

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, January 4, 2023 – 9:30 a.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

PRESENT: Chairman, John Michael Matthews; Members: Melissa Arndt and Carolyn Lange **Also Present:** Assistant Director of Public Works, Richard Mutterback; and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Chartier

Excused Absences: Michelle Dale and Curtis Paulisin

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Matthews called today's meeting to order at 9:32 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) November 2, 2022

Mr. Matthews made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 2, 2022 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting. Mrs. Lange seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Matthews stated that two (2) of their members are absent from today's meeting so he would like to suggest they postpone the Election of Officers until their next meeting.

The other Committee members were in favor of his recommendation.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Michael Hide, Chief Engineer, retired United States Merchant Marine, said he is here today with a fellow Mariner, Mr. Ross Rowlinson. They would like to propose and seek permission to have a monument on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary for the U.S. Merchant Marine Veterans of World War II (WWII). He explained that in 1988 the late President Ronald Regan granted full Veteran status with benefits to all WWII Merchant Mariners who were involved in the war effort. He referred to the handout he provided (on file in the city Clerk's office) and said it explains a little bit about the Merchant Marines. He said the monument would be a white concrete block with a bronze WWII Merchant Marine marker on the top and another bronze plaque on the front.

Mr. Rowlinson said that the Merchant Mariners were issued the Congressional Gold Medal of Honor in May 2022 and since they received this recognition they felt it was fitting and timely to do this for

them. They hope that the Merchant Marines will be recognized as part of WWII and be allowed to have a pedestal on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary.

Mr. Hide explained that they are not looking for funding, but just approval. He believes it will fit in with the tribute that is in the works for all WWII Veterans and with the other five (5) branch service markers on the Island.

Mr. Matthews asked if they have done any fundraising, because there will be two (2) plaques that will need to be paid for.

Mr. Hide replied that he might fund it himself, but he has been talking with all his Veteran friends and he has some feelers out there for support. The top plaque will be a 12 or 14 inch bronze disc of the Merchant Marine logo. The small plaque on the face of the pedestal will explain a little bit about the U.S. Merchant Marine.

Mr. Matthews made a motion to approve the proposed monument request for the WWII Merchant Marine on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. Ms. Arndt seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Matthews said there are still some details to work on including finding a Veteran organization to sponsor it.

Mrs. Lange said there is no question that they deserve a monument, so can they get moving on this right away.

Mr. Matthews explained that they will still have to do fundraising and bring the final design back to the Committee for review. If they feel it fits with the Island then they can make a recommendation to City Council for their approval.

Mr. Hide thanked them for their approval.

Mr. Tony Young, said he would like to recognize some Veterans that have markers on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. He explained that when he was recently traveling he stopped at the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in Pooler, Georgia. He stated that there are 16 WWII aviation Veterans recognized with cenotaph markers on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary and the museum had records on four (4) of them. He gave a brief account on the history of Luther E. Hogan, Charles L. Futch, Raymond F. Knight, and Gordon F. Henry.

6. NEW BUSINESS

A) Correction to James Ellis Loudermilk's Cenotaph Marker

Mr. Young explained that Mr. Bill Loudermilk, who still lives here locally, is a brother and half-brother of the two (2) Loudermilks that are recognized with cenotaph markers on the Island. He said that the marker for James Ellis Loudermilk shows that he died on December 12, 1967, but when doing some research he found out that he actually died on December 27, 1967, so the marker is incorrect. He continued by giving a brief account of the military history of James Ellis Loudermilk and how he gave his life.

Mr. Matthews asked if they should replace the marker for James Ellis Loudermilk to correct the date of death.

Mr. Young replied yes, he would recommend that the cenotaph marker be replaced to reflect the proper date of December 27, 1967.

Mr. Matthews made a motion to have a new marker made for James Ellis Loudermilk to reflect the correct date of his death as December 27, 1967. Mrs. Lange seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Young reported that the bronze plate on the cenotaph marker for Luther Fendley, Jr. has separated from the granite base and it needs to be reattached.

B) Repairs and Repositioning of the Alex MacWilliam Monument

This item was discussed after item 7-A).

Mr. Matthews explained that the Alex MacWilliam monument is deteriorating a bit and the vegetation is growing out over it. They will probably need to look at doing some work to it in the near future.

Mr. Young announced that Mr. Robert MacWilliam, Alex's youngest brother, said he would pay to have the bronze plaque recast since it has declined in appearance. If that is something their Committee would like to see happen and it is approved by City Council then they can get a price quote from the foundry to have it recast.

Mr. Matthews made a motion they accept the generous donation to have the Alex MacWilliam plaque recast and that the City provide a new base for it and reposition it away from the vegetation. Mrs. Lange seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

C) Recap of the Wreaths Across America Ceremony – December 17, 2022

Mr. Matthews stated that Mr. Rob Ryan led the charge of the Wreaths Across America and they did a great job. They were able to provide wreaths for all the Veterans at all of the cemeteries in Indian River County.

7. OLD BUSINESS

This item was discussed after Item 6-A).

A) Update on the Stage and World War II Tribute

Mr. Young said there has been broad community support for the success of the World War II tribute and stage for Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. He recognized numerous clubs, national associations, neighborhood organizations, businesses, military groups, civic organizations, Veterans organizations, as well as the City and the County for all of their help and support. He reported that they have raised about \$180,000 to date through the generous donations from private foundations, individuals, and businesses. A dozen of local businesses have committed resources to make the tribute a reality. These resources include architects, surveyors, civil engineering, site development,

media, and legal support. If added up, these donated services would equate to over \$100,000, but they still have a ways to go.

Mrs. Lange asked if they have selected an individual or company to execute the construction of the project.

Mr. Young explained that the work order has been completed by the City and now the structural engineers and the architect will design the specifications, which will go to the County for their approval. The next step will be with Bill Bryant & Associates, who is the lead agent for building the stage and they will reach out to contractors as needed for specific parts of the construction.

Mrs. Lange asked if they have a timeframe when they think this might be finished.

Mr. Young replied it would be a miracle if it was finished by November 2023, but more likely it will be ready by Memorial Day 2024. It depends on the availability of the supplies for the new bridge and when it is completed. He said there are signs on the Island stating that the WWII memorial and stage is coming soon.

Mr. Matthews commented that the contractor for the bridge cannot start the work until they have all the materials to do the job and who knows how long that might take. To build the bridge it might take another five (5) months, so there is going to be a span of time that they cannot access the Island.

Mrs. Lange asked where will the Memorial Day 2023 ceremony take place if the bridge is being replaced.

Mr. Matthews stated they have discussed holding it at Riverside Park at the gazebo or even moving it to the Intergenerational Center as an indoor location in case of bad weather. It is a Veterans Council function, but the location has not been decided yet.

8. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

Mr. Matthews said they were unable to hold the Veterans Day ceremony in November, 2022 due to a hurricane and they most likely will not hold the 2023 Memorial Day ceremony on the Island either. He announced that the Gold Star Families have expressed an interest in having a monument on the Island. There is a classic one (1) that is used across the country, so this is something that might come before their Committee in the future. He said several years ago, their Committee approved a request from the Next Generation Veterans to have a monument on the Island, but their original design was too big and heavy. They still want to honor those from the Iraqi and Afghanistan wars and they already approved a place on the Island for it, but it has been postponed for a while.

9. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Mrs. Lange said she was wondering if the City will go out to bid for some of the work on future projects for Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary, because she feels that the \$300,000 spent on the Words From War memorial was an extravagant amount of money for three (3) pieces of concrete and a top.

Mr. Matthews said that if something comes before their Committee for the Island they definitely want to give good advice to City Council. The Words From War memorial is off the Island, so it is out of

their hands. He said he believes the agreement was that the artist would donate \$150,000 back to the Veterans Council, so he hopes that happened.

Mrs. Lange replied that she would like to know if that did occur and it should be public information.

10. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) February 1, 2023

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for February 1, 2023 at 9:30 a.m.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:28 a.m.

/rc