

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, April 4, 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, Don Wickstrand, and Alternate Member, Peggy Lyon **Also Present:** Recreation Director, Rob Slezak; Assistant City Attorney, Stefanie Beskovoyne and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Hawkins

Excused Absence: Sylvester McIntosh

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) March 7, 2018

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

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

5. NEW BUSINESS

A) Request for Use of the Island – Memorial Ceremony for Vietnam Veteran Jeffery Flannery

Mr. Matthews announced that they received a request to use Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary for a memorial ceremony for Vietnam Veteran Jeffery Flannery. His family, friends, the Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Honor Guards are requesting the ceremony, which has already been approved. The requested time is listed as 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., but the actual ceremony starts at 10:00 a.m. and they are expecting 25 to 100 people to attend.

B) Memorial Day Ceremony – May 28, 2018

Mr. Matthews stated that they are planning the Memorial Day Ceremony, which is scheduled for May 28, 2018.

Mr. Bruce Cady, Veterans Council, stated that he has the application requesting to use Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary for the Memorial Day Ceremony. The Veterans Council will be

organizing this event and he came to today's meeting to provide a brief outline of the event and to get the paperwork processed so they can move forward.

Mr. Matthews stated that the original reason for forming the Veterans Council and a good part of what they do for Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary are the ceremonies for Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

Mr. Cady explained that the Keynote Speaker will be Marine Lieutenant General Wingless. They will also be honoring the Gold Star Mothers in the community. The Vero Beach High School Band, the Color Guards, the Vero Beach Police Department, Indian River County Sheriff's Office, Fire Rescue, the American Legion, the Boy Scouts, Civil Air Patrol, and several other groups will also be involved.

Mr. Matthews said he understands that Mr. Patrick Williamson will display the Boots on the Ground Memorial in the circle in front of the stage again. Mr. Cady replied that is correct. He said that Mr. Williamson was going to attend today's meeting, but he got called away to support a Veteran. This will be the second annual display of the boots, but he is not sure how many boots there will be. Anyone who wants to donate military service boots for the display can contact the Veterans Council at (772) 410-5820 and they will put them in touch with Mr. Williamson.

Mr. Matthews explained that Mr. Williamson will accept boots from any conflict or era and in any condition. The boots can be loaned to Mr. Williamson or donated to him for use in future displays. The Memorial Day Ceremony starts at 9:00 a.m., but people should try to get there earlier so they are not moving around during the National Anthem. He reminded anyone who will be attending to bring a chair, because seating is limited.

C) Florida's 31st Annual Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion April 19th – April 22nd

Mr. Matthews announced that Florida's 31st Annual Vietnam and all Veteran Reunion will be from April 19th – April 22nd at Wickham Park in Melbourne, Florida. He understands that this is the biggest Military Veteran's Reunion in the United States.

D) The True Meaning of Memorial Day Youth Essay Contest

Mr. Matthews said the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee and the Veterans Council have been approached about judging an essay contest about Memorial Day. The essay contest is sponsored by Cox Gifford Funeral Home.

6. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Matthews announced that the Indian River County Victims' Rights Coalition will hold their annual vigil on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary on April 12, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. It is to honor the memory of those who were victims of crime.

A) Recap of the Veterans Council Next Generation Veterans Ruck March

Mr. Cady stated that on March 10, 2018 the Veterans Council Next Generation Veterans gathered together along with U.S. Army Recruiters, U.S. Marine Corp Recruiters, American Legion Post #39, Dogs for Life, Gold Star Mothers, the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) and several others. Approximately 60 people gathered at the starting point, which was at the U.S. Army

Recruiting office. The group marched up 10th Avenue, along Royal Palm Boulevard, over the Merrill Barber Bridge, and ended on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. The purpose of the event was a Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) awareness opportunity. They partnered with the first responders, law enforcement officials, and the veterans in the community to help support each other and understand the challenges of PTSD. Each participant was asked to add weight to their rucksack by filling it with dry food goods. The ruck ended at the entrance to Veterans Memorial Island, where they emptied their rucksacks into the back of a pickup truck. There was over 400 pounds of food and it was donated to the Veterans Council Outreach program, which is a local food pantry to help Veterans in the community. They proceeded onto the Island where Mr. Barry Roberts, Florida State Chaplain for the American Legion, gave a presentation and spoke about PTSD. He said that Mr. Sylvester McIntosh, Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee member, gave the opening prayer for their event. The Gold Star Mothers held their installation of officers on the Island right after the event, so it was an honor to be a part of that and share the day with them. He thanked the Veterans Council for providing transportation back to where the participants parked their cars.

Mr. Matthews asked if they will do another march. Mr. Cady replied that going forward they plan on holding this annual ruck march in February, before it gets too hot.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

Mr. Matthews announced that he attended the annual Red, White, and Blue concert at the Vero Beach High School Performing Arts Center. He was asked to participate in the production by ringing the bell, which was to honor all those that died in the service of the Country. While being back stage he was able to see everything up close and he really got to enjoy the concert. He stated that this was the 25th year for this concert, which consists of patriotic and historic music. He said the Guest Conductor was Captain Shanti Simon who was a student at Vero Beach, but she is now a Captain in the Air Force. She was fantastic and you could tell she loved what she was doing.

Mr. Matthews stated that Vietnam Veterans Day was March 29, 2018 and it honors the Vietnam Veterans. He said it is hard to believe that 50 years have passed since the Vietnam War. In 1968 approximately 16,500 United States service members and 27,500 South Vietnamese troops were killed that year. North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, which were the enemies, lost over 200,000 people. It was a very violent place and there are many sad stories.

Mr. Matthews said he was informed that the Military Officers Association would like to set up a table near the entrance to Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary on Memorial Day. The area they want to use is a great area, because everyone will pass by there to get onto the Island. His thought was that the Ceremony Committee for the Veterans Council might want to use that area for an Honor Guard or such. The small grassy area just outside of the gates to the Island is still within the footprint of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee's responsibility, so he thought they should discuss it.

Mr. Cady explained that a member organization of the Veterans Council is the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), which is an organization that represents commissioned officers from any branch of service. In the past they have had a presence at the entrance to the Island where they would hand out American flags and greet people. He said that it was brought to their attention that the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee should have the opportunity to understand what their request is and be able to approve or not approve their presence there.

Mr. Matthews explained that the circle and the red brick area is part of Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. The MOAA did not get approval before, but now other organizations may want to request that spot. It might have to be on a first come first serve basis in the future. He asked if anyone wanted to make a motion to allow the MOAA to have a table at the entrance to the Island for Memorial Day.

Mr. Herman said that he applauds organizations like the MOAA that want to be there and hand out American Flags, but what if they have private organizations or corporations that want to set up a table and do a similar thing. What do they do in a case like that.

Mr. Matthews said if they approve this it would just be for this Memorial Day event, but as he motioned earlier the Veterans Council might want to keep that area for the ceremonies as a place to hand out programs, a spot for an Honor Guard, or an honored guest. If they did approve this they would be approving it today, but there are 24 Veteran Organizations that might also come forward and say they would like to use that spot.

Mr. Cady stated that since they were not actually on the Island he suspects the MOAA assumed that that they did not need to ask permission. He understands that the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee has control over that area, but it is probably not common knowledge in the community.

Mr. Herman commented that he is concerned that two (2) or more organizations will ask for permission to use that area at the same time. Mr. Matthews replied that he believes they should first offer that area to the Veterans Council to be used as part of the ceremonies, but that does not prevent the MOAA or other organizations from moving further down the sidewalk, or into the Park area.

Mr. Paulisin said he agrees with Mr. Herman that they might be opening up a can of worms. He especially does not agree with them being there on Memorial Day, because it is not a day of celebration. He asked what is the City's regulation on allowing something like this.

Mrs. Lyon asked if they are speaking about the circle or the brick area going onto the bridge. Mr. Matthews clarified that it is the little grassy area and the brick pavers just outside the entrance.

Mrs. Lyon stated that there is a lot of foot traffic, golf carts, and handicap people going through that area. She thinks it would be within their rights to ask any group to seek permission from the City Manager to use another area in Riverside Park outside of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary property.

Mr. Herman asked why is the MOAA group requesting to have a table if they are only handing out flags. Mr. Matthews replied that he thinks their main purpose is to recruit members, which is probably a smart idea since there will be a lot of people walking by.

Mr. Herman stated that is not the place to recruit people. Mrs. Lyon added that it might fall under the guidelines of inappropriate uses on the Island.

Mr. Paulisin said a better location for recruiting might be at the Downtown Friday Fests. He is not against it, but they need to look at it further especially since it is Memorial Day.

Mr. Herman stated that he is all for these groups recruiting members, but in front of or at the entrance to Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary is not the place to do that.

Mr. Paulisin suggested that they table this item until next meeting.

Mrs. Lyon commented that there is a prohibition against commercial activity on the Island. Mr. Cady explained that the MOAA is a nonprofit organization.

Mr. Matthews said this does not mean that the MOAA could not set up a table in another area that would work for them.

Mr. Wickstrand asked if there would be any objections if they did not have a table and just handed out flags. He explained that there are other groups that pass out flags and there is the Women's Prayer Group that stands on the bridge and hands out prayer cards.

Mr. Matthews commented that the MOAA group is an organization that they want to support. He said utilizing a table is not acceptable to the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee, but passing out flags would be fine. He said he is not aware of allowing any organization to block off or utilize the bridge to hand out anything for any event no matter what it is, so he might speak with the prayer group. They don't mind people having the prayer cards, but they might want to address this for the future. If there are 24 Veteran organizations, and other civic organizations how do they limit the number, control it, or organize it so that it is appropriate for Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary.

Mr. Cady asked if the MOAA can still pass out flags as long as they do not have a table. Mr. Matthews replied yes, that will be appropriate.

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Mr. Paulisin thanked the City and everyone for the kind words in regards to the loss of his mother-in-law and for him following his surgery. The support went a long way with his wife and family.

Mr. Paulisin announced that the Veterans Outreach Golf Tournament will take place on June 16, 2018 at Sandridge Golf Course. This year's proceeds will be used to help purchase new vans for transporting Veterans to the VA Hospital in West Palm Beach. He said the event is selling out quickly.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) Next Meeting Date –May 2, 2018

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for May 2, 2018.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Patrick Williamson, Veterans Council Next Generation Veterans, apologized for his late arrival. He passed out flyers for the Boots on the Ground event (on file in the City Clerk's office). He said last year's display looked and went well. He is currently doing a boot collection for this year, which will be added to what was left over from the previous event. He said his contact information is on the flyer so people can make arrangements to donate or loan him boots. He hopes he can set up the display again this year and it will look just as nice.

Mr. Matthews said that he understands they will have the Battle Cross displayed again. Mr. Williamson replied that is correct. He said he has already contacted the Sheriff's Department and they will be loaning them the cross.

Mr. Williams explained that last year he had one (1) boot for every 25 military members who lost their lives since the 911 tragedy, so he hopes to meet or exceed that for this year. Last year they set up the boots the night before and provided a fire watch over the display. After doing this last year they realized that the fire watch actually provided two positive outcomes. It bonded the military personnel and it served as a support group among the Veterans.

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

/rh