

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES  
Wednesday, October 2, 2019 – 10:00 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, Alternate Member #1, Sylvester McIntosh and Alternate Member #2, Peggy Lyon **Also Present:** City Attorney's office, Karen Emerson, Recreation Director, Rob Slezak, Assistant Public Works Director, Don Dexter, and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Hawkins

**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) July 3, 2019**

**Mr. Herman made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 3, 2019 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting. Ms. Fallon seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Tony Young, Vero Beach Vice Mayor, said he does not believe this Committee had the opportunity to see the fruits of his labor in trying to obtain County Commission funding for the bridge leading to Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. He showed a video for the Committee members and audience. He said the County Commissioners had the opportunity to see the video, which was put together by Mr. Bruce Cady, Veterans Council. They will be adding to the video to give recognition to all the Veterans memorialized on the Island. He said everything that the Veterans Memorial Island Advisory Committee does for the Island is incredibly important. He said everyone here understands what it means to have friends and family not come home from the service. Alex MacWilliam, who was one of the pioneers and founders of the community, created Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. The Island has always been and will continue to be a sanctuary for everyone in the community. The County funded the first bridge that was built and the City was responsible for the Island. All of the cities in the County have been a part of Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. He reported that the City has money set aside to repair the bridge in the coming year. The exterior of the bridge looks perfectly fine, but on the underside you can see where repairs need to be made. He is confident that they are laying the groundwork for future efforts to maintain Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary as it should be.

Mr. Matthews stated that he does not think many of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee members new about the bridge or the money required for the repairs, because it was never brought before them.

Mr. Young explained that it was brought up during the City Council budget hearings and the money was set aside. The bridge became a budget discussion item, because the State of Florida performed a scheduled engineering review of all the structures in the County. In that inspection, they identified required repairs for the bridge and the Public Works Department put it in their budget.

Mr. Paulisin asked if there would be any funds available through Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), because of the recent hurricane. Mr. Young replied that he also asked that question and the answer he received was the damage was not attributed to the hurricane specifically and it was just normal wear and tear. He said that he approached the Board of County Commissioners as a Veteran and not as a City Council member when he asked for their assistance.

Mr. Matthews said he believes that about half of the Veterans memorialized on the Island are from the County and the other half are from the City.

Mr. Young said the video he showed was only three (3) minutes long, but if they speak of the stories of those Veterans everyone would know that it is a countywide Sanctuary. When the video is complete, his intent is to make it available to other organizations and groups.

Mr. Herman asked if a copy of the inspection report is available for the Committee members to see.

Mr. Don Dexter, Assistant Public Works Director, replied yes. He explained that it was a Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) report and he will send it to the City Clerk's office to forward to the Committee members.

Mr. Young stated that he read the report and he went to look at the bridge. He is not an engineer, but he could clearly see that there is exposed rebar and damage to some of the pylons.

Mrs. Lyon asked how long has that bridge been there. Mr. Young said it was built in 1988 and it was completely paid for with federal funding.

Mr. Herman asked if the concrete was redone and stamped at a later date.

Mr. Dexter explained that the bridge originally had an asphalt surface, which was removed and replaced with concrete pavers. The sidewalk on both sides of the bridge is stamped concrete.

Mr. Matthews said that Mr. Herman's inquiry was not to question the decision, but to keep the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee in the loop. Mr. Herman said absolutely. The Committee needs to be informed about anything pertaining to the Island.

## **5. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A) Request for the use of Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary for Veterans Day Ceremony – Veterans Council**

Mr. Matthews stated that they received a request from the Veterans Council to use Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary for the Veterans Day Ceremony on November 11, 2019 (on file is the City Clerk's office). He asked if there were any questions.

**Ms. Fallon made a motion to accept the request from the Veterans Council to use Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary for the Veterans Day ceremony. Mr. McIntosh seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

Mrs. Lyon stated that in July they approved the Alzheimer & Parkinson Association to use the Island on November 9<sup>th</sup> at some point for part of their walk. That is the same day as the practice run for the Veterans Day ceremony. She asked if that is going to be a problem.

Mr. Paulisin said he also asked that question because it is the same day, but they did not think it would be a problem.

Mr. Matthews stated that there will be quite a bit happening on November 9, 2019. They will have the dry run for Veterans Day, the dedication for the Words From War monument, and over 650 people participating in the Alzheimer & Parkinson Association walk, so it will be packed at Riverside Park.

## **6. OLD BUSINESS**

### **A) Update on the Words From War Monument**

Mr. Matthews reported that they received a letter from Mr. Bruce Cady, President of Next Generation Veterans, giving them an update on the progress of the Words From War monument (copy attached to the minutes). He said the Next Generation Veterans are still fundraising, so if anyone wants to help with the monument they are accepting donations. The event for the Words From War Monument will be on November 9, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. and will probably consist of putting shovels in the ground as a groundbreaking ceremony. The monument will be off the Island and it is out of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee's area of responsibility, but it will be a wonderful project and nice for the community. He asked if there were any comments or questions about the information they received.

Mr. Herman said he hopes that a lot of people come out for the event to show their support of the Next Generation Veterans and their great project.

Mr. Wickstrand asked since the monument is off the Island who will maintain it.

Mr. Dexter replied that the City will maintain the grounds around it, but the monument is made of concrete so there should be very little maintenance.

### **B) POW/MIA Remembrance Day – September 20, 2019**

Mr. Matthews said POW/MIA Day was on September 20, 2019, but nothing took place on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. It is a day to remember those who were held as prisoners of war or went missing in action.

Mr. Herman stated that in a magazine article he read, it stated that 22 more Marines were found on the Island of Tarawa and their remains were brought home.

## **7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS**

Mr. Matthews reported that the tickets for the Marine Corp Ball have sold out. Another event taking place on November 9, 2019 is a ruck march called “Who Gives a Ruck”, but it will be held in Sebastian, Florida. He said he participated in a ruck march during the Tunnel to Towers event at Riverside Park. He announced that in a few weeks he will be visiting Normandy and Omaha Beach where the biggest invasion in the history in the world took place.

## **8. MEMBER’S MATTERS**

Mr. Paulisin reported that a Judge from Kentucky came to Vero Beach, Florida and she purchased some property on Royal Palm Boulevard. The City Planning and Zoning Board approved her plans to renovate the existing building to create low cost housing. She will be going before the City Council on October 15<sup>th</sup> for their approval. He believes there will be 35 units and their preference for tenants will be military Veterans. He said he spoke with a few of the City Council members and they indicated they are in favor of the project.

Mr. Herman asked if she sat down with a representative from the Treasure Coast Homeless Services.

Mr. Paulisin replied that he does not think she has spoken with them yet. She had to get all her permits and paperwork processed for low cost housing done first. He believes she is living here full time now, so she will probably contact them soon.

Mrs. Karen Emerson, City Attorney’s office, asked the Committee members if they could introduce themselves to help her put names with faces. The Committee members each stated their name and in which military branch they served.

Mr. Matthews said the Youth Sailing Foundation is offering free sailing classes to Veterans with any level of disability. It is a wonderful, relaxing, program and he hopes that people will take advantage of it.

Mr. Matthews announced that October 26, 2019 is the big Centennial Parade, which starts at 10:00 a.m. and tonight there is a meeting at 5:30 p.m. at Riverhouse for all of the Parade volunteers.

## **9. NEXT MEETING DATE**

### **A) Next Meeting Date – November 6, 2019**

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for November 6, 2019.

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

Today’s meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

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