

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, September 2, 2020 – 10:00 a.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

PRESENT: Chairman, John Michael Matthews, Vice Chairman, Joel Herman; Members: Barbara Fallon, Don Wickstrand, and Alternate Member, Peggy Lyon **Also Present:** City Attorney, John Turner (arrived at 10:10); Public Works Director, Matthew Mitts and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Hawkins

Excused Absence: Sylvester McIntosh

Unexcused Absence: Curtis Paulisin

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Matthews called today's meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Committee members and the audience joined together in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

Mr. Matthews announced that Mr. McIntosh asked to be excused from today's meeting.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) July 1, 2020

Mrs. Lyon made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 1, 2020 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting. Ms. Fallon seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

5. NEW BUSINESS

A) Request to use Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary by Wreaths Across America – Mr. Rick Lewis

Mr. Matthews said that Mr. Rick Lewis was supposed to be here today to talk about the Wreaths Across America event, which takes place just before the holidays. He said they are estimating that 50 people will be attending. Mr. Matthews said he does not think that the City is issuing any permits for events at this time, so he does not think that they have to approve it today. He recommended that they table this item until October or November and maybe Mr. Lewis can attend to provide more information.

6. OLD BUSINESS

A) Status of Proposed Plaque for the Korean War Veterans Monument – Mr. Joe Gomez, Korean War Veterans Association

Mr. Matthews stated that he asked Mr. Joe Gomez, President of the Korean War Veterans Association, to attend today's meeting to talk about the plaque for the Korean War Monument, but he is not present. He knows that Mr. Gomez is working on getting the plaque made. Mr. Matthews said that the Korean War monument is somewhat plain so they want to add a bronze plaque to the front of it to explain more about the Korean War. Mr. Matthews stated that 54,246 individuals were killed, 185,284 were wounded, and there are still 8,175 people missing from the Korean War. He said by adding this information to the monument, it gives the current and future generations the history of what happened. He stated that the Korean War Veterans Association is paying for the plaque and they are trying to have it ready for Veterans Day.

B) Update on the Sea Wall Repair and the Bridge Repair Projects

Mr. Matthew Mitts, Public Works Director, stated that they had a routine repair project scheduled for the bridge, but after they selected a design engineer they discovered the bridge needs to be replaced. This is going to be a two-step approach. First, they are going to stabilize the damage that has occurred to reinforce the bridge. They finalized the plans with the design consultant and the project will go out to bid in early October. The work will take place this fall or early next year at a time that will not impact any events taking place on the Island. This will give them a grace period to safely use the bridge under certain weight restrictions. They will be able to bring items like the stage or small trucks onto the Island, but not heavy equipment. They will start on the design of the new bridge in October of next year and the construction will take place in the fiscal year 2022-2023. He announced that the shoreline embankment repairs are now complete.

Mr. Matthews said that when the bridge is replaced it will not look much different than what it looks like now.

Mr. Mitts reported that the new bridge will be designed with a 75-year life span, so they should get more mileage out of the new bridge. He said the holidays are coming up and the City work crews will be going out to Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary to pressure wash the sidewalks and replace some of the benches that have become moldy.

Mr. Matthews said he noticed that there are new benches near the Vietnam Veterans memorial and the Island looks fantastic. He asked if anything has been done to address the big tree on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary that split.

Mr. Mitts replied that the ground has been very wet. They are waiting for it to dry out a little so they can get some heavier equipment out there without causing damage to the ground.

Mrs. Lyon asked if the damage to the tree was caused by a lightning strike.

Mr. Mitts replied that he is not aware of the cause of the damage, but lightning would make sense. He is not familiar with how long it has been damaged or if it was something recent.

C) Further Discussion on a World War I Monument

Mr. Matthews stated that they have been talking about a World War I (WWI) monument for Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. It is a little tricky because there are no WWI Veterans or active WWI organizations to sponsor it. He said WWI Veterans formed the Island, so it is appropriate to have a WWI monument. They previously discussed ideas for a monument and they mentioned utilizing the cement slab where the sundial used to be located. He reported that the

United States joined WWI late and had 117,000 casualties, but worldwide there were 40 million casualties. There were 20 million deaths, 21 million wounded, and 10 million of them were civilians. Those numbers are hard to imagine, but this is a part of history and a part of Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary so he thinks they should pursue a monument. He said he has spoken with some Marines who are willing to donate towards it. He will also mention it again at the Veterans Council meeting to see if they can get some support. There have been some donations coming in even though there has not been a big push for it. He said the monument might be similar to the other basic rectangular granite designs with engraving or a plaque, because they do not want to overshadow any of the other monuments on the Island. He asked if there were any other ideas or thoughts on this monument.

Ms. Fallon said she thinks it should be similar to the Korean War monument with the dates and statistics.

Mr. Matthews agreed that listing the statistics and some of the information he just mentioned would be appropriate. He will see if he can get a volunteer or an architect to draw something up that can be passed around.

Mrs. Lyon agreed that if they could get someone to draw up a design, it would give people something to look at and possibly help with donations.

Mr. Matthews said it does not need to be artistic because it is a monument for history. He knows some architects so he will see if he can find a volunteer to draw it up.

Mrs. Lyon said once they know the cost of the Korean War monument plaque it will give them a good idea of what they can expect to pay for a plaque of that size.

Mr. Matthews said that is true because they talked about it being similar. These are the types of discussions they need to have before they move to far along.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

A) Patriots Day – September 11, 2020

Mr. Matthews said there are so many important dates in September that need to be remembered. Patriots Day is September 11th and it is nearly impossible not to remember the 2,977 victims of that day and those who went forward with the War on Terrorism and have been involved with the conflicts in Iraqi and Afghanistan. They are still awarding medals for the War on Terrorism and it is still going on today. Some individuals have spent their entire military career at war if they joined the service after the 9/11 attacks. He mentioned that the Tunnel to Towers organization is holding their annual 5K event on September 12, 2020. A few people will meet and start at Riverside Park, but they are trying not to draw large crowds.

B) POW/MIA Day – September 18, 2020

Mr. Matthews said that POW/MIA Day is always the third Friday of September, so it will be September 18th this year. The POW/MIA monument is one (1) of the first main monuments people see when they walk onto the Island and it is made of beautiful black granite. He stated that the POW/MIA monument is a regional monument and they have had several memorial ceremonies at that site. He said there are 1,587 that are still unaccounted for and most likely they are presumed dead. There were 55 American service men and seven (7) civilians that died in captivity.

Worldwide there are 83,204 still unaccounted for that either died or were unrecovered. About 73,000 are from WWII and 7,800 are from the Korean War. The POW/MIA monument memorializes an important part of our Country and those who serve our Country. The longest held prisoner from the Vietnam War was held captive for nine (9) years. There are still six (6) missing in action from the recent conflicts and most people do not know that. Mr. Matthews said that there are six (6) National holidays that the POW/MIA flag should be flown on and POW/MIA Day on September 18th is one (1) of them.

Mr. Mitts stated that the City does have a POW/MIA flag and it will be flown on that day.

C) Gold Star Mother's Day – September 28, 2020

Mr. Matthews announced that the Gold Star Mother's Day is September 28, 2020. Now they have the beautiful Gold Star Grove on the Island to remember and memorialize those Gold Star Families and their lost loved ones.

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Mrs. Lyon asked after the new light poles are installed on the Alma Lee Loy Bridge will the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) reinstall the flagpole brackets.

Mr. Mitts replied that he believes the State has wrapped up installing the light poles, but the City is responsible for the brackets. The City pulled them off the old poles, fixed them up and they will be reinstalled on the new poles. They did talk about having them installed for Labor Day, but he will have to check with FDOT. The City cannot do any work while FDOT has an active work site.

Mr. Matthews announced that the Words From War monument project is moving forward and they are still accepting donations. This monument will also be a regional monument, so people will come from all over to see it. He said they are aiming at having it dedicated by Veterans Day, November 11th. He said Mr. Bruce Caddy is heading the project and they started a 100-day march from the artist's home to the monument site to raise awareness.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) October 7, 2020

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for October 7, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:33 a.m.

/rh