

From: [Carol young](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Disturbing incident at Venice beach
Date: Saturday, November 1, 2025 5:24:33 PM

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I wanted to alert you to a disturbing incident that occurred at the Venice public beach this morning, express my concerns about its handling by the Venice police team that eventually responded, and seek any guidance you might have about an appropriate way for all concerned to deal with such a situation in the very likely event it reoccurs in the future.

When I arrived at the beach this morning at 7:50 am to participate in the daily beach yoga session conducted by Elin, a crowd (comprising yoga attendees and other members of the public) of approximately 60 was gathered and Elin was on her phone talking to a police dispatcher and attempting to persuade them to send officers. The cause of the disturbance was an apparently unhoused middle-aged man, who had placed his possessions in the center of the circle used daily by Elin's yoga sessions (notably for many years, sessions for which I understand she has a Venice permit), and who was verbally abusive and physically threatening towards anyone who attempted to enter the circle. This male individual was accompanied by a middle-aged female companion, who also was verbally abusive to the yoga attendees and telling us to "get out."

I am a retired medical professional of 38 years and my career included 4 years in a large urban emergency room. My assessment of the threatening male is that he suffers from some kind of mental illness. I overheard others in the crowd saying that this individual is a regular presence in public parks in Sarasota County and is well known to area law enforcement as a result. In addition, I was informed that the same man had disrupted the yoga group recently, when it was being led by one of Elin's substitutes.

When the Venice police team (which eventually totaled 4 officers) arrived, they were informed of his threats against the yoga participants. The officers did not remove him, and their initial response to us was that this was a public area and the yoga group had to move its location. We also informed the police team of the permit for long-standing use of the beach for yoga, which seemingly had no bearing on their handling of the situation.

Eventually, after our group had moved south to another area of the public beach, it appeared the police did escort the male individual from the beach around 8:15 am. While I am pleased that the police did not escalate their response with him, there was certainly no resolution to the situation. The police team provided us with no guidance whatsoever as to what rights a large group of individuals, using the public beach consistent with a permit, may have vis-a-vis a single individual who has issued threats towards anyone entering space that he has claimed as his, nor did they advise us as to what we should do or what their response might be in the very likely event that he continues this behavior in the future. I believe such a reoccurrence is a near certainty, in light of the prior incident, today's events, and the fact that his and his companion's abuse and threats clearly show animus towards the yoga group generally and males who practice such a "girly" activity specifically.

The Venice municipal website rightly highlights the appeal of its public beach for a wide range of family-oriented fun. Tourism sites routinely list the beach's daily yoga sessions as one of the numerous attractions of the town. Indeed, the beach and its yoga are foremost among the many wonderful things about this town that persuaded my husband and I to buy our second home here 6 years ago.

I am well aware of the challenges that unhoused people and mentally unhealthy people can present to any community and its law enforcement, no matter its size. I also realize this is a public beach, and that no one who is

peaceably and lawfully enjoying it has any lesser or greater right to it than others. But given the events I witnessed this morning, and a police response that seemed to offer not much more than a “What can we do? All of you will just need to move somewhere else” shrug to our group, I am very concerned that any future incidents involving this individual, at whatever time of day, could very easily and quickly escalate to violence and injury.

I would appreciate any thoughts or guidance you might care to share with me in response.

Thank you,
Carol Young

From: [joanharborlights](#)
To: [James Clinch](#); [City Council](#); [Kelly Fernandez](#); [Kelly Michaels](#); [Andy Leisenring](#); [Kath](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: Yoga on Venice Beach
Date: Friday, November 7, 2025 4:16:43 PM

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James and others:

There is an EASY answer to the mentally ill man harassing the yoga students. Sarasota County has nuisance laws. Here is the dog nuisance law. It can easily be changed to apply to humans, ie., if one doesn't already exist.

No companion Animal shall be allowed to unreasonably annoy humans, to endanger the life or health of other Animals or persons acting lawfully, or to substantially interfere with the rights of others thereby interfering with the reasonable use and enjoyment of property.

Revised:

No person shall be allowed to unreasonably annoy other people, to endanger the life or health of other persons acting lawfully, or to substantially interfere with the rights of others thereby interfering with the reasonable use and enjoyment of public property.

If no Sarasota County law already exists, simply have City Council pass this ordinance immediately. The fact the Venice

Beach and the Yoga Circle are within the City of Venice is ample cause. The rights of one cannot trample on the general good.

Joan Farrell

Venice, Fl 34285

423-314-9442

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

From: [Linda S](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] new ordinances
Date: Sunday, November 23, 2025 12:09:59 PM

You don't often get email from lfserbay@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

This Message Is From an External Sender

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Dear Venice City Council Members,

I have enjoyed participating in beach yoga on Venice Beach for many years until recently. We have been subjected to a scary looking homeless man for the past month. He has created a disturbance at times and the police have been called numerous times, but they say they can't do anything. It's time for Venice to create a nuisance ordinance so that the police have some recourse. It's not right that one homeless man can usurp the rights of the many tax paying property owners that come to enjoy beach yoga daily.

I first came to know about this homeless man last winter when he took up residence in one of the picnic shelters at Service Club Park. At first I thought he might be a homeless veteran so I called the police to see if there were any programs to help. After talking with the homeless outreach officer Sgt. Hammett, I learned he wasn't a veteran and chooses to be homeless. He created a many months long eye sore (I sent pictures to James Clinch) at the park because the police said they couldn't do anything. After approximately 5 months he finally did something that got himself trespassed out of there.

Surely there are ordinances that can be developed to address situations like these that offer the police the ability to address these problems and remove people like this from the public spaces. I don't know where he came from, but I don't like his rights superseding my rights as a taxpaying citizen of Venice.

I understand that you have already been given samples of nuisance ordinances so please do something.

Sincerely,

Linda Serbay
619 Leisure
Venice, FL 34285

From: [Ellen Gabrielli](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Venice Beach Yoga Disturbing Presence
Date: Monday, November 24, 2025 10:43:46 AM

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Good morning members of the Venice City Council.

I know I am not the first person to write about the (supposed homeless) male who has been a disturbing presence at yoga on the beach most mornings for the last few weeks.

I just wanted to voice my concern also and hope that something can be worked out.

E. Gabrielli

From: Michael Fantin
To: joanharborlights
Cc: City Council; Kelly Fernandez; Kelly Michaels; James Clinch; Andy Leisenring; Board and Council Messages
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Venice Beach Yoga Intimidator
Date: Thursday, December 4, 2025 4:37:50 PM

This Message Is From an External Sender

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Why don't police arrest him for menacing?

On Wed, Dec 3, 2025, 1:30 PM joanharborlights <joanharborlights@protonmail.com> wrote:

Council Members:

This is the homeless man who has been terrorizing Elin Larsen's Yoga students at least 5 days a week since November 2nd. On November 2nd, Van Vleet called Elin a F___ing C___T and "bumped" his stomach into hers. He plays music at top volume all during the classes and takes videos of the students, getting into their faces to do so., and going round and round the circle in a threatening manner. Van Vleet posts these videos to YouTube and often edits them as well.

Elin's Beach Yoga is listed as one of the "Top 10 things to do in Venice". Even those who don't attend are aware of this valuable resource which is a source of pride to all of Venice. At this time Elin has an average of 100 students in the 8:00am class, about 90 in the 9:00am class. These numbers will swell in January to about 500 students for both classes. Elin has conducted her classes on the beach for 18 years, and some of the students have been with her the entire time.

Van Vleet is 6' 4" and weighs 220. He is 51 years old and a Sexual Predator. He often wears camo pants and shirtless on top. Other times he wears black pants, a black hoodie and a black mask. He is described as being in "excellent physical shape" and is particularly tense around women. The male students have taken to placing their mats on the outside of the circle to protect their teacher.

Families arriving at the class with small children generally leave when they see the situation. Students told me that Van Vleet doesn't mess with the Volleyball people who are much younger and might fight back. He prefers easier targets. Many of Elin's students are older, some as old as 90. One 90+ year old student who drives herself to class can't really see Elin, because Van Vleet stalks Elin's every movement and she must move constantly, often going out of the visual field of the 90+ year old student. A longtime student described the yoga class as "very stressful, I don't know what he is going to do, sometimes he is nice, giving people a piece of candy, other times he goes off with curses and threats." He always wears a backpack. Students expressed concerns as to what is in it. Van Vleet taunts the yoga students. He recently stated that "I can grab the donation bag and no one can catch me".

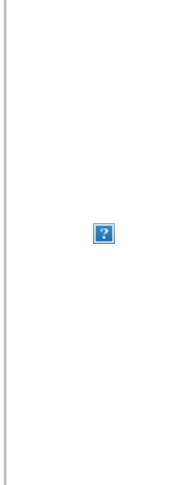
This is not a First Amendment issue, it is a PUBLIC SAFETY issue. That one predator can apparently torment, victimize and terrify an entire community without Police action or City Council action is reprehensible. Stop dithering.

This is the 100 year Anniversary of Venice. What a shocking look it is.

Joan Farrell
Venice, FL 34285

<https://offender.fdle.state.fl.us/offender/sops/flyer.jsf?personId=92278>

James Anthony Van Vleet



James Anthony Van Vleet
Date of Image: 10/16/2025

Designation: **Sexual Offender** Name: **James Anthony Van Vleet**Status: **Released - Subject to Registration** Dept of Corrections #: **James Anthony Van**
Not Available Date of Birth: 10/27/1974Race: **Vleet**
[Search the Dept of Corrections Website](#) WhiteSex: MaleHair: RedEyes: **is a**
GreenHeight: 6'04"Weight: 220 lbs **sexual offender under Florida law.**
Positive identification cannot be established unless a fingerprint comparison is made.
[Click Here to Track this Offender](#)

James Anthony Vanvleet

Type	Body Location	SMT Count
Tattoo	Right Leg	3
Tattoo	Right Hand	2
Tattoo	Left Hand	2
Tattoo	Right Arm	1
Tattoo	Neck	1
Tattoo	Left Leg	1
Tattoo	Left Arm	1
Tattoo	Stomach	1

Address	Address Source Information	Map Link
Transient 1100-1600blk S Harbor Dr Venice, FL 34285 Sarasota County	Source: Transient Check-In Received Date: 11/20/2025 Type of Address: Transient	Show Map

Adjudication Date	Crime Description	Court Case Number	Jurisdiction & State	Adjudication
04/11/1995	SEX OFFENSE, OTHER STATE (CRIMINAL SEXUAL CONDUCT-3RD DEGREE (PERSON 13-15))	Not Available	Jackson, MI	Guilty/convict

Gender	Minor
Not Available	

The following information reflects only those vehicles registered to or owned by the specific offender or predator. Please be aware that this individual may drive or operate vehicles other than those listed here.


Vehicle Make	Vehicle Model	Vehicle Color	Vehicle Year	Vehicle Body	Tag Number
Not Available					

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Not Available						


Link to FDLE

FDLE Link QR Code



FDLE Mobile App

FDLE Mobile App



Subject's Flyer

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

December 5, 2025

Dear Council Members,

I have been a daily participant of the Venice Beach yoga for the last 7 [years](#). It's a wonderful way to start the day. As a 40 year owner in Venice I've always been proud of the inclusiveness of our city. Recently a homeless Veteran, who goes by the name Gypsy, has been coming to the beach at the same time as yoga. He's a nice man who isn't causing any problems.

The first day he was there our instructor Sue moved the class down the beach a bit. Another day our instructor Karen greeted him and offered him a piece of candy. One of the other instructors is trying to get him off the beach. The police have been called several times but I'm not sure as to why. I don't understand how anyone can ask another person to leave the beach. Isn't this a public beach?

Thank you,
Betsy Dunn
1168 Bird Bay Way

From: [PR Ranch](#)
To: [joanharborlights](#)
Cc: [City Council](#); [Kelly Fernandez](#); [Kelly Michaels](#); [James Clinch](#); [Andy Leisenring](#); [Board and Council Messages](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Venice Beach Yoga Intimidator
Date: Friday, December 5, 2025 9:26:56 AM

This Message Is From an External Sender

This message came from outside your organization.

Yikes

Sent from Gmail Mobile

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Gender	Minor
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Not Available						

Link to FDLE

FDLE Link QR Code



FDLE Mobile App

FDLE Mobile App



Subject's Flyer

Sent with [Proton Mail](#) secure email.

December 4, 2025

Dear City Clerk.

Thank you for sending copies of this letter to the Venice City Council members.

TOPIC: To make sure Venice Public Beach remains equally assessable to everyone.

In the upcoming December 9th meeting many people will try to convince you to take that right away from a Homeless Veteran because he is different and many feel threatened.

The following incidents version may not be brought up December 9th:

1. The first time the said homeless person showed up the yoga instructor (Sue) just moved the class 30 yards down the beach.
2. Another yoga instructor (Karen) proudly announced that he was no problem as she "just greeted him and gave him a piece of candy."
3. The problem seemed to escalate after a snowbird yoga instructor (Elin) first class upon return tried to get him to move off "her beach", which he resisted.
4. As the requests in following days to leave became verbally abusive he responded in the same.
5. Another snowbird male at a later date tried to use force to get him to leave. The homeless man defended himself and refused to press charges when the police asked him many times. His response was "Jesus taught me to forgive".
6. Many are appalled at the ugly untrue rumors that have spread about this homeless person. The police have been saying that he has a clean record.
7. Every time yoga instructor Elin leads the yoga class she uses it to spread fear about the homeless person and as a recruiting tool to have people show up to the December 9th council meeting.

CONCLUSION: I am sure you will hear from a very vocal ELDERLY minority of the yoga attendees. You might be the last opportunity in their life to learn that "equality for all" does not mean equality for only the "PRIVLEDGE".

Thank you for your open mind and for your service.

THE SILENT MAJORITY