

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, March 7, 2018 – 10:00 a.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

PRESENT: Chairman, John Matthews, Vice Chairman, Joel Herman, Members: Barbara Fallon, Don Wickstrand, Alternate Member #1, Sylvester McIntosh and Alternate Member #2, Peggy Lyon
Also Present: Recreation Director, Rob Slezak; Assistant City Attorney, Stefanie Beskovoyne and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Hawkins

Excused Absence: Curtis Paulisin

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

Chairman Matthews announced that Mr. Paulisin recently had back surgery and asked to be excused from today's meeting. He said that Mr. Paulisin would like to thank the City and the Veterans for their kind words and condolences on the loss of his mother-in-law, Catherine Licardi.

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 7, 2018

Ms. Fallon made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 7, 2018 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting. Mr. McIntosh seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Ryan Bass, Finance Commission Chairman, said that first of all they will all be praying for their absent member as he recovers. He stated that he had the opportunity to meet with the Lest We Forget, LLC group, some of the City staff, and the City Attorney's office. He believes that what they are going to present is a wonderful opportunity for the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee, the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary, and the City. He said it would be great if they would support this group so they can go before the City Council. He thanked the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee for what they do and allowing him to speak his opinion as a City resident and someone who participates with the City.

5. NEW BUSINESS

A) Preserving the History and Beauty of Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary - Lest We Forget, LLC

Mr. David Rollman (spelling might not be correct), stated that his father served in the military in Korea and Japan during the Korean War and World War II. Both of his sons also served in Iraqi and

Afghanistan and thankfully they both returned home safe. Memorials to Veterans are very important to his family, so they are grateful for Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. He has seen substantial monuments for Veterans in Washington, D.C., but this is one of the best local sanctuaries honoring Veterans. He explained that as a group of them walked the Island they recognized a greater need to be involved in some way. The group has been getting together and they know that those Veterans who died and the sacrifices that families made were not in vain, but they also know there are those who will try to dishonor Veterans, or those who have served. Because of this, they formed the Lest We Forget, LLC. Their mission statement is that Lest We Forget, LLC exists to honor those who paid the supreme sacrifice in all wars in defense of the Country and those men and women living or dead who sacrificed themselves to active duty service. They will support the efforts of public and private institutions and organizations by participating in ceremonies that honor their heroic sacrifice. Lest We Forget, LLC supports efforts to create and preserve parks, memorials, and monuments erected to honor those who paid the ultimate sacrifice defending and protecting our freedom for our sons, daughters, and future generations. They came here today to make an appeal to ask the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee to make a recommendation to the City Council to allow them to help serve. The Lest We Forget, LLC is seeking permission to lease a portion of Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary for the preservation and beauty at the gateway to the Island. They are requesting to lease a 60 foot by 60 foot area from the benches that face the flag and extends out approximately 60 feet east and north to create a gateway to the Island. They will provide all the maintenance and costs involved with that area that is currently being absorbed by the City. They will also look at other ways to enhance and preserve Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary.

Ms. Stefanie Beskovoyne, Assistant City Attorney, asked to make a statement regarding Lest We Forget and the monument that is already on Veterans Memorial Island. She stated that the City Council has already entered into a contract for legal representation with Liberty Counsel in anticipation of any legal challenge. The law firm represents them pro bono and they have requested, and the City Council has agreed that any public statements about this case will not be made without Liberty Counsel's review and approval. As an Advisory Committee, they are part of that obligation, so she would ask that they refrain from making any statements which might be representative of the City and might harm them in litigation.

Mr. Matthews stated that since there is pending litigation on this subject they cannot really comment on it. The concept of leasing part of Veterans Memorial Island is a bit unusual and it has never come before the Committee, so there is no way they could make a recommendation without researching and discussing it further.

Ms. Beskovoyne clarified that there is no active litigation at this time, but there is a possibility. As part of the City Charter this property can only be leased by a referendum or vote by the public.

Mr. Matthews stated that if this group wants to pursue this, it will be the beginning of a long and winding road. As the Assistant City Attorney stated they cannot comment on this.

Mr. Bass asked Ms. Beskovoyne if the referendum requirement is only for the sale of the property. It is his understanding that a referendum is not required for a lease agreement, which could be a lease on a portion of Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. If the City wanted to sell the property then that is when it would trigger a voter referendum.

Ms. Beskovoyne read from the City Code a section pertaining to Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary that states the property may be leased without a referendum only for a public or civic

purpose, which also serves a recreational, artistic, or cultural purpose including incidental concessions. This is a decision that would be made by the City Council.

Mr. Bass stated that this Committee has been instructed not to discuss certain legal matters, but the Lest We Forget, LLC group is asking for a recommendation to go to the City Council. They want to discuss with the City Council what the group is about and to see if they could enter into a lease with the City. He does not believe the contract they have would prohibit the Committee from discussing a recommendation to go before the City Council.

Mr. Matthews explained that since a proposal for a lease has never come up before he does not believe they can, nor does he believe they should make a recommendation. This item came to the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee last minute with no backup information, so there is no way they can make a recommendation on this now.

Mr. Bass asked what would it take to make a recommendation. Mr. Matthews replied that it would take long discussions with the City Attorney's office and the City Council.

Mr. Bass asked if the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is recommending that the group go directly to the City Council rather than coming back to this Committee.

Mr. Matthews stated no. They cannot recommend anything on this sort of pop quiz approach. They have not heard anything on the subject and they have not had time to research the legal implications. He personally does not think they should do it, so he is not recommending it for that reason.

B) Request for Use of the Island – Indian River County Victims' Rights Coalition

Mr. Matthews announced that they received a request to use Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary from the Indian River County Victims' Rights Coalition. He said they have been holding their memorial on the Island for years. They are requesting to use the Island on April 12, 2018 and they are expecting approximately 100 people to attend.

Ms. Fallon made a motion to accept the application. Mr. McIntosh seconded motion and it passed unanimously.

6. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Matthews announced that the Veterans Council Next Generation Veterans ruck march will take place this Saturday. It starts at the Army recruiting station, goes over the Barber Bridge, and ends on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. This event is in support of those with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, first responders, law enforcement, veterans, and anyone who supports veterans.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

Mr. Matthews announced that the Saint Patrick's Day parade will take place on March 17th along Ocean Drive.

Mr. Matthews stated that plans are being made for the Memorial Day ceremony which will be held on May 28, 2018 on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. Marine Lieutenant General Wineglass will be the Keynote Speaker.

Mr. Matthews noted that the Marine Corp Ball is a ways off, but it will be held on November 17, 2018.

Mr. Matthews reported that March 29, 2018 is National Vietnam Veterans Day, but he is not aware of any ceremonies planned for that day. He said that during this week in 1968 543 service members were killed in Vietnam and during the first seven (7) weeks of 1968 2,242 service members lost their lives. He asked that anyone who knows a Vietnam Veteran to please take the time to thank them for their service.

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

None

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) Next Meeting Date –April 4, 2018

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for April 4, 2018.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

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