

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, November 6, 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:** Assistant City Attorney, Karen Emerson, Recreation Director, Rob Slezak (arrived at 10:08 a.m.), 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.

Mr. Matthews announced that they received a request to use Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary, but not in time to have it on the agenda. He asked if the Committee would allow this item to be added under New Business. There were no objections from the Committee members.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) October 2, 2019

Mr. Herman made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 2, 2019 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting. Ms. Fallon seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

5. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Matthews announced that Wreaths Across America submitted an application to use Veterans Memorial Island for their event.

Mr. Rick Lewis, with Wreaths Across America, said this wreath laying and ceremony will be just like last year and it will take place on December 14, 2019. They will start laying the wreaths at 10:30 a.m. at Crestlawn Cemetery. They are requesting to hold the ceremony on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary at 12:00 p.m., which corresponds with the same ceremony being held at Arlington Cemetery. The Sheriff's Department will have the Honor Guard there and the Next Generation Veterans will also be assisting. It will be a short ceremony, probably no longer than 30 minutes. At this time, they have Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary fully covered for wreaths. So far this year they have raised enough funds for 1,000 wreaths for Indian River County, and more is still coming in. This year they also sponsored Sebastian Cemetery and they have raised over 230 wreaths for them. Their goal is to sponsor

every cemetery in Indian River County. They are well ahead of last year and this is a growing event. They are hoping for a nice ceremony and he invited everyone to come out.

Mr. Matthews asked if the wreaths will be placed on the Island before or after the ceremony. Mr. Lewis explained that once they are done at Crestlawn Cemetery they will go to Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary and lay the wreaths on the cenotaphs. The wreaths for the other monuments will be laid during the ceremony while they play taps.

Mr. Matthews asked what time should people be there to help. Mr. Lewis replied that people should arrive by 10:30 at either of the cemeteries they want to help with. At Veterans Memorial Island they will try to get people who have a connection to the Island to lay most of those wreaths. If there are any family members of the individuals with cenotaph markers, they can lay those wreaths. That process worked very well last year.

Mr. Matthews said he sees on the application that they are requesting the use of a podium and a speaker system. He asked if they have submitted that request to Mr. Rob Slezak, Recreation Director. Mr. Lewis replied that another individual was handling that. They would also like to request that the gates to the Island be opened, so they can drive a vehicle onto the Island to unload everything and set up beforehand. That will make it much easier than walking everything over as they did last year. Mr. Matthews asked if they want the gates open by 10:30 a.m. Mr. Lewis replied that they would probably like them open at 9:00 a.m.

Mr. Wickstrand said it has been a fast year. Mr. Lewis replied yes, a very fast year. They are down to the last month and they are still looking for donations and volunteers.

Mr. Wickstrand asked how can people donate. Mr. Lewis replied that they can go to Wreaths Across America's website and put in their zip code, which will pull up the locations in Indian River County. He said he would like to request if people are going to donate a wreath that they do it through one (1) of their fundraising sites, because they get three (3) wreaths for every two (2) that are donated. That really helps increase their numbers. If anyone needs more information, they can call him.

Mr. Paulisin announced that Mr. Rob Slezak, Recreation Director, just arrived. He asked him if it would be possible to have the gates to the Island opened on December 14 at 9:00 a.m., so that they could deliver and lay the wreaths. Mr. Slezak replied yes, he would do that.

Mr. Lewis asked Mr. Slezak if he received the request for a podium, speaker system, and stands from Mr. Joe Crowley. Mr. Slezak replied no. Mr. Matthews announced that the Veterans Council also has a podium and a speaker system if they want to use it.

Mrs. Lyon stated that she will get the local Boy Scouts involved this year, because they were so disappointed they were not told about it last year. She asked Mr. Lewis for his phone number, so that they can contact him. Mr. Lewis said his phone number is (772) 913-1717.

Ms. Fallon made a motion to approve the application request from Wreaths Across America for use of Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary for a wreath laying and ceremony. Mr. McIntosh seconded motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Lewis stated that as of right now they are planning to remove the wreaths on January 4, 2020.

6. OLD BUSINESS

A) Words From War Monument Dedication – November 9, 2019

Mr. Matthews announced that there will be a dedication on November 9 at 10:00 a.m. for the Words From War monument. It is not in the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee's area of responsibility, but they are thrilled to have it just outside of Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. The monument will be made from T-walls and it will display words that Veterans gave the artist. He is not sure if the dedication will just consist of putting a shovel in the ground, but it will help bring awareness to the project and maybe more people will donate to it. The organization has enough funding to start the project, but not to complete it. This monument will become a regional monument that will attract those from the Afghan and Iraqi conflicts.

Mr. Don Dexter, Assistant Public Works Director, stated that they are still in the design process and they have not done any permitting yet.

Mr. Matthews explained that the dry run for the Veterans Day ceremony is also on November 9th at 9:00 a.m. and then they will head over to the Words From War monument dedication at 10:00 a.m. Mrs. Lyon reminded them that the Alzheimer and Parkinson's Association also has their fundraiser walk that day.

Mr. Matthews said that is correct, so it will be a busy day.

Ms. Fallon asked where exactly will the monument be built. Mr. Dexter explained that there is a sign there now, but it will be located in the little island on the left before you get to the roundabout near Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary.

B) Veterans Day Ceremony – November 11, 2019

Mr. Matthews explained that the main reason that the Veterans Council exists was to coordinate activities between the different organizations for Veterans Day and Memorial Day. Veterans Day is November 11th and it is traditionally held on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, which marks the end of World War I. Veterans Day is a celebration, so there will be color guards, bands, and Veteran Organizations. He announced that Mr. McIntosh will give the invocation and the benediction this year. He continued by going over the program for the Veterans Day ceremony. He reminded everyone to get there early, because parking can be difficult and to bring a lawn chair if they want to sit. They are expecting a large crowd, so they printed 2,000 programs. The Vero Beach ceremony starts at 9:00 a.m. and the Veterans Day ceremony in Sebastian is at 11:00 a.m.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

Mr. Matthews reported that he got the chance to visit Normandy where the largest invasion took place. It was the 75th Anniversary. He toured the German bunkers that look out over the water. He explained that Mr. Herman had an empty wine bottle from the 50th Anniversary of the Normandy invasion, so he added some sand from Normandy Beach to his collectable bottle for him. He also visited the cemetery, which France gave to the United States. It is a beautiful spot right on the ocean. There are 9,000 crosses and the Star of David with beautiful well-manicured lawns much like the Arlington Cemetery. After the war, the families had the opportunity of bringing their loved ones back home or having them buried there. As he visited all these locations and saw all the sites, it was hard to imagine that 30 million people were killed then. It was a very memorable trip and he was glad he had the chance to visit it.

Mr. Matthews announced that the Centennial celebration and the Parade are over. He said it did not rain on the Parade, but some of the other activities that day were rained out.

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Mr. Paulisin wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving.

Mr. Herman said it is a sad note, but they found out today that Mr. Bob Drake passed away last night. Mr. Drake was the Transportation Coordinator for the Veterans Council for many years. He was also a driver and a scheduler before that. Their thoughts and prayers go out to his family.

Mr. Herman said on a brighter note, he heard that Mr. Matthews received a "Business of the Year" award.

Mr. Matthews replied yes he did. He explained that the Indian River County Chamber of Commerce has several categories of awards they announce each year. They added a new category for a "Veteran owned Business Award of the Year" and this is what he received.

Ms. Fallon said because of the Victory Center in the mall, that most Veterans know Mr. Bill Beyerle. She said she found out that he passed away two (2) weeks ago. He and his wife did not return from New Jersey in early October as usual. He had COPD and passed away very quickly. He was very active and a long-term member of many organizations and groups here and in New Jersey.

Mr. Matthews said Mr. Beyerle did a lot to create the ordering and inventory systems for the Victory Center.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) Next Meeting Date – December 4, 2019

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for December 4, 2019.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:28 a.m.

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