

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, January 5, 2022 – 9:30 a.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

PRESENT: Chairman, John Michael Matthews; Vice Chairman, Curtis Paulisin (arrived at 9:44 a.m.); Members: Melissa Arndt, and Michelle Dale **Also Present:** Assistant City Attorney, Jenny Flanigan; and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Chartier

Excused Absence: Carolyn Lange

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) December 1, 2021

Mrs. Dale said that on the first page under the approval of the minutes, the word *misspelled* is misspelled.

Mrs. Dale made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 1, 2021 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting with the one (1) correction made. Ms. Arndt seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

5. NEW BUSINESS

None

6. OLD BUSINESS

A) Recap of the Wreaths Across America Ceremony

Mr. Matthews stated that wreathes were placed on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary and at all of the cemeteries in Indian River County. He explained that the Wreaths Across America Organization was able to raise enough funds to have a wreath on the grave of every Veteran. Wreaths were also placed on all of the cenotaph markers and throughout Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. The placing of the wreaths took place on December 18th and they were picked up on January 3rd. He helped remove the wreaths from the Island along with Colonel Marty Zickert. He said the wreaths

make a beautiful photo opportunity at Christmas and it is nice that a Veterans Organization does that for the community.

Mrs. Dale stated that as a Gold Star Mother, it was heartwarming to see the display. She said she was at Crestlawn Cemetery and Veterans Memorial Island to help put out the wreaths. It was beautifully profound.

B) Discuss Ideas for a World War II Memorial/Stage

Mr. Matthews said they have been discussing ideas for a World War II (WWII) memorial and a stage for quite a long time, but there is nothing for their Committee to approve yet. He likes to keep the Committee abreast and invite anyone to share ideas they might have.

Mr. Carroll Oates, President of the Indian River Chapter of Military Officers Association (MOA), said he is also a past Board member of the Veterans Council and he is still involved with them. He would like to volunteer the MOA to help the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee if they choose to move forward with a WWII tribute. He explained that the MOA had the honor of selecting two (2) of their officers to manage the World War I (WWI) tribute that was just completed. They did that for the past year and they did a wonderful job. Unfortunately, there was some damage done to the bayonet on the statue, but that is scheduled to be fixed this Saturday. He said the MOA requested that the bill for the repair work be sent to their organization. They raised most of the money for the repair and the rest will be paid for by the MOA, because they feel responsible for that monument. He stated that in looking ahead, the MOA would love the opportunity to do that again if they move forward with a memorial for WWII. They have two (2) individuals from the MOA who have volunteered to handle it. They have discussed some ideas, but they are not trying to promote anything. They are volunteering their time and resources and the opportunity to collect donations, but they would like to allow another local Veteran Organization to take the lead and manage the project.

Mr. Matthews explained that the Veterans Memorial Island Committee is an Advisory Committee and the City Council would make the final decision on what goes on the Island. Other organizations want to help just like they did with the WWI monument. There have been individuals who have proposed some ideas, but there has not been any formal presentation to approve. He said that Mr. Scott Johnson, Architect, has experience in creating sculptures in public places and he has volunteered his services. The idea is to build a stage that would also have a tribute to the Veterans of WWII, because they saved the world and they deserve our respect.

Mr. Tony Young said that their intent is to make sure they have a stage, which is absolutely needed. He explained that the portable stage the City has is not compatible with the Island. They are fortunate that Mr. Johnson has offered to help create ideas, because it is important that whatever is designed is compatible with the Island. They need to know that what is presented to the Committee is supported by the community. They are attempting to design a stage that would be a tribute to the military personnel of WWII. They need to recognize all of the contribution of WWII and he believes they are on the right path. He is comfortable that this Committee and the City will be engaged through the entire process.

Mr. Matthews said they want to collect any ideas that are out there so that it is done right the first time.

Mr. Rey Neville, Vice Mayor, said he applauds their efforts in trying to recognize the WWII Veterans and those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Millions of men and women were involved in saving the world and making recognition of that is important. He thinks that making it part of the stage would be appropriate and a beautiful recognition. He is in favor of using the stage as a vehicle to illustrate the importance of WWII and all the sacrifices that people made to end that war.

Mr. Paulisin stated that he received a phone call regarding two (2) members of the same family who passed away this past year and were Veterans, but they did not have a wreath placed on their graves. He asked if anyone knows if the Wreaths Across America receives a roster of the Veterans at Crestlawn Cemetery.

Mr. Young replied that Wreaths Across America is an independent group and to his knowledge they are not provided with a roster of deceased Veterans. In the past, he has provided them with a list of Veterans he knows of that are related to Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary.

Mr. Matthews explained that they look at the headstones and if it shows they are a Veteran they put a wreath there. He does not know of any list.

Mr. Young stated that in the past, there have been graves that were not marked and they did not get a wreath, but Wreaths Across America makes a note of it for the future. He said a lady informed him that her father or uncle was a Veteran, but their family monument does not indicate he was a Veteran. He explained that anyone who has a marker that does not reflect they were a Veteran is eligible to receive a free Veteran service marker from the Veterans Service office.

Mr. Matthews said that any family member who wants to participate should certainly attend and place a wreath on their family member's marker.

Mr. Young said that family members can also go to the Wreaths Across America website for this area and dedicate a wreath specifically for their family member.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

Mr. Matthews said they previously talked about trimming the mangroves or cutting windows in them, but he is not sure when that will take place.

Ms. Jenny Flanigan, Assistant City Attorney, replied that she will speak with the Public Works department and bring back any information to their next meeting.

Mr. Matthews explained that two (2) organizations have contacted him about having some type of monument on the Island. He said years ago they approved a spot on the Island for the Next Generation Veterans to recognize the War on Terrorism, the Iraqi war, and the Afghanistan war. The idea would be to possibly have a garden of remembrance, but nothing has been proposed. He said he was also approached by the Navy Sea, Air and Land (SEALs), because there is a Navy SEAL who was killed in Vietnam that is recognized on the Island. He believes it would be appropriate to have something to honor the SEALs near the Navy marker.

Mr. Paulisin said he remembers when they were approached by the Next Generation Veterans and they also mentioned having all the conflicts merged onto one (1) monument.

Mr. Matthews replied that also sounds good. He said that their Committee has approved the Next Generation Veterans to have something on the Island, but they would have to review the design.

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Mr. Paulisin said at this time each year they start planning for the annual Veterans Golf Tournament, because it is so large. Last year they had 260 golfers and the proceeds went to the homeless Veterans and to the homes they run for the homeless Veterans. He explained that Sandridge Golf Club shuts down both of their courses for them to use for the tournament and they were allowed to use the Indian River County Fairgrounds for their luncheon. Last year they made almost \$30,000 for the community and this year they hope to make even more.

Mr. Matthews said he was asked to mention about the possibility of having a camera installed on the Island to deter any more vandalism. However, he is not sure where it would be installed or who would monitor it.

Ms. Flanigan replied that the Vero Beach Police Department looked into some options at the direction of this Committee, but there were a couple of issues. One (1) issue was the need for electricity and the other was just in terms of the cost, but it is something they can still consider.

Mr. Paulisin mentioned that on some of his properties he has solar cameras that work well and they are not that expensive.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) February 2, 2022

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for February 2, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

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