

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, February 2, 2022 – 9:30 a.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

PRESENT: Chairman, John Michael Matthews; Vice Chairman, Curtis Paulisin; Members: Melissa Arndt, and Michelle Dale **Also Present:** Assistant City Attorney, Jenny Flanigan; Public Works Director, Matthew Mitts; and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Chartier

Unexcused 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) January 5, 2022

Mrs. Dale stated that on page 2, the Military Officers Association of America should be "MOAA", not MOA.

Mrs. Dale made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2022 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting with the one (1) correction made. Mr. Paulisin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Tony Young stated that he would like to share some information about two (2) Veterans who are recognized with cenotaph markers on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. The first individual is Corporal Ernest Osceola Sheffield whose family still lives in Vero Beach. Sometimes you can find a flower by his cenotaph that a family member has placed there. He explained that Corporal Sheffield was in a tank destroyer outfit and they were in the wrong place at the wrong time for the Battle of the Bulge. He was on the east end when the Germans attacked. There were 8,000 to 9,000 Americans who were captured during the early part of that battle and Corporal Sheffield was one (1) of them. He was sent to a German Prisoner of War (POW) camp and became a forced laborer in the City of Bitburg, Germany. Following the Battle of the Bulge the air war continued on Germany and Corporal Sheffield was on the streets in Bitburg when one (1) of the United States air bombing attacks took place. He was reported missing on December 24, 1944 and was killed in Bitburg the following day while a prisoner of the Germans. He read a letter that was sent to Corporal Sheffield's parents by a fellow POW service member (on file in the City Clerk's office). Mr. Young said the other Veteran is Clifford Barnwell and his half-brother Leon still lives in this community and is a member of the American Legion Post in Gifford. The initial report on Clifford Barnwell was that he had been killed in an explosion at a chemical plant in Hawaii, but in 1960 the information on his death was

unclassified. He explained that Pearl Harbor has three (3) bays or lochs that have access to water and two (2) of them were hit in a surprise attack. The Navy had all of their logistics, ammunition, fuel, etc. on 30 ships tied up in the lochs. Clifford was unloading a ship that contained mortar rounds and something happened that set off all the ammunition on board and it erupted. The fire quickly spread among the ships. In all, nine (9) ships were destroyed and this became known as the “West Loch Disaster” in May 1944. The disaster lasted almost 24 hours and then they took the remnants of the ships about four (4) miles out to sea and dropped them. Any type of remains on those ships were never recovered. Somewhere around 1990 Congress acknowledged they knew what happened, so all of the markers at the National Cemetery in Pearl Harbor that were listed as “Unknown” victims were amended to read “Unknown, West Loch Disaster May 21, 1944”. There were about 160 men killed and another 300 that were wounded. He stated that he is meeting with Clifford’s half-brother tomorrow to get the rest of the details.

Mr. Matthews thanked Mr. Young for helping them to remember the history of those who are recognized with cenotaphs.

Mr. Young explained that the Department of Defense POW/MIA Accountability Office continues to look for the remains of all the people who were lost in combat. They identify the individuals using DNA so they can give closure to the families.

Mrs. Dale said it is important to remember the Veterans and share their stories. If we do not remember them then they are gone, but if we talk about them, say their names, and share their stories, they are still with us. She thanked Mr. Young.

Mr. Matthews asked if an armed forces member is lost by friendly fire are they awarded the Purple Heart Medal.

Ms. Arndt replied that there was a period of time that the military awarded the Purple Heart for friendly fire, but not anymore.

Mrs. Barbara Ruddy stated that she is proud to be a part of a small group whose objective is to come up with a monument for Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary in honor of the World War II (WWII) Veterans. It is coming along nicely and they are meeting tomorrow with various engineers who will be pricing out the project. Hopefully in the near future they will go public with the project and start raising funds. She likes to ask people for money particularly when it is for a good cause, so she hopes she is successful. She said as she was listening to Mr. Young talk about those Veterans, she thought it would be wonderful to have an audio device on the Island so that people could hear the stories about these individuals.

Mr. Matthews explained that the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), Mr. Young, and Mr. Carroll Oates are taking the lead on that project. They have been talking about this for quite a while and it is certainly important to honor and remember the WWII Veterans.

5. NEW BUSINESS

A) Memorial Service on the Island for Edmund Bradley

Mr. Matthews announced that they received a request to use the Island for a memorial service for Edmund Bradley. They looked over his DD Form 214 and he was an honorably discharged Veteran.

The application has been signed by all required parties. The memorial service was held on January 29, 2022.

Mr. Paulisin made a motion to approve the use of the Island for the memorial service. Mrs. Dale seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Paulisin stated that Ms. Chase Mariposa contacted him to find out where she could get the application to use the Island. He said he was able to direct and help her, but he would like to know if it is possible for people to google that information and it will take them to that spot on the City's website.

Ms. Jenny Flanigan, Assistant City Attorney, said that is a good point, because people probably would not think to look under Recreation for that information. She said they will try to make that form and information more prominent.

6. OLD BUSINESS

A) Update on the Repair of the World War I Monument

Mr. Matthews explained that the bayonet was damaged on the World War I (WWI) monument, but they are not sure how it happened. The company who cast the monument came and did the repair. It cost about \$1,600 for the work and most of that was paid for by Mrs. Kathie Schumann and the rest was paid for by MOAA. He said now it is done and paid for and hopefully it will not get damaged again.

Mr. Young explained that when the Public Works Department found out the generator needed higher amperage to do the repair work, they reached out to Mr. Bill Bryant. Mr. Bryant in turn reached out to his contacts and found the correct generator to do the job. They did not have to rent a generator, so that saved them about \$500.

B) World War II Memorial/Stage

Mr. Matthews said they all know they need a stage for the Island and if they build one (1) perhaps they could honor the WWII Veterans on the front of it. They could use the European Theater, the Pacific Theater, or some of the other events pertaining to WWII on the front of it. There have been some volunteers that have come forward to talk about ideas. There will be something presented soon and they might have a Power Point presentation about it at their next meeting.

C) Update on the Trimming or Windowing of the Mangroves around the Island

Mr. Matthews said they talked about trimming or cutting windows in the mangroves around the Island. It would be nice to open up some areas where there are benches, but they cannot just cut them without approval.

Mr. Matthew Mitts, Public Works Director, explained that they also do mangrove trimming in Riverside Park along the water and by the Marina. He said Mr. Matthews was correct in saying they cannot just hack away at the mangroves without a moderate amount of environmental permitting. They are going through that process now to get a permit. They will bring the plan back to their Committee to make sure it is compatible with all the uses they are foreseeing in the future.

Mr. Matthews said that some of the mangroves are good because they shield the Island from the noise and music when people are launching their boats.

Mr. Mitts said he agrees that when you walk out on the Island the sound kind of disappears because the canopy around the Island. That is what helps create the peaceful atmosphere of the Sanctuary. They obviously would not want to cut everything because it would not be compatible with the use of the Island.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

Mr. Matthews said that he was invited by the Marine Corps League to present a Good Citizenship award to a young gentleman, Logan Riley Griffiths who became an Eagle Scout. The group honored him and presented him with a Proclamation from the County. He said it is amazing what these young men and women are doing to show their ability to be leaders and what they contribute to the community. It was a very impressive ceremony.

Mr. Matthews stated that January 31, 1968 was the deadliest day of the Vietnam War. They lost 246 military personnel on that day. Vietnam Veterans Day is March 29th, but they don't usually have a ceremony for it.

Mr. Matthews said that 77 years ago, on February 19th the Marines landed on Iwo Jima and it took about four (4) days for the famous flag raising on Mount Suribachi.

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Mrs. Dale announced that there will be a Veteran and Family picnic this Saturday, February 5th at the Indian River County Fairgrounds. This year's event was named in honor of her son Army Corporal Dale J. Kridlo. The picnic starts at 11:00 a.m. and goes until 3:00 p.m. It is a free picnic for Indian River County Veterans and their families. They will have entertainment, food, prizes, and children's games, so it will be a wonderful day.

Mr. Paulisin announced that he finalized the paperwork and information on the Veteran Golf Tournament that will be held on June 18, 2022. It is a fundraiser to help provide homes for the Veterans of Indian River County.

Mrs. Ruddy stated there is money available across the United States for infrastructure and she hopes that an effort is being made to receive some of those funds for the replacement of the bridge to Veterans Memorial Island.

Mr. Rob Medina, Representative for Congressman Bill Posey, thanked the Committee for everything they do for Veterans and he thanked Mr. Young for the wonderful history lesson. He said that Veterans have been using the travel kiosks to submit their travel expenses when they go to a Veterans appointment or to the VA Hospital. He explained that the travel reimbursement software has been removed from the kiosks. Congressman Posey has been fighting tooth and nail with the Administration to get it back. He submitted a letter to the Veterans Council and they will receive a copy of it at their meeting this afternoon. He said most of the Veterans are more mature and they are having difficulty doing the paperwork. They are being referred to the online applications, which is causing them a lot of undo stress. They are working hard to have that software reinstalled.

Mr. Paulisin stated that Mrs. Sandy McLaughlin and her husband will be opening the James Arthur Court at 1055 Royal Palm Boulevard, which is affordable housing for Veterans. He met with them and looked at the units and they are very nice. They will have their certificate of occupancy in about 30 days and then they can start getting some Veterans moved into the units. He said they put a lot of money into this project to help the Veterans and they did a great job.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) March 2, 2022

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

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:11 a.m.

/rc