

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, January 3, 2024 – 9:30 a.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

AGENDA

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
 - A) December 6, 2023**
- 4. PUBLIC COMMENT**
- 5. NEW BUSINESS**
- 6. OLD BUSINESS**
 - A) Update on the Bridge Replacement and Reopening Date**
 - B) Update on the Stage and World War II Tribute**
 - C) Recap of National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Ceremony**
- 7. CHAIRMAN’S MATTERS**
- 8. MEMBER’S MATTERS**
- 9. NEXT MEETING DATE**
 - A) February 7, 2024**
- 10. ADJOURNMENT**

This is a Public Meeting. Should any interested party seek to appeal any decision made by the Committee with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, they will need a record of the proceedings and that, for such purpose, they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. Anyone who needs a special accommodation for this meeting may contact the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator at 978-4920 at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, December 6, 2023 – 9:30 a.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

PRESENT: Chairman, John Matthews; Vice Chairman, Michelle Dale Members: Curtis Paulisin and Carolyn Lange **Also Present:** Assistant Public Works Director, Joseph Berenato; Civil Engineer, Austin Linville; City Attorney, John Turner and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Chartier

Excused Absence: Melissa Arndt

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Matthews called today's meeting to order at 9:30 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) November 1, 2023

Mrs. Dale said that in the first paragraph on page 2, Mrs. Lange's name is missing the letter "e".

Mr. Matthews made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 1, 2023 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting as corrected. Mr. Paulisin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

A) Chairman

Mr. John Turner, City Attorney, opened the floor for nominations for Chairman.

Mr. Paulisin nominated Mr. John Michael Matthews for Chairman. Mrs. Lange seconded the nomination.

Mr. Turner asked if there were any further nominations for Chairman. There were no other nominations.

Mr. John Matthews was unanimously appointed as Chairman of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee.

B) Vice Chairman

Mr. Matthews asked for nominations for Vice Chairman.

Mrs. Lange nominated Mrs. Michelle Dale for Vice Chairman. Mr. Matthews seconded the nomination.

Mr. Matthews asked if there were any other nominations for Vice Chairman. There were no other nominations.

Mrs. Michelle Dale was unanimously appointed as Vice Chairman of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Matthews opened the meeting for public comment.

Mrs. Barbara Ruddy said as a member of the World War II (WWII) Tribute Committee they are grateful for the wonderful work that the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee does.

Mr. Tony Young said he would like to acknowledge the three (3) men from WWII who lost their lives in December and are honored on the Island. He reported that on December 22nd James L. Dodson died of wounds while fighting with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Division in the Battle of the Bulge. Mr. Dodson received the Silver Star and the Purple Heart awards. Another casualty of WWII is Corporal Ernest Sheffield, who was born in Fort Pierce, Florida but was raised in Vero Beach, Florida. He was born in 1916 and on December 28, 1942, he joined the Army. Mr. Sheffield was captured in the winter of 1944 and taken as a prisoner by Germany where he was killed as a POW when a wave of bombers attacked. The third individual is Staff Sergeant John Middleton, an Indian River County resident, who was also born in 1916. He was 28 years old when he was killed in India while serving in the Army supporting airfield operations. In 1949 his remains were moved to the National Memorial Pacific Cemetery in Hawaii.

Mrs. Ruddy stated that she provided them with a WWII Tribute handout that she uses to solicit funds for the project (on file in the City Clerk's office). She said there is a \$400,000 gap but she is optimistic they can bring this to fruition for Memorial Day 2024. Everyone knows these WWII gentlemen are dying by the second so we need to get this done.

Mrs. Ruddy said she recently attended the Johns Island Lecture Series and Mr. Alex Kershaw was the speaker. He is an author and has written six (6) books about WWII. She said she spoke to him about the WWII Tribute and he was so thrilled with the project. He even volunteered to come and speak at the dedication.

6. NEW BUSINESS

None

7. OLD BUSINESS

A) National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day – December 7, 2023

Mr. Matthews stated that December 7th is Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. A ceremony was originally scheduled to take place at the Grand Pavilion in Riverside Park, but the location was changed to inside the Heritage Center. If anyone wants to attend, it will start at 7:45 a.m. and is being conducted by the Veterans Council.

B) Update on the Bridge Replacement

Mr. Austin Linville, Civil Engineer, reported that the contractor just poured the last portion of the concrete for the sidewalk leading to the bridge. The last remaining items include the installation of the light poles, the handrails, and the plaque for the bridge. They are still anticipating the substantial completion of the construction to be done in December and then have it open to the public in January.

C) Update on the Stage and World War II Tribute

Mr. Matthews said the centerpiece of the Island will be the stage to be used for services and ceremonies and it will be a tribute to the WWII Veterans.

Mr. Young, WWII Tribute Committee, said that he would like to provide some updates since they last met. They have completed a lot of strides since they began this project in June 2021. It started with a \$100,000 contribution and they have since tripled that amount. In addition, there was an in-kind amount of \$50,000 for the engineering and surveying work. He said the Indian River County Historical Society has joined them and they have completed a draft video about several WWII men that will be linked to a kiosk on the Island. They are also paying for a marker that will go on the kiosk. He reported that they currently have a roster of 33 local WWII Veterans, but since they started this project five (5) people have lost their lives. He announced that the Cultural Council, which is their fiscal agent, has moved from the Chamber of Commerce office to 2400 15th Avenue, Suite 2. The Tribute Committee feels they could accomplish building the foundation, but the remainder of the tribute will need the funding they are seeking. He announced that they will be holding their third WWII Veteran luncheon on December 11, 2023, at the American Legion Post 39 at 1535 Old Dixie Highway. Also, on December 16th is the Wreaths Across America Ceremony, which is another opportunity to recognize these men. They are making great strides and the City is an integral part of making it happen.

Mr. Matthews stated that Bill Bryant Construction is doing a great job in moving this project forward. He said the Garden Club of Indian River County is also donating to this project.

Mr. Young announced that St. Helen Catholic Church held their annual Fall Festival and they dedicated \$5,000 to go towards the WWII Tribute. In addition, the Bernard Egan Foundation donated \$15,000. If they combine these contributions with almost \$35,000 that the County paid for the helical spirals to support the foundation, they are looking at nearly \$60,000. He said if anyone wants to help they still need funds for the seven (7) foot columns that will display the Theater of Operation Medals. The total cost for the tiles to make the ribbons, the black granite, and the medallions is \$43,000. Making a donation in honor of a family member who served would help them make strides toward their goal. Also, the four (4) small pedestals in the front are \$7,000. The general contractor, Bill Bryant Construction, is doing an amazing job working with the subcontractors and keeping it affordable. This is a community endeavor and they appreciate all their help. He thanked Mr. Jeff Palleschi, 21st Amendment Distillery owner, for his support. The commemorative bottles of whiskey have netted \$35,000.

D) Recap of the Veteran Suicide Awareness Walk-A-Thon – November 5, 2023

Mrs. Dale reported that the Veteran Suicide Walk-A-Thon was a great success. They had beautiful weather and the vendors and participants were great. The funds they raised will be distributed to Dogs for Life, Next Generation Veterans, and the Mental Health Association, which are agencies where Veterans meet. Everything went well and they were happy with the donations and how it turned out.

E) Recap of Veterans Day Ceremony – November 11, 2023

Mr. Matthews stated that they had all the sites and sounds that are traditional for a Veterans Day Ceremony. The ceremony took place at the Grand Pavilion in Riverside Park instead of on Veterans Memorial Island. Colonel Carlos Halcomb led the charge for putting the ceremony together and he did a great job.

8. CHAIRMAN’S MATTERS

Mr. Matthews stated they will not have wreaths or the Wreaths Across America Ceremony on the Island this year, but wreaths will be placed at all the other cemeteries in Indian River County.

Mr. Rob Medina, Representative for Congressman Bill Posey, thanked the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee for everything they do. He said at this time of the season he would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and may God bless each of us. There are so many people suffering through a war in the Middle East and he believes it was God that placed the desire in their hearts to serve this great nation.

9. MEMBER’S MATTERS

Mrs. Lange said a couple of months ago she talked about a Bible she had in her possession for many years and her desire to get it back to the family it belonged to. She thanked Mr. Young for all his time and research to find the family so she could return it. She thanked Mr. Young for putting together a folder of all the notes and records he found about the Bible and the family. With the phone numbers he provided she was able to contact the family. Mr. Jim Sibley who is the rightful owner of the Bible was her brother's fraternity brother from college. She said Mr. Sibley was perplexed about how her brother even had the Bible in his possession. She mailed the Bible to Mr. Sibley and he called her right away after he received it and was very thankful and slightly emotional about having it back.

Mr. Paulisin announced that the Vietnam Veterans of Indian River County moved to a new location at 1956 41st Avenue and their new phone number is (772) 794-0005. This year the Vietnam Veterans decided to donate half of the proceeds from their annual golf tournament to the WWII Tribute, so that will be a substantial donation.

Mrs. Dale explained that the Gold Star Mothers host the WWII Veteran luncheons and anyone who is planning on attending should contact her at (570) 885-2811 so she can let the American Legion know how many to expect. Right now they have nine (9) WWII Veterans who are planning on attending the luncheon on December 11, 2023, at 11:15 a.m. She said the American Legion covers the cost for the WWII Veterans lunches and the Gold Star Mothers generally picks up the tip.

10. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) January 3, 2024

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for January 3, 2024, at 9:30 a.m.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:03 a.m.

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