

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, June 3, 2020 – 10:00 a.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

PRESENT: Chairman, John Michael Matthews, Vice Chairman, Joel Herman; Members: Barbara Fallon, Don Wickstrand, Alternate Member #1, Sylvester McIntosh, and Alternate Member #2, Peggy Lyon **Also Present:** City Attorney, John Turner; Assistant Public Works Director, Don Dexter; 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.

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) May 6, 2020

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

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

5. NEW BUSINESS

A) Flag Day / Army's Birthday – June 14, 2020

Mr. Matthews explained that the small flag has been flying on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary due to the high winds. He said that Flag Day and the Army's Birthday is on June 14, 2020, so he hopes that the large holiday flag will be up for that date.

B) July 4th

Mr. Matthews announced that Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary is normally closed on July 4th, because that is where they set off the fireworks.

Mrs. Tammy Bursick, City Clerk, stated that they might have read the article about July 4th in the newspaper today. They do not want to say they are cancelling the fireworks, but they want to say they are postponing the event. Last year was the City's Centennial celebration and they had well

over 10,000 people at the event. Normally there are about 7,000 people and that is a huge crowd. With the virus that we are still going through, the City Council decided to postpone it and combine it with their third annual beachside bonfire, which will be the first or second weekend in November.

Mr. Matthews thanked Mrs. Bursick for the update. They will encourage people to stay home, have a backyard barbeque, and stay safe.

Mr. Matthews announced that June 6th is D-Day, a day to remember all those from World War II (WWII) and the battles they fought to save the world. He said that he visited Normandy and Omaha Beach last year and was able to go inside some of the bunkers. Those soldiers had to be brave to storm onto the beaches. There are not that many WWII Veterans left, but they deserve our respect and admiration.

Mr. Matthews stated that there is some work being done to the bridge leading to Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary, so it might not be available for a while.

Mr. Don Dexter, Assistant Public Works Director, explained that there is a project to raise the riprap sea walls that run along the causeway on both sides of the bridge that leads to the Island. They are hoping to start that work this week if the weather cooperates. The pedestrian access to the bridge will be closed for the most part when they have equipment and people working there. He explained that they will be lifting up the seawalls about three (3) feet and filling the area in with soil to create a flatter area for easier maintenance. The Ligustrum Trees that line the area will be left as they are and they will be installing more than 2,000, 80-pound bags of riprap material to create the wall. If there are any hurricanes or storms that create high water this should eliminate the erosion as they have experienced in the past. He explained that previously on the west side of the Island they created a stone revetment wall with filter cloth and soil to protect that portion of the Island.

6. OLD BUSINESS

A) Proposal of an Additional Plaque on the Korean War Veterans Monument – Mr. Joe Gomez, Korean War Veterans Association

Mr. Matthews explained that they invited Mr. Joe Gomez, President of the Korean War Veterans, to today's meeting to discuss his request. He said that the Korean War monument is somewhat plain, so the Korean War Veterans Association of Indian River County originally asked about adding the names of their members to the front of the monument. He said the City's Resolution for the Island allows the name of the Organization that sponsored the monument to be on the monument, but not individual names.

Mr. Joe Gomez, Commander of Korean War Veterans Association of Indian River County, stated that the reason they wanted to list the names of their 62 members was because once they are gone that is the end of the organization. The second proposal he presented today is for a smaller 12 inch by 22 inch plaque that would read, "Korean War Veterans Association of Indian River County, Chapter 318, Freedom is not Free" (attached to the original minutes). With that on there, at least Chapter 318 will be recognized, so he is asking permission to add the plaque. He explained that the Korean War Veterans, Chapter 318 had 62 members, 24 members are active, 18 are inactive, and 20 are deceased. He explained that the Korean War started on June 25, 1950, so this year will

be the 70th Anniversary of the start of the war and it is still not over. He said that more than two (2) million Americans have served in the War since 1953. He continued by explaining how Chapter 318 was started and now they want something to remember the members by.

Mr. Mathews said that only Veteran organizations sponsoring a monument can be recognized as part of the monument and since Chapter 318 sponsored the monument, it appears it would be an authorized use of the monument. He asked if the Korean War Veterans Association would be paying for the plaque.

Mr. Gomez replied yes. The Korean War Veterans will pay for the plaques and the installation. He asked if they have any suggestions on where to have it made.

Mr. Matthews replied that the City can guide and assist him on where to order the plaque. He asked when would they like the dedication to take place if it is approved.

Mr. Gomez explained that he designed a basic plaque, because he thought that it might be turned down. If he can add more to it then he will give it some thought. He said he would like to have it done and ready for a dedication on Armistice Day on July 27, 2020 if that would be possible.

Mr. Matthews said they are only an Advisory Committee to the City Council, so they would make the final decision. He stated that having it ready for July 27th is kind of a short time frame to have it ready.

Mr. Gomez replied that the dedication can be done anytime, but just having it approved and done is the main objective.

Mr. Matthews stated that it would be a bronze plaque to match the one (1) on the top of the monument.

Mr. Herman made a motion to approve the concept of adding a plaque to the front of the Korean War monument by the Korean War Veterans Association of Indian River County. Ms. Fallon seconded the motion.

Mr. Herman asked if there is anything else they would like to add to the plaque. If they add more to it, the plaque might be 16 to 18 inches in height. There is plenty of room on the front of the monument for a larger plaque.

Mr. Wickstrand said he noticed that there are no dates listed for the Korean War on his diagram.

Mr. Gomez replied that he could add the dates.

Mr. Matthews stated that they can approve the concept of adding a plaque to the front providing that the Korean War Veterans come back with more details on the design at a later date.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Gomez stated that he was a soldier in the 7th Infantry Division and served from 1951 – 1953. He spent most of his time in North Korea.

Mr. Matthews thanked him for his service.

B) The Gold Star Grove Marker Dedication for PVT Joseph Canalichio – Mr. Philip Canal

Mr. Philip Canal, Vero Beach resident, stated that he is the nephew of Mr. Joseph Canalichio whose plaque is the newest addition to the Gold Star Grove. He thanked everyone who helped make the Gold Star Grove marker and dedication possible. He said the Gold Star Mothers, especially Mrs. Michelle Dale, the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee, Mayor Tony Young, and the Vero Beach City Council were incredibly helpful. He explained that his uncle Joseph Canalichio was a young man of 21 years and was the son of a grocer. He had six (6) brothers and one (1) sister and they lived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At the time of the war four (4) of the brothers were able to serve in the military. Two (2) went into the Navy, and one (1) got a deferment because he was already a supervisor in the Navy yard building ships. His uncle, who was the youngest of the four (4), enlisted in the Army and he was shipped to New Orleans for training. Following training, he was assigned to a convoy to fight in Europe. In the early morning hours on March 13, 1945 an aircraft carrier ship lost its steering and veered into the paths of the small troop ship that his uncle was on. It cut a very large hole in the side where 34 of the 1,900 infantry were berthed. Unfortunately, 68 people including his uncles lost their lives and his body was swept out to sea. The ship was saved by the Merchant Marines and it finished the trip. The remaining troops were dropped off and were eventually ferried to France. He said this plaque is the only recognition his uncle has in the Country, so he and his family thank everyone for the memorial. Mr. Canal continued by giving a brief account on the military history of his father. Mr. Canal stated that he spent two (2) years with the Marine Corps. then he put in the rest of his 30 years with the Federal Aviation Administration. He continues that dedication to public service as a member of the Vero Beach Federal Aviation Administration Safety Team.

Mr. Matthews thanked him for sharing his story and that is part of why they have Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. He said he believes there are 11 Veterans with cenotaph markers on the Island that are listed as lost at sea.

Mr. Tony Young, Mayor, stated that whenever they have a dedication he tries to look at the rest of the Veterans who are on the Island, because their stories and accounts are incredible. He stated that there are almost 90 individuals recognized on the Island with cenotaph markers or markers on the Gold Star Grove trees. Out of those 90 men, 11 of them were never recovered. He continued by giving accounts of some of the other Veterans who were lost at sea.

Mr. Herman asked Mayor Young if all the information and history on the Veterans from Indian River County that are recognized on the Island is in a book form.

Mayor Young replied that when he retires from public service that is one (1) of his first priorities. Hopefully, the accounts of these individuals will be published in books in the Public Library. The families of these Veterans are disbursed throughout the United States so it is hard to get those accounts. He stated that he is still looking for the stories on two (2) men recognized on the Island and they are Fred Coleman and Robert Coleman. If anyone has information on any of the Veterans recognized on the Island, please contact the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee, or the City Council. He would like to have the complete background on all of them.

Mr. Canal asked Mayor Young if the presentation he had written up for the dedication of the marker for Mr. Canalichio is part of a public record.

Mayor Young replied those were just his notes, but perhaps someday he can work with the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee to make those individuals come to life.

C) Further Discussion on a World War I Monument

Mr. Matthews said he wanted to continue their discussion about a World War I (WWI) monument to be placed on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. There is not a WWI Veterans organization, but the person who had the vision to create the Island, Mr. Alex MacWilliam, was a WWI Veteran. There are other families in the community with fathers or grandfathers who were WWI heroes who would also like to see this happen. He wants to keep this on their agenda for discussion and involve the families of these Veterans. He believes there would be several organizations that would like to donate to it. They discussed using the cement slab where the sundial use to be located, so that might be an appropriate location.

D) Memorial Day Recap

This item was discussed before item 6-B).

Mr. Matthews explained that to avoid a large gathering anywhere, the Sheriff's Department and the Vero Beach Police Department helped them escort a small group to Young Park to make a video of a downsized Memorial Day ceremony. A firetruck flew a large flag from its ladder, Mr. Michael Hyde played the bagpipes, and they had the traditional sights and sounds of a normal ceremony, which was televised on Memorial Day. It was an appropriate ceremony. He said part of the original plans for Memorial Day was to dedicate a new plaque in the Gold Star Grove on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

Mr. Matthews announced that June is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder recognition month. He believes there are quite a few Veterans in the community who suffer from this in some form.

Mr. Matthews reported that he went to Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary where they recognized 22 Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) cadets from Sebastian and Vero Beach who have joined the military. Dr. David Moore, Indian River County School Board Superintendent, and the leaders of the Navy JROTC and the Air Force JROTC were there to read the names of the cadets aloud. The event was recorded and afterwards they added a photo of each of the cadets. Due to the Coronavirus, they only allowed 10 people to be at the event. We are very proud of them for choosing to serve our Country.

A) Mr. Bob Greco's Certificate of Appreciation

Mr. Matthews announced that he and Mayor Young presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Mr. Bob Greco for all his years of service to the City. The certificate was from the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee and he and Mayor Young signed it.

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Ms. Fallon said until they can all gather on the Island again they should think about a way to recognize Ms. Alma Lee Loy. She thought that maybe they could do something on Veterans Day.

Mr. Matthews announced that there is WWII Veteran who is turning 100 years old and they are planning a drive by celebration. He lives in Vista Gardens and they will be driving by the clubhouse where they are having a small celebration. If anyone wants to join the parade, they are meeting at McKee Botanical Gardens at 2:00 p.m. on June 5, 2020.

Ms. Fallon announced that they are tentatively scheduling the Vietnam Veterans Golf Tournament for August 1, 2020.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) July 1, 2020

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for July 1, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:57 a.m.

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