

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, March 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, Michelle Dale, and Carolyn Lange **Also Present:** Assistant City Attorney, Jenny Flanigan; Assistant Director of Public Works, Richard Mutterback; Architect, Scott Johnson (via zoom); 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) February 2, 2022

Mr. Paulisin made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 2, 2022 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting. Mrs. Dale seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

5. NEW BUSINESS

A) Request to use the Island for a Memorial Service for John Corbin – March 16, 2022

Mr. Matthews stated that they received an application to use Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary for a memorial service for John Corbin. Mr. Corbin was an honorably discharged Marine Veteran and they are asking to have the memorial service on March 16, 2022 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. with approximately 15 to 20 people in attendance. He said the Veterans Council and the Veterans Service office have already reviewed and signed off on the application. He asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Matthews made a motion to approve the memorial service for Mr. John Corbin. Mr. Paulisin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

B) Information on a Memorial Service held for Larry Eulenfeld - February 19, 2022

Mr. Matthews explained that there was a previously approved memorial service held on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary for Larry Eulenfeld. It was held on February 19, 2022 and there was about 45 people in attendance.

C) Vietnam War Veterans Day – March 29th

Mr. Matthews stated that Vietnam War Veterans Day is March 29, 2022. He said he does not believe there are any plans for a Vietnam War Veterans Day service in the local area. However, there will be an event called *Heroes Honor Festival* taking place at the Daytona International Speedway on May 27 and 28, 2022. He handed out some flyers about the event (on file in the City Clerk's office). The flyer says it is "a tribute so meaningful it will change history and it is the largest welcome home celebration of Vietnam Veterans ever assembled."

6. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Richard Mutterback, Assistant Public Works Director, said he would like to update them on the mangrove trimming. He said what he handed out is a rendition of a design for trimming the mangroves that the Public Works Department did in 2016 (on file in the City Clerk's office), but the permit was never obtained and the work was not done. He explained that they are required to keep a certain amount of the mangroves as reserve, they can window out certain species, and some can be hedged to six (6) feet as dictated by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The diagram shows where they would hedge or window areas near the benches to open up the view. With the development of the World War II (WWII) memorial and stage, they will need to decide if they want a backdrop or a view. He is looking for some input from the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee members on where they would like to see some windows, or hedging and bring back their comments and suggestions to their April meeting. Once they verify the different species with DEP they will try their best to get as close to their request as possible.

Mrs. Lange stated that the original idea was to leave the area closest to the bridge alone and focus more on opening up areas along the river and creating views.

Mr. Mutterback replied that the mangroves closest to the bridge are marked as reserve and that means they will not be doing anything with them. If the Committee can give him their wish list of where they would like windows and hedging they will take that into account when they determine the species. They will tie it in with the WWII monument and stage after it is determined which direction it will be facing and if they want a view or a backdrop.

Mrs. Lange suggested that it would be great if they could go out as a group and walk the Island with the maps and make their recommendations from there.

Ms. Jenny Flanigan, Assistant City Attorney, stated that is a good idea, but the members of this Committee cannot go as a group due to the Florida Sunshine Laws. Even if they did not discuss anything while they were there the appearance could be less than transparent, so they will have to go individually.

Mr. Paulisin asked Mrs. Lange what was her biggest concern with the mangroves when she brought this up a couple of meetings ago.

Mrs. Lange replied that there are benches facing the river, but there is no view and people are just looking at bushes. She knows, based on what she has read is that they can trim up to 25% of the really tall mangroves every year. She said the northern area, the west side and as it turns to the south needs to be opened up to create more air flow.

Mr. Matthews stated the WWII and stage plans have not been approved yet and that might take a while. He asked how often can they trim the mangroves.

Mr. Mutterback explained that right now there is no funding for the mangrove trimming and they will have to go to City Council to find the funds. He explained that the best time to trim the mangroves is in the spring and summer for the best results. Once they get some direction from the Committee and due to the permitting process it will probably be late this summer or spring 2023 before they can do any work.

Mr. Matthews stated that next year would probably be the perfect time to do the trimming because the design of the WWII project should be approved.

Mr. Mutterback said when they visit the Island they might agree that this plan from 2016 is perfect and that the windows and hedging are in front of the benches as they would like.

Mr. Paulisin asked to clarify that there is no type of regular maintenance of the mangroves because it has to be permitted.

Mr. Mutterback replied that is correct.

Mrs. Lange said she thinks they should take advantage of being able to trim up to 25% off the very tall mangrove along the east side.

Mr. Tony Young explained that there should not be a problem with removing the invasive plants from the mangroves along east side of the Island, but on the west side there are a lot of vines and invasive plants that detract from the look of the mangroves and that should be taken into account when they look at the vegetation.

Mrs. Lange asked how long does it take to get a permit.

Mr. Mutterback replied that he is not exactly sure, but it does take a while.

A) New Stage and World War II Tribute

Mr. Matthews explained that they have talked for months about the need for a stage and a WWII tribute and the idea has expanded quite a bit, but they have some good ideas. He would like to invite Mr. Carroll Oates to come forward and report on what they have planned.

Mr. Carroll Oates, President of the Indian River County Chapter of Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), said he has been a resident of Indian River County since 2008 and is a retired Army Veteran. He explained that he was serving on the Veterans Council, but resigned a year ago when he was elected as the President of MOAA. MOAA is just one (1) of the principle organizations that make up the Veterans Council and all together they are trying to do good things for the Veterans. Last year MOAA was the lead organization for the World War I (WWI) memorial and it is the only statue on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. They felt that the statue of the WWI Doughboy really fit what they wanted to honor WWI. Now they are discussing a World War II (WWII) tribute, but they do not envision a monument. They want something that fits with the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary environment but still recognizes the importance of WWII. Of all the wars, WWII was the closest one (1) connected to Vero Beach and Indian River County primarily because of the Naval Air Station that operated here as well as the Navy Seals just south of here. He is happy to have been

asked to serve on a Committee of individuals interested in doing this project and doing it right. The group consists of himself, Mr. Tony Young, Mrs. Barbara Ruddy, Mr. John Matthews, and an Architect, Mr. Scott Johnson. He said Mr. Johnson will give them an explanation on what they have been talking about, but nothing is firm yet. He explained that MOAA has approximately 140 members and is growing. They have been in existence since 1983 in Indian River County and are more than willing to take the lead again on this WWII tribute. It will take a lot of people to get this done.

Mr. Scott Johnson, CEO of Xdea Architects, said he is glad to be working on this project along with the group. He said his presentation is more of a thought process on how they came up with the design. He explained that part of their discussions have been about the mangroves and how to create the views and their overall relationship to and majesty of the Island and the WWII tribute. He stated that his father served in WWII, so he is honored to be a part of this collaboration. He explained that their Committee first took a look at the Island to understand the site and how the ceremonies are currently organized. They then researched other memorials in public spaces for inspiration that resonated for Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. With all of that they came up with some ideas to provide them with direction, which he is going to provide to them today. At this time he started by going through the pages of his presentation (on file in the City Clerk's office). He said he thought it would be nice to have openings in the mangroves to the north and south, southwest to northeast, and northwest to southeast so people can see directly through the Island. He continued with the presentation and discussed events that have taken place on the Island and what public spaces and monuments that inspired them. He said they also looked at ideas for fixed seating and raised stage areas. He went on to discuss the design ideas and visioning of the presentation. He said they are proposing to shift the ceremonial stage area 45 degrees to the west so the audience does not have to look into the sun. They would also plant more Palm Trees behind the review platform with benches so visitors have a place to rest and reflect. He explained that the review platform area would be approximately 25 feet by 35 feet with stairs and a ramp. He continued by explaining how they would utilize the WWII service medals and campaign ribbons in the design. He said they also looked at the possibility of adding a retractable projection screen right behind the review platform. It could be as basic as a white fabric sheet that could be raised up and held in place with two (2) flag poles and easily taken down after the event. They had another idea of having 42 folding chairs, with each one (1) containing a name of a WWII Veteran from Indian River County. He explained that the Honor Circle is basically empty, but they could use it to tell stories of the town as told by veterans and use it in the design of the circle. If anyone has a story of a local WWII veteran, they would like to set up a meeting with them so their story can be documented. He thanked the Committee for their time and he appreciates their consideration.

Mr. Young said the amount of visioning and ideas that has gone into this project is considerable. He thanked the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee for taking time to have them here today. This process started about eight (8) months ago when Mrs. Ruddy asked him what she could do to honor the loss of a Veteran and he told her that they could really use a stage for the Island. He said the concept of utilizing the reviewing stand to recognize the WWII Veterans is a perfect fit. He thanked Mr. Johnson, Architect and Mr. Robert Paugh with Bill Bryant Construction for all of their technical skills to put this together. He said the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee, the public, and the City can take great faith that they have a wonderful group of technical geniuses working on this and the dedication to the concept of the Island is understood. They would never do anything to diminish how important the Island is to the community. They need the Committee's support along with the City, and the support of the community. The Island is over 50 years old and it is very significant. He continued by giving a brief history account of Mr. James Loudermilk Jr., a gentlemen from Sebastian, Florida. He explained that 30 years ago a local architect,

Mr. John Dean created the vision for the Island after all of the Australian Pines were wiped out by a hurricane. He believes they can take Mr. Dean's vision and compliment it with the work of Mr. Johnson. He said this project will accomplish two (2) things. First, it will be a legacy to the WWII Veterans and secondly, the Island is not just a place for memorials, but it is a gathering place. People go to the Island and they see the sacrifice that these men and their families have made. He read an article from the Press Journal newspaper dated April 6, 1945 about the death of Mr. James Powers Loudermilk, Jr. who died in Iwo Jima and was a resident of Indian River County. He said he has a great deal of confidence in Mr. Johnson and he would appreciate it if their Committee would consider supporting this project.

Mrs. Lange said she is blown away by Mr. Johnson's presentation. She asked if they will start raising money for this project.

Mr. Young replied that MOAA is the lead agency and they will be accepting donations to assist in paying for it.

Mr. Paulisin stated that this is a very ambitious endeavor. He knows they will look at this a number of times as they go through the process. He thanked Mr. Johnson for putting this together.

Mr. Matthews said he likes the idea, but he thinks it is a little too early to present it to City Council, who will make the final decision.

Mr. Oates said he does not believe anyone in Indian River County would disagree that there is a need for a stage on the Island. This idea started out as a need for a permanent stage and then they talked about using it as a tribute to WWII. They will need more than just MOA. They will need help from the Veterans Council, the City, the County and other organizations because this will be a long process.

Mr. Matthews asked if there were any additions or objections to what was presented.

Mr. Mutterback stated that the City staff supports the project and they appreciate all the coordination that has taken place so far. He would like to bring to their attention that when they start figuring construction costs they need to keep in mind there are limitations with doing construction on the Island and it will cost more.

Mrs. Lange said she thinks their objective for the mangroves was to open them up on the west side. She thinks that Ms. Nanette Haynes, Grounds Maintenance Manager, should also look at the overall picture of what could be done.

Mr. Mutterback replied that Ms. Haynes helped with the plan from 2016 and she will be involved when they walk the Island and start identifying the different species to see if it is feasible.

Mr. Paulisin said he believes they need to go out to the Island and see exactly what it looks like, because it might look different than looking at a picture.

Mr. Matthews said that Mr. Johnson's idea of having areas opened up so people can see out from the center of the Island is nice and he thinks they should try to tie this in with his design. He asked the Committee members if they are in favor of moving forward with this discussion, or are there any objections. He is not sure when they should present it to City Council, but they should bring back their ideas and thoughts to their next meeting.

Mr. Young suggested that their Committee take a look at the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary forms that the Recreation Department has for requesting to use the Island, because there are some things that need to be updated.

Mr. Matthews said there is also a form for requesting a cenotaph marker. He mentioned that last month they talked about the forms and making them easier to locate on the City's website.

Ms. Flanigan replied that they are moving the forms to the Veterans Memorial Island page, so it is a more natural place for people to find them. She will also look at the forms and update them as needed.

Mr. Matthews suggested they review the application for the use of the Island, the cenotaph marker application, and the duties of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee members at their April meeting.

Mrs. Lange stated that people are bringing dogs onto the Island. There is a sign stating that dogs are not allowed, but she still sees them. She is not sure if there is any way to enforce it.

Mr. Matthews stated he has also seen people on bikes and he tells them nicely that there are signs restricting certain activities and that they could possibly be fined, but some people don't accept that advice. It is a sanctuary, not a park and it has the same dignity and decorum as a cemetery.

Ms. Flanigan said it is a City Code violation and she could speak with the Code Enforcement Officer and bring back some information to their next meeting.

B) Update on the Veterans Memorial Island Bridge Repairs

Mr. Matthews announced that someone crashed into the gate on the bridge for the Island, but it has already been repaired.

Mr. Mutterback reported that the temporary repairs to the bridge are complete and it has been signed off by the Engineer. He said Engineering has advised keeping the reduced weight restrictions of 5,000 pounds for now. The new bridge design is nearing completion and they have already begun the permitting process. The design and permitting is what was scheduled for this year and the construction of the new bridge is scheduled for the fiscal year 2022/2023. He was just informed this morning that the bridge will be out of service for a maximum of four (4) months while they do the construction. The contractor will not be allowed to start the construction until they have procured all of the materials.

Mr. Matthews asked what type of rails will the bridge have, will there be places for flags, and will they have the same gates.

Mr. Mutterback said he is not sure, but he thought they were trying to keep it as close as possible to the current design. He will try to bring that information back to their next meeting.

Mrs. Ruddy suggested that they might want to hold off starting the WWII memorial and stage until after the new bridge is complete.

Mr. Mutterback stated that the bridge is on its own schedule and it is a priority, but they will coordinate everything with the Committee working on the WWII project.

Mr. Rey Neville, Vice Mayor, said he listened to the presentation of the WWII tribute and stage and it sounds extraordinary. He suggested that the design elements for the bridge be brought before this Committee before it is finalized, because there might be some things they would like to add. He said with the idea of the WWII monument and fundraising, he thought they could pave the new bridge with pavers. They could sell pavers listing the names of Veterans who did not die in war, but of those who served. It would be kind of symbolic. While people are crossing the bridge they see the names of those who have served and then on the other side they see those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. He believes it is a way to make some money and get the community involved and excited about the project.

Mr. Paulisin said even though the bridge is not the Island, they will need to look at their guidelines to see if it falls under the same rules of not allowing sponsors. They don't want to break their own rules.

Mr. Matthews agrees that there is an Ordinance that governs what they can do, so it is worth looking into.

Mr. Johnson agrees that it would be wonderful for the Veterans Memorial Island Committee to see the plans of the bridge before it is finalized, because there might be some opportunities to add to the design of it. It is also a tribute to the Island and not just be a concrete passageway.

Mr. Matthews thanked Mr. Johnson for all the time he spent looking at the Island, the hours he donated creating the designs, and for making this presentation.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

None

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

None

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) April 6, 2022

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for April 6, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

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