

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, January 3, 2018 – 10:00 a.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

PRESENT: Chairman, John Matthews, Vice Chairman, Joel Herman, Members: Barbara Fallon, Curtis Paulisin, Alternate Member #1, Sylvester McIntosh, and Alternate Member #2, Peggy Lyon **Also Present:** Public Works Manager, Don Dexter; Recreation Director, Rob Slezak; and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Hawkins

Excused Absence: Don Wickstrand

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.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) December 6, 2017

Mr. Matthews requested to have one (1) correction made on page 3 of the December 6, 2017 minutes. He asked to have the title for Lieutenant General Flora Darpino corrected where she was referenced the second time. Her correct title is Lieutenant General, not just Lieutenant.

Mr. Herman made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2017 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting with the one (1) correction made. Ms. Fallon seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments made.

5. NEW BUSINESS

A) Wreaths Across America – Mr. Rick Lewis

Mr. Rick Lewis introduced Mr. Joe Crowley and said that they are here today to discuss Wreaths Across America.

Mr. Crowley said that he and his wife moved here about a year ago from Massachusetts. He is a retired firefighter and they ran the Wreaths Across America program in their hometown of Ludlow, Massachusetts. They were able to place wreaths on all 700 veteran's graves in the town. This program started 26 years ago in the Arlington Cemetery and after people started

learning about it they wanted to know how it could be done in their towns. He explained that groups are formed and they raise money privately through fundraisers to make sure they can have a wreath for every veteran's grave. They are living wreathes, not plastic and they are not a decoration. Wreaths Across America's motto is to remember, honor, and teach. They like to involve the schoolchildren, the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, etc. With his experience in Massachusetts he would like to start this program in Vero Beach. He said that Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary is a beautiful spot and they thought it would be a great place for this program, as well as Crestlawn Cemetery. They would like to raise enough money to purchase wreaths for both locations.

Mr. Matthews asked if the wreaths are placed out for Veterans Day. Mr. Crowley explained that the wreaths are done for Christmas and this year it will take place on December 15, 2018. The event is held nationwide beginning at 10:30 a.m. with a ceremony at 12:00 p.m. The wreath-laying ceremony takes place at the same time all across the United States. If they would like more history and information on the program they can log onto *Wreathscrossamerica.org*.

Mr. Matthews asked if their group has to do fundraising to pay for the wreaths. Mr. Crowley replied yes. He said it can be as simple as talking with the schools and allowing the children to bring in pennies and spare change, because no donation is too small.

Mr. Crowley explained that they will form a fundraising committee within Wreaths Across America, which allows them to purchase the wreaths for \$10 each.

Mr. Paulisin asked how long will the wreathes be left at the location, because there are rules for Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. Mr. Crowley said that will be the City's call on when they want the wreaths removed and they will honor that request. In Massachusetts they try to pick them up the week after Christmas, if the weather is permitting. He will turn to the City's Public Works Department for help, but if they cannot pick them up he will be there with his pickup truck and a group of Boy Scouts to help, but they will be removed on the day the City chooses. He said they will be amazed at how many people volunteer for this program. He was just up in Massachusetts while they laid the 700 wreaths and there were over 200 volunteers consisting of adults, children, organizations, and groups.

Ms. Fallon asked how long does their group prefer to leave the wreaths on display. Mr. Crowley replied that the wreaths are there for the holidays, so he likes to remove them the week following Christmas, or preferably until the New Year.

Mrs. Lyon explained that the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee's approval will be contingent on the City Council's approval. For this program to be approved for Crestlawn Cemetery they will need to discuss it with the City Council. Mr. Crowley stated that he understands.

Mr. Paulisin said when they have flowers on the Island for ceremonies he knows that they are taken off right afterwards, so he is not sure what the policy would be for the wreaths.

Mrs. Lyon stated that she has a copy of their rules in front of her, but it does not specify what time frame flowers can be left on the Island. It only has a list of uses that are not permitted. This will probably be something that the City Attorney's office will need to weigh in on.

Mr. Paulisin commented that what they are proposing sounds incredible.

Mr. Matthews said that he also likes the idea except he is unclear who is paying for the wreaths if the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee gives their approval.

Mr. Crowley explained that they are only seeking the Committee's approval and the date that they want the wreaths removed. The rest is up to the Wreaths Across America group, so if they fail to raise enough money then there will not be any wreaths. Their thought is to start this program at Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary and Crestlawn Cemetery, but their ultimate goal would be to provide wreaths for the veterans graves at every cemetery in Indian River County.

Mr. Matthews stated that with only 78 Cenotaphs on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary it would cost under \$1,000. Mr. Crowley said that is correct, so it will be a piece of cake.

Mr. Herman asked how will the wreaths be displayed, because the cenotaphs are all flat markers.

Mr. Crowley said that they would normally just place the wreaths flat on the ground, but since Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary is much smaller they could do extra fundraising and provide stands.

Mr. Matthews asked if they are granted approval, which would be first Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary, or Crestlawn cemetery. Mr. Crowley stated that they would like to start with the Island first, because of what it stands for. He is not at all concerned about being able to raise enough money for the wreaths on the Island.

Ms. Fallon asked if a simple, sturdy, green, dowel rod would work as a stand. Mr. Crowley said that might be a possibility, but if they raised enough money for the stands they would store them away and use them year after year. He said he will use his connections with the Fire Department to see if they will start a fundraiser webpage to start raising the money.

Mr. Lewis stated that he is also a member of a local American Legion Post, so he will be working with the various veterans groups to get them involved as well.

Mr. Herman made a motion to approved the program with Wreaths Across America to place wreathes on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. Ms. Fallon seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Don Dexter, Public Works Manager, stated that Mr. Lewis came in and spoke with him a few weeks ago. He thinks it is great for the community and a great way to honor the veterans. With their group taking care of the labor end, the City can help facilitate with disposing of the wreaths by providing a dumpster if it is needed.

Mrs. Lyon commented that she has a lot of contacts with the Boy Scouts and she offered her assistance if they need it.

6. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business for discussion.

7. CHAIRMAN’S MATTERS

Mr. Matthews announced that Mr. Wickstrand asked to be excused from today’s meeting.

8. MEMBER’S MATTERS

Mr. Paulisin said that he spoke with Mr. Joseph Martorano over the holidays and he asked to give everyone his regards and he wished them all a Happy New Year.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) Next Meeting Date – February 7, 2018

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for February 7, 2018 at 10:00 a.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today’s meeting adjourned at 10:21 a.m.

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