

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, March 1, 2023 – 9:30 a.m.
City Hall, Second Floor Training Room, Vero Beach, Florida**

PRESENT: Chairman, John Michael Matthews; Vice Chairman, Michelle Dale; Members: Curtis Paulisin, Melissa Arndt and Carolyn Lange **Also Present:** City Attorney, John Turner; Grounds Maintenance Manager, Nanette Haynes; and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Chartier

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. 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) February 1, 2023

Mrs. Dale asked to correct the spelling of her last name on page one (1).

Mr. Matthews made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2023 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting with the one (1) correction made. Ms. Arndt seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Tony Young announced that March is the month of the year that has the most service members honored with cenotaph markers on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. He gave a brief overview of those Veterans who were lost in service in March (attached to the original minutes). He also gave a report on the history of James Dinsmore Tew, Jr. (attached to the original minutes).

Mr. Young stated that March is also Black History Month. He shared the names of the black Veterans and the wars they served in that are honored on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary (attached to the original minutes).

Mrs. Barbara Ruddy said she read that there are 82,000 service members Missing in Action (MIA) in the United States. She asked if anyone knows how many of those listed as MIA are from Indian River County.

Mr. Young replied that they celebrated POW/MIA day about five (5) years ago and he believes there were nine (9) men listed as MIA and probably four (4) others were Prisoners of War (POW).

Ms. Arndt said Mr. Young mentioned that one (1) of the Veterans he talked about passed away in basic training, but yet he is still memorialized on the Island.

Mr. Young replied that as long as they died in service while on active duty they are authorized to be recognized with a cenotaph.

Mr. Matthews explained that the City's Resolution governing the Island originally stated that individuals had to have entered the service as a resident of Indian River County and "died in combat", but it was later revised and now it states "died in service". That way anyone who died while in training would qualify.

5. NEW BUSINESS

A) Request for use of the Island on November 5, 2023 – American Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County, Inc.

Mrs. Dale explained that she was advised by the Recreation Department to get their request in early in order to make sure the date is reserved.

Mr. Matthews made a motion to approve the use of the Island by the Gold Star Mothers for part of their walk and the Veteran's Resource Expo on November 5, 2023. Mrs. Lange seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

6. OLD BUSINESS

A) Update on the Bridge Replacement

Mr. Matthews stated that the work on the bridge is scheduled to start on Memorial Day, May 29, 2023, so they will be holding the Memorial Day ceremony at the Grand Pavilion in Riverside Park.

Ms. Nanette Haynes, Grounds Maintenance Manager, reported that the contract for the bridge replacement has been received from the contractor and it is being routed internally for signatures. She stated that they also received the oyster relocation permit and they will do that work two (2) weeks prior to the start of construction.

Mr. Matthews said he understands that the lowest bidder for the project was almost \$1.5 million, but now it is up to \$1.7 million.

Ms. Haynes replied that she is not part of the bidding process, so she is not sure.

Mrs. Ruddy explained that \$200,000 was added on for a contract with an organization that will oversee the construction of the bridge project.

B) Merchant Marines Monument, Plaques, and Location

Mr. Ross Rowlinson, said at their last meeting they discussed having a pillar with just the Merchant Marine insignia on top, but now they want to go back to the idea of having a 12" x 6" plaque on the front of the monument. He provided a copy of what the new plaque would look like (on file in the City Clerk's office). The verbiage was shortened to a message that everyone can understand. He stated that the history behind the Merchant Marines is quite detailed and there would not be enough room to display it all and that is why they discussed possibly using a QR code down the road.

Ms. Arndt said she thought at their last meeting they agreed to have just a monument but nothing more on it.

Mr. Rowlinson replied at the end of that meeting they did agree to have a monument with just the Merchant Marines medallion on the top, but when discussing this further with other people it was recommended that they have some sort of brief explanation of how the World War II (WWII) Merchant Marines received Veterans status.

Mr. Michael Hyde said they are seeking approval today for the final verbiage on a plaque for the front of the monument. They all agree that the medallion on the top was fine and it would match all the other service monuments on the Island. The handout they provided today shows the wording that seems to satisfy everyone. It is important that the wording is acceptable, looked at, and approved so they can move forward.

Mr. Paulisin said he does not believe it is up to their Committee to make a change to what is on the plaque. If that is what they want it to read it should be allowed.

Mr. Hyde said if they can agree on this as their final presentation then they can move on to discuss the location for the monument.

Mr. Matthews said he thinks the purpose for the plaque is to let people know that WWII Merchant Marines are Veterans.

Mr. Rowlinson announced that they now have a sponsor for the monument, which is the Vero Beach Veterans, Inc.

Mr. Matthews asked why don't they list the dates that qualified them for Veteran status.

Mr. Rowlinson replied that the story is quite extensive and there are a lot of details, so they just listed it as WWII.

Mr. Hyde clarified that the dates are from December 7, 1941 to the end of the war in August 1945 and Veteran status was granted only to those Merchant Marines that served in the war effort.

Mr. Matthews asked if they have a vendor to make the plaques and an estimate for the cost.

Mr. Hyde stated that everything is all set, so all he needs to do is make a phone call to give them the go ahead. It will be approximately a four (4) to five (5) week delivery time.

Mr. Matthews said he thinks more important than the date that President Regan signed it in to law, is the timeframe it happened.

Mr. Hyde explained that they just discussed the dates and it would be the same for any WWII Veteran. Once the war ended there were no more new WWII Veterans.

Mr. Young stated that if you follow the research on this there are two (2) Federal Laws and two (2) sets of dates. He feels the brevity provides the important information and the date is a fact for when it was instituted. If anyone wants to know more information they can google WWII Merchant Marine and research it. The January 19, 1988 date is very important, because that is when the government finally acknowledged these men and granted them full Veteran status.

Ms. Arndt made a motion to approve the monument with the wording on the plaque as presented (Exhibit 1). Mrs. Lange seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

There was a brief discussion on the location for the monument. They agreed on the new proposed location number three (3) on the east side of the Island as shown on the map provided (Exhibit 2 on file in the City Clerk's office).

Mr. Rowlinson explained that the City will place the benches by the monument facing west, so people will have a great view of the open field and the water.

Ms. Haynes clarified that the monument and the benches will all be on the east side of the sidewalk facing west.

Mr. Rowlinson explained that they hoped there would be a possibility of getting this done before they start the bridge replacement.

Ms. Haynes asked if this is approved today, when would they order the plaques.

Mr. Hyde replied that he would order them this afternoon, because there is a four (4) week lead time.

Mr. Matthews asked what is the cost.

Mr. Rowlinson replied that it will be about \$1,000.

Ms. Arndt made a motion to approve the location for the Merchant Marine monument as discussed. Mrs. Dale seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Young asked what Veteran organization is sponsoring the project.

Mr. Rowlinson replied that it is the Vero Beach Veterans.

Mr. Young said his understanding is that the Board of Directors for the Veterans Council has also approved supporting them.

Mr. Rowlinson replied that they are going to the Veterans Council meeting this afternoon to discuss the project, but he did receive an email stating they are in support of it.

Mr. Young explained that with the Veterans Council approval they will have everything in place so they can take it to City Council.

Mr. Turner said that the monument location and wording have both been approved, but it still has to go before City Council.

C) Update on the Stage and World War II Tribute

Mr. Young reported that they met with KSM, the engineering firm, and they volunteered to do the soil boring test on the Island, which will take place on Monday. The architect is working with the structural engineer to further the plans and after that the builder will get with the County to get the final permits. He mentioned that Sharon Sexton will be doing the tile work for the ribbons.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

A) Vietnam War Veterans Day – March 29th

Mr. Matthews announced that Vietnam War Veterans Day is on March 29, 2023. There is not a ceremony or parade, but if anyone knows a Vietnam Veteran they should welcome them home.

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Mr. Paulisin announced that they will be holding the annual golf tournament, which is hosted by the Vietnam Veterans and the Veterans of Indian River County. It will be on June 17, 2023 at Sandridge Golf Club and the price is \$75.00. Following the tournament there will be a lunch at the Indian River County Fairgrounds. Last year they raised almost \$25,000 and a portion of that money was used to help furnish the new apartments on Royal Palm Boulevard where some of the homeless Veterans are now living.

Mr. Hyde said he would like to volunteer to play the bagpipes at the golf tournament for about an hour prior to the tee off.

Mrs. Dale announced that the Vero Beach High School's Red, White, and Blue concert will take place on April 2nd at 2:00 p.m. and April 3rd at 7:00 p.m. The cost is \$15.00 for general admission and \$6.00 for Veterans.

Ms. Haynes announced that the mangrove trimming on the Island will start next week.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) April 5, 2023

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for April 5, 2023 at 9:30 a.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:36 a.m.

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