

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, January 6, 2021 – 9:30 a.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

PRESENT: Chairman, John Michael Matthews, Vice Chairman, Joel Herman, Members: Barbara Fallon, Curtis Paulisin, Don Wickstrand, and Alternate Member, Sylvester McIntosh **Also Present:** City Attorney, John Turner; Grounds Maintenance Manager, Nanette Haynes; Grounds Maintenance Supervisor, Josh Chandler; Recreation Director, Jim O’Connell; and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Hawkins

Excused Absence: Peggy Lyon

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Matthews called today’s meeting to order at 9:30 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 4, 2020

Ms. Fallon made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 4, 2020 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting. Mr. Herman seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

A) Chairman

Mr. John Turner, City Attorney, suggested that he take the gavel for the election of the Chairman and when that position is selected he will pass the gavel back to the Chairman. Mr. Turner stated that the floor is now open for nominations for Chairman.

Ms. Fallon made a motion to nominate Mr. John Michael Matthews for Chairman.

Mr. Turner asked if there were any other nominations for Chairman. With none being heard, Mr. Turner announced that Mr. John Matthews was elected as Chairman of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee. The motion passed unanimously.

B) Vice-Chairman

Mr. Matthews asked for nominations for Vice Chairman.

Mr. Wickstrand made a motion to nominate Mr. Joel Herman for Vice Chairman. Ms. Fallon seconded the motion and with no other nominations the motion passed unanimously. Mr. Joel Herman was elected as Vice Chairman of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

6. NEW BUSINESS

A) Review Annual Report

Mr. Matthews said 2020 was an unusual year for everyone and their annual report is a recap of what took place throughout the year. Some of their events were not held as normal or not at all. He said there are several military dates recognized throughout the year that they do not have ceremonies for, but they are mentioned at the meetings. He asked if there were any recommendations or changes to the annual report.

Mr. Herman made a motion to accept the 2020 Annual Report as presented. Ms. Fallon seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

B) Recap of the Veterans Day Ceremony – November 11, 2020

Mr. Matthews announced that the Veterans Day Ceremony took place on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary on November 11, 2020 and they tried to keep everyone spaced apart. He said that both Colonel Halcomb and Colonel Holden did a wonderful job.

C) Recap of the Parkinson and Alzheimer Association Walk – November 14, 2020

Mr. Matthews reported that the Parkinson and Alzheimer Association event took place on November 14, 2020 and part of their walk included using Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. He said he did not attend the event, but they always take good care of the Island. He noticed that they left their big sign on the Island reminding the walkers to be respectful of the Island. It is actually a good sign to leave there even if it is a temporary sign.

Ms. Nanette Haynes, Grounds Maintenance Manager, replied that she was not aware it was still there, but she will take a look at it. If the sign is in a good spot and it will not interfere with maintenance she will leave it, but if there is an issue she will return it to the Parkinson and Alzheimer Association.

Mr. Matthews replied that he believes it is in a good location and it will be a reminder to other people who visit the Island. He thanked Ms. Haynes for how nice the Island looks and it is always well maintained.

D) Recap of the Wreaths Across America Ceremony – December 19, 2020

Mr. Matthews announced that Wreaths Across America placed the wreaths on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary on December 19, 2020. He said it is very moving to see the Island decorated with the wreaths. This practice started at Arlington Cemetery and now it is done at numerous cemeteries around the Country. The wreaths were removed on January 3, 2021.

Ms. Haynes reported that after the wreaths were placed on the Island they were vandalized. The wreaths were taken off the cenotaphs, some had the backs removed, and they were thrown all over the Island. She thought the Committee would like to know about the incident.

Mr. Matthews replied that he was not aware that happened. He thanked Ms. Haynes for the report.

E) Donations for World War I Monument – Marine Corps League of Indian River

Mr. Matthews reported that they received a donation from the Marine Corps League for the World War I (WWI) monument and there are more donations coming. They will continue discussing this at their meetings to create awareness. He said the American Legion Post is also interested in supporting the WWI monument, because the American Legion was formed right after WWI. He thanked Mr. Eric Flowers and Mr. Rob Ryan from the Sheriff's Office for helping with the donation.

Mr. Wickstrand announced that the Indian River Chapter of Military Officers Association of America plans on making a donation as well. He asked how should the check be made out.

The Senior Administrative Assistant explained that the check can be made out to the City of Vero Beach and noted that it is for Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary for the WWI monument.

Mr. Matthews said the Marine Corps League is going to pursue some ideas for a WWI monument along with support from the Veterans Council. This idea (for a monument) came about because Mr. Alex MacWilliam was the founder of Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary and he was a WWI Veteran and hero from that war. It is appropriate to have a monument out there, but they need to do it the right way and have a Veteran organization sponsor it.

F) New Ball on top of the Flag Pole

Mr. Matthews explained that the old ball on top of the flag pole on the Island was leaning, so a new one was recently installed along with new cables for raising and lowering the flag.

Mr. Herman asked if they know what happened to the original ball that was removed.

Ms. Haynes replied that she will try to find out.

Mr. Herman said if they can locate it, he would be interested in adding it to the collection of military memorabilia he has at the Veterans Service Office.

Mr. Turner stated that the iconic gold ball from the flag pole would still be City property if it was part of Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary.

Mr. Herman replied yes of course, but if the City no longer wants it he would like to be able to keep that piece of history.

7. OLD BUSINESS

A) Korean War Veterans Monument Plaque

Mr. Matthews explained that he invited Mr. Joe Gomez, Korean War Veterans, to attend today's meeting so they could thank him for the plaque. He did not know that Mr. Gomez was going to install the plaque personally, but he is an excellent craftsman and he did a great job. He stated that they received a picture of the monument after the plaque was installed (on file in the City Clerk's office). He explained that Mr. Gomez installed it on a piece of granite first and then attached it to the front of the monument. He also laid brick pavers in front of the monument so people can walk up to it. The Korean War Veterans Association paid for the plaque and the installation, so there was no expense to the City.

8. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

Mr. Matthews said that the Words From War monument is making progress. They had some drainage issues but that has been addressed and they are moving along.

Mr. Paulisin said Mr. Roger Walker likes to stay in the background, but he put a lot of work into helping create the Words From War monument and he deserves to be recognized.

Mr. Matthews said the Words From War monument will be a regional monument and people will come from all over to see it.

Mr. Matthews announced that he attended a memorial service for Mr. Joseph Richard Polletta. It was held on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary and the Sebastian Honor Guard and approximately 20 family members and friends were in attendance. Mr. Polletta was a Veteran of the 3rd Marine Division in the Vietnam War from 1968 to 1969. The request was a late notice and it did not come before the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee, but it was approved. He read a thank you note he received from the family (on file in the City Clerk's office).

Mr. Joe Gomez arrived at 9:55 a.m.

Mr. Joe Gomez, President of the Korean War Veterans Association, reported that it took three (3) months to have the plaque made and installed on the Korean War monument. He put as much information as he could on the plaque and he hopes they like it. He explained that he received some price quotes from local businesses to have the plaque cast but it was very expensive. He was finally put in touch with Erie Monuments out of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which gave them a great discount and a final price of \$700. The installer he was working with kept stalling, so finally he and another Korean War Veteran installed it themselves. He took pictures of the monument, framed them, and gave them to each of their members since most of them cannot get out to go see it. He thanked the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee for their help and support of this project.

Mr. Matthews mentioned that the stage is still on the Island from the Veterans Day Ceremony and the tarp or covering on the top is all ripped and torn. The next ceremony will not be until Memorial Day, so he assumes it will be repaired by then.

Ms. Haynes explained that the City purchased a new stage which is much larger. They wanted to take it out to the Island for Veterans Day, but there was no way it was going to fit, so they used the old stage. She said there was some discussion about leaving the old stage on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary as a permanent home for the events that take place there, but if repairs need to be made that will be addressed.

Mr. Matthews announced that there was a very nice article about Alma Lee Loy in the January addition of the Vero's Voice magazine. Everyone remembers her fondly for all she did for the community, but she was also one (1) of the original members of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee.

9. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Ms. Fallon asked in regards to the wreath destruction, what is the rate of vandalism on the Island.

Ms. Haynes replied that it is rare. The only other incident she recalls is when the small American flags on the cenotaphs were left out overnight and half of them were tossed into the river. Now they make sure the flags are picked up every evening.

Ms. Fallon asked if they might want to consider installing a mini surveillance camera especially on the cenotaph square.

Mr. Matthews replied that might be an option, but he is not sure who would monitor it.

Mr. Paulisin announced that Chaplain Dick Flick passed away. He was on the Veterans Council and a very good friend.

Mr. Matthews said that Chaplain Flick retired as a Navy Captain and he was a Chaplain in the Navy for many years where he counseled and advised numerous Marines and Sailors.

10. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) February 3, 2021

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for February 3, 2018 at 9:30 a.m.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:09 a.m.

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