

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
January 5, 2022 – 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 1, 2021**
- 4. PUBLIC COMMENT**
- 5. NEW BUSINESS**
- 6. OLD BUSINESS**
  - A) Recap of the Wreaths Across America Ceremony**
  - B) Discuss Ideas for a World War II Memorial/Stage**
- 7. CHAIRMAN’S MATTERS**
- 8. MEMBER’S MATTERS**
- 9. NEXT MEETING DATE**
  - A) February 2, 2022**
- 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 1, 2021 – 9:30 a.m.  
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

**PRESENT:** Chairman, John Michael Matthews; Vice Chairman, Curtis Paulisin; Members: Melissa Arndt, Michelle Dale, and Carolyn Lange **Also Present:** Assistant City Attorney, Jenny Flanigan; Finance Director, Cindy Lawson; Grounds Maintenance Manager, Nanette Haynes, and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Chartier

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman 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 3, 2021**

Mrs. Dale stated that on page 3 in the 6<sup>th</sup> paragraph the word *metal* is misspelled and on the last page the word *permanent* is missed spelled.

Mr. Paulisin said also on page 6, item number 9, the money that was raised actually goes to the Vietnam Veterans of Indian River County with Every Dream Has a Price.

**Mr. Paulisin made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 3, 2021 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting with the three (3) corrections made. Mrs. Dale seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**5. NEW BUSINESS**

**A) Overview of Budget Costs for Maintaining Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary – Ms. Cindy Lawson, Finance Director**

Mr. Matthews explained that at their last meeting there were some questions regarding the Veterans Memorial Sanctuary budget.

Ms. Cindy Lawson, Finance Director, stated that after reviewing the minutes from their last meeting, there were a couple of different questions. She explained that there is not a separate line item in the budget for the maintenance of the Island, it is part of the Grounds Maintenance budget in the City's General Fund. However, there is a spreadsheet that Ms. Nanette Haynes, Grounds Maintenance Manager, prepares every year with an estimate of how many man-hours are spent on the various

locations that she maintains, because they do allocate some of those costs to other funds. Based on that spreadsheet and the budget from this year, the ongoing maintenance costs for Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary is about \$27,000 per year. There are some minor utility bills of about \$400 per year for keeping the flag lit and there is a line item for the occasional replacement of the flags, but that is not a substantial cost. Once in awhile there are other maintenance expenses, such as broken irrigation lines or heads, but again that is not substantial. She said the money that is donated to Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary is held in escrow and it does not support the maintenance of the Island.

Mr. Matthews said there might be some confusion when they send a thank you note to someone who makes a donation, because the thank you letter normally reads; “the money will be used for any improvement that might be needed for the Island”. Ms. Lawson replied that the key word is *improvements*. She explained that ongoing expenses for mowing, trimming, fertilizing, irrigation, etc., gets paid for out of the City’s General Fund budget just like any other City Park. They also have escrow money that is donated by people specifically for the Island. The current balance in that account is about \$15,000 and that money is used for expenses that are above and beyond normal maintenance. The last time they spent money from that account, except for the money they gave back for the World War I (WWI) monument, was in 2019 when some cenotaph markers were replaced. The donated money is only used for special projects or improvements that this Committee recommends spending it on.

Mr. Matthews said that occasionally they are asked about making donations and who to make checks out to. If a person wants to make a donation to a specific project they should specify that on the check or with a note because if they don’t it will go into the general escrow account. Ms. Lawson replied that is correct, they keep track of it and that is how they knew how much was specifically donated to the WWI memorial.

Mr. Matthews stated that they are still flushing out ideas for a World War II (WWII) monument, so he asked if it would be better to have donations go directly to a Veterans organization who could sponsor the project and not be given to the City. Ms. Lawson explained that there are two (2) ways to handle special projects. If the money is donated to the City then it is a City project and the City has to comply with all its own purchasing procedure. The City has to go out for bid, they have to pay for the project out of funds the City has and write checks to the vendors. The City cannot have someone else do a project and take City money and give it to a vendor. The other way is when organizations come to the City to ask for a license agreement to make a improvements, such as the stage they are talking about for the Island. The organization will head the project, manage the contractors, raise the money, and oversee the construction. After they complete the project the organization will donate it to the City. That is her preferred method and the preferred method for most organizations, because they have control of the project under the parameters of the construction agreement.

Mr. Paulisin asked if expenses for special events like Veterans Day or Memorial Day come out of the Recreation Department’s budget. Ms. Lawson replied that it is usually a combination of the Recreation Department, Public Works, and the Grounds Maintenance Department.

Ms. Lawson said if they ever have any questions about a project or if the escrow funds can be used, please feel free to give her a call to discuss it with her. She can also come back to their meetings to help them set it up for a successful outcome rather than trying to figure it out after the fact.

Mr. Matthews said there is another small project coming up. He explained that the Korean War Veterans Association asked to have a tree planted near their monument, but he believes the

organization offered to pay for it. Ms. Lawson said as a Committee, if they wanted to recommend planting trees or landscaping on the Island that might not be within the Grounds Maintenance budget, she would not have a problem with them using funds from the escrow account for items like that.

**B) Overview of Grounds Maintenance of Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary – Ms. Nanette Haynes, Grounds Maintenance Manager**

Ms. Nanette Haynes, Grounds Maintenance Manager, said she understands there were some questions about the mangroves around Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary, so she will address that first. She explained that a number of years ago they met with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) and they walked the entire perimeter of the Island to review the mangroves. They came up with a plan for what areas were to be preserved and what could be hedged or windowed. She is a little uncomfortable using those same plans, because it has been a number of years ago. Since this was brought up, she will contact FDEP and evaluate the Island again. She believes the first thing they might want to do is open up the areas near the benches so there is more of a view. They will need to find out if they need a permit to do that work or can they just hire a mangrove trimmer. They can also refresh the plans for trimming around the entire perimeter. She will get a cost for that, which she can plan for in a future budget year.

Mrs. Lange said that in her research she read that the tall mangroves, which are the ones on the east side of the Island can be cut 25% per year. She said some of those are close to 30-feet tall. Ms. Haynes explained that FDEP kept sections of the mangroves as reserves and other sections they were allowed to hedge or window. FDEP does not want them to hedge the really tall ones, but they would rather create a window in them to create a view. They are not allowed to do anything with the sections that were designated as reserves. When she meets with DEP she will discuss opening up the areas near the benches, then they will do the rest of the Island.

Mr. Matthews said when you stand at the flagpole there is a beautiful view of the water towards the bridge. The east side that Mrs. Lange was speaking about, is what shields the Island from the boat ramps and the noise from that direction. He said if you stand at the flag pole and look out over the cenotaphs towards the circle, it would be nice to have a view in that direction. Ms. Haynes replied yes. If you keep looking beyond that area those mangroves are the ones that can be trimmed to create that nice view.

Mr. Matthews said he understands that it is not in the City's budget for this year, but they should figure out who is going to pay for it first. Ms. Haynes stated that opening up the areas near the benches is something she could afford, but doing the entire Island is what she will need to budget for.

**C) Request from the Korean War Veterans Association to Plant a Tree Near the Memorial**

Ms. Haynes said that she wants to get a feel for what area the Korean War Veterans want to plant a tree. She went out and looked at the monument, but the area behind the monument near the water already has two (2) large Oak Trees. However, she could plant one (1) on the side where the bench is. Mr. Matthews stated that he will speak with them, but he believes they want a tree to shade the bench area when they are sitting there facing the monument. Ms. Haynes replied that would be fine. She explained that if the Korean War Veterans are paying for it, they will need to contact her so she can have them fill out a tree dedication form.

Mr. Matthews said he noticed that the Alex MacWilliam monument is getting covered by plant growth, but it looks like it was recently trimmed back a little. He said they could see if it is possible to move the monument forward. Ms. Hynes stated that she loves those Philodendrons there and she hates to trim them. She believes the monument was originally placed out a ways from the plants, but over time they have grown towards the monument. She said she is not sure if the monument can be moved, but she will find out from the maintenance department.

Mrs. Lange asked what brought about the removal of all of the trees and plants by the Fire Department. Ms. Haynes replied that was done to clear the ditch, so it can drain. It is a main drainage area and it has been clogged up for a long time. Mrs. Lange said it has made a huge difference and they get a nice breeze through there now.

Mr. Paulisin stated that a friend emailed him to let him know that the wreath that was placed at the WWI monument on Veterans Day was moved off to the side about a week after the event, so she placed it back at the monument. He asked aren't the wreaths removed after an event. Mrs. Haynes replied that when they start fading they remove them. Mr. Matthews said in the past, they try to leave them as long as they can or until they start to look bad. The same thing applies to the flowers that people place at the cenotaph markers.

Mr. Matthews asked if the request for a dedicatory tree for the Korean War Veterans has to go through City Council for approval. Ms. Haynes explained that if the Korean War Veterans wants to pay for it and handle it as a dedicatory tree they will need to fill out the application and she will submit it to the Tree and Beautification Commission for approval. However, if this Committee wants to pay for it, then they need to request to use funds from the Veterans Memorial Island account. Mr. Matthews said if the Korean War Veterans want to pay for it, he feels that they should allow them to do that.

**D) Ms. Jenny Flanigan, Assistant City Attorney, to go over the Sunshine Law**

Ms. Jenny Flanigan, Assistant City Attorney, explained that she will go over the Sunshine Law and how it applies to the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee members. She explained that the Sunshine Law has been in existence since 1967 and it is a Florida State Statute. She gave a Power Point presentation on the Sunshine Law (attached to the original minutes).

Mr. Matthews explained that some of their Committee members also serve on the Veterans Council, which is also a noticed meeting, it is open to the public, and minutes are taken. He asked if they are fine speaking with each other there. Ms. Flanigan replied that is fine because they are complying and they are discussing their business in the Sunshine.

Mr. Paulisin explained that sometimes he does public speaking. He asked if another Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee member was with him and as long as they are not speaking on items that will be on their agenda or be a subject they might vote on are they fine to be there together. Ms. Flanigan replied yes, that would be fine as long as they are not talking about items they might be making a decision on regarding this Committee.

**6. OLD BUSINESS**

**A) Recap of the Veterans Day Ceremony**

Mr. Matthews stated that they had a fantastic Veterans Day ceremony. He gave a shout out to Mr. Kevin Rott with Jim Rott Home Improvements for providing a truck full of water for the event. There

were about 700 people in attendance and all 750 of the programs they printed were handed out. He explained that they wanted to have the ceremony at the flag pole so they could also have the dedication of the WWI monument. They were a little concerned about packing 700 people into that area, but it turned out fine.

## **B) Recap of the Veterans Suicide Awareness Walk-A-Thon**

Mr. Matthews said the other event that took place was the Veterans Suicide Awareness Walk-A-Thon and he asked Mrs. Dale to provide them with an update.

Mrs. Dale stated that the day was amazing and they were overwhelmed with the attendance and the weather. They had over 350 people who walked at the event and even some of the vendors participated. They had the American Flag and the Gold Star Mother Flag leading the walk. This was not a race, but just a walk to support those Veterans who are struggling with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The grounds were fixed perfectly and she thanked Mr. Doug Clock (spelling may not be correct) with making sure everything was in order with the vendors and their tables.

Mr. Matthews said that most of the event took place off of the Island, but those who were on the Island were very respectful.

Mrs. Dale said they are grateful for the support of the community and especially for those Veterans who are struggling.

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

Mr. Matthews said the WWI monument is the classic dough boy figure stepping up on to a rock holding his rifle with a bayonet. Unfortunately, the bayonet got bent before the Veterans Day ceremony but it was bent back, so it was not a terrible situation. The foundry who cast the bronze statue is scheduled to repair it on January 8, 2022. He explained that the foundry needed a generator in order to make the repairs, so Mr. Robert Paugh, with Bill Bryant Construction, was able to provide them with one to use.

Mr. Richard Mutterback, Assistant Director of Public Works, confirmed that the repair work is scheduled for January 8, 2022. The City did not have a generator with the proper amperage, so a company offered to donate one (1) for them to use. The Public Works department volunteered to get the generator out there on Friday, January 7, 2022, so the work can be done on Saturday. They will also make sure the gate is open on that Saturday so they can have access to the Island.

Mr. Matthews announced that on December 18, 2021, Wreaths Across America will be placing the wreaths and holding their ceremony on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary.

Mr. Matthews said they received a request yesterday from Christina Hucks to use Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary for a memorial service for an honorably discharged Veteran, Joseph Hucks. The service will be held on February 26, 2022 with about 25 people attending. He stated that the Island is an appropriate place to hold a memorial service for a Veteran as well as military promotional and retirement ceremonies.

**Mr. Paulisin made a motion to approve the application from Christina Hucks to use the island for a memorial service. Mrs. Dale seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

Mr. Matthews said they have been talking about and flushing out ideas for a World War II (WWII) monument. They also do not have a stage for the Island, so there have been some discussions about combining the two (2). There have been ideas about building a stage or a raised performance area to be used for events on the Island and on the front they could honor the WWII Veterans. They do not have any definite plans yet, but Mr. Scott Johnson, an Architect, has volunteered some of his time to help with the plans. He came to their meeting today to find out what is being discussed.

Mr. Paulisin stated that there are people in the community who are doing fundraising for the stage. He knows it is going to take a while, but he believes it is something they need for the Island.

Mr. Matthews explained that according to their rules, only Veteran Organizations can propose a monument for the Island, so the Military Officers Association is taking the charge and they can accept the donations for the project. They are not working on the project yet, but if people want to make donations they are accepting them.

## **8. MEMBER'S MATTERS**

None

## **9. NEXT MEETING DATE**

**A) January 5, 2022**

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for January 5, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:23 a.m.

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