confirmed, but he had expressed frustration to someone that management had promoted others who had less time on the job than him.

Others said Craddock had a romantic interest in one of the victims on the third floor and that she had not only spurned his advances but also reported it to a supervisor.

The Pilot hasn't been able to confirm that. The city said it has no record of any formal complaints against Craddock, and the Heintze investigation didn't uncover evidence of unwanted advances.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that LaQuita Brown, 39, was the first victim slain on the third floor.

Summer intern Jack Jones was listening to music while doing data entry when he saw Brown walk past his doorway. They exchanged smiles.

Jones, 21, had only been interning in the office for two weeks, and Brown had been helpful and welcoming.

Walking about two steps behind Brown was Craddock. Jones and Craddock made eye contact, too. Jones had seen Craddock around, but didn't know his name at the time. He said he doesn't know whether Brown knew that Craddock was walking behind her.

Soon after, Jones heard a bang. It sounded like a nail gun.

He walked into the hallway and saw Craddock standing in Brown's office, with his arm extended toward Brown. Jones couldn't see Craddock's hands — or the gun.

He heard another bang.

"The second [bang] was seeing him kill LaQuita," Jones said.

When Craddock turned to leave, Jones saw the gun in his hand.

He ran away, screaming "Gun, gun, gun!"

“I started hearing shots”

Engineer Steven Poe heard Jones’ screams from his third-floor office. He turned off his lights and crouched behind his desk.

“Then I started hearing shots,” said Poe, 35.

He couldn’t tell where they were coming from. He heard some people had gathered around the front desk, not far from his office. Poe felt like a sitting duck — his office didn’t lock — so he went out there.

“I was just going to take my chances and see if I could get to an exit,” he said.

A couple of the other men near the front desk had a view of a main hallway. Suddenly, one of the men saw Craddock, who walked toward them, aiming his gun and shooting.

“Oh (expletive)!” the man yelled, and they all scattered.

As Poe ran, people popped their heads out of office doorways, trying to figure out what was going on. He ran into a co-worker’s office, and they dragged her desk in front of the door and leaned against it.

“In our minds, we thought that he was going door to door executing people,” said Poe, a married father of two young boys. “And we were getting ready to give everything we had to brace ourselves against the door.”

Craddock killed four others and wounded two more on the third floor, most of them in the area around Brown’s office, before going to the second floor.

Engineer Algen Canonizado, who was walking to his second-floor office after using a printer, said Craddock stepped into his field of vision in a hallway but turned and walked around a corner in the opposite direction.

Within a minute, Canonizado, 46, heard six gunshots and a woman screaming. He thinks it might have been Nixon, whose office was around that corner.

Craddock and Nixon had a strained relationship, according to Nixon’s husband, Jason Nixon. She told her husband that Craddock was chauvinistic and did sloppy engineering work.

Canonizado, who took cover under his desk, had left his office door open. A woman came in seeking refuge. On the other side of his office’s back wall, Canonizado heard a violent struggle. He believes it was Craddock fighting with Joshua Hardy, one of the deceased whose cubicle was on the other side of the wall.

“A lot of wrestling, struggling, bumping around the cubicle walls,” Canonizado said. “I think Josh was trying to grab the gun.”

Hiding under a desk, another engineer smelled the gunsmoke that wafted into her nearby office.

“I will never forget that smell,” she said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The struggle between Craddock and Hardy might explain why Hardy was shot more times than the other victims — 10, according to his family.

Once it ended, Canonizado heard one of the men, presumably Craddock, taunt the other.

“Gotch you, mother (expletive),” Craddock said, according to Canonizado.

After Craddock moved on, Canonizado heard Hardy praying and asking, “Why? Why?”

“I’m going in”

By the time the first 911 call came in, Craddock had moved to the second floor and was shooting Nixon and Hardy — the 11th and 12th people shot that day, according to the police timeline.

Then the city’s emergency communications center started getting flooded with 911 calls from employees in Building 2.

In one chilling call, a dispatcher got information from the caller, heard eight loud gunshots, then the line went silent, according to the Heintze report.

It didn’t take long for officers to respond; the police department’s headquarters is 800 feet from Building 2.

Little is known about the four officers who entered the building first. The police haven’t released their names, divulging only that two of them are detectives and two are K-9 officers.

One detail is clear. In a country where mass shootings are becoming more frequent, and where some officers have let fear get the best of them, these four didn’t hesitate.

One of the officers could be heard on the police scanner before they went into the building. He sounds out of breath.

“Do we have any idea where the shooter is at?” he asks. “I’m going in.”

When those officers entered the building at 4:10 p.m., Craddock was returning to the third floor, where he shot one person, and then quickly went back to the second floor, according to the police timeline.

The officers moved as a team through the building. They heard gunshots on the second floor.

It appears that it took about six minutes for the officers to find and confront Craddock.

The officers’ inability to get through doors that required keycard access might have slowed their movement. The police eventually got employee cards, but officers also had to breach doors at times.

Craddock shot two more colleagues — his last victims — at 4:15 p.m. One of those men died; the other jumped out a second-story office window and survived.

Less than a minute later, the officers confronted Craddock. They found him behind a secured interior door with a window, the Heintze report stated.

One of the officers shot Craddock — and Craddock shot one of them — but it's not clear whether those shots were fired through the closed door.

"Officer hit! Officer hit!" one of them said over the radio.

The officer's bulletproof vest stopped the bullet and his comrades dragged him to safety.

"We have the suspect behind a barricaded door," an officer barked on the radio. "We need a keycard access right now."

It's an unsurprising end for the man who avoided confrontation — shooting through a wooden door at officers he couldn't see.

For Craddock, it was a decidedly defensive position, as he shifted from taking peoples' lives to prolonging his own.

The police released a photo of the spot where the gunfight happened. The door Craddock hid behind is riddled with bullet holes, some from bullets that were coming and others that were going.

At some point, Craddock retreated down a hallway, away from the door.

The police department's SWAT Team finally got to Craddock, even though no one had officially requested the team's presence that day. Team members had been at the Oceanfront, preparing for a Memorial Day festival, when they got word of the shooting and "self-deployed," according to the Heintze report.

When officers descended upon Craddock, he still had some fight left in him, kicking at them.

The police haven't offered any details on Craddock's gunshot wound; they've only said that officers tried to save his life once he was in custody.

A workplace no longer

For city workers in hiding, the sound of police dogs barking was a welcome one. For many, it was the first sign that the police were there. The employees would soon be jarred from their hiding places by officers banging on doors.

Poe and his co-worker weren't sure if it was a ruse to lure them out of their office, so they asked a 911 operator if it was safe to come out. Yes, the dispatcher assured them.

When they came out, “we had to put our hands up and run,” Poe said.

As Poe and others were herded out of the building, they caught glimpses of what had become of Building 2.

It was a workplace no longer. Cabinets had been toppled. Binders were strewn about. Debris covered the floor. Bullet holes in walls and doors served as ugly markers for the winding path that Craddock took around the building.

And the blood. That was the worst part. It was everywhere, especially the stairwells.

VB Strong

The shooting was, at the time, the deadliest mass shooting of the year in the United States. Its impact locally was so powerful that some called for the building to be demolished, as if the violence and bloodshed had rendered it uninhabitable.

The slogan VB Strong became the rallying cry for the city, so much so that one can hardly go a day without seeing it somewhere: on bumper stickers, roadside signs, clothing and even tattoos.

The people who worked in Building 2 are recovering at their own pace, seeing therapists, suffering from anxiety or taking medication.

Charlene, the one who somehow avoided Craddock’s bullets, is doing all three. She hasn’t been to work since that day. She’s on medical leave. She said she’s been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and has sparingly left her house over the past five months.

It’s difficult enough dealing with the stress of someone you thought was a friend trying to kill you. But there’s more to it with Craddock. He killed some people he knew and some he didn’t. He came across some on his manhunt, looked right at them, and chose not to shoot. With others, he decided it was their day to die.

And only he knew why.