

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, March 3, 2021 – 9:30 a.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

PRESENT: Chairman, John Michael Matthews; Vice Chairman, Joel Herman; Members: Barbara Fallon, Curtis Paulisin, Don Wickstrand, Alternate Member #1, Sylvester McIntosh, and Alternate Member #2, Peggy Lyon **Also Present:** Assistant City Attorney Jenny Flannigan; Grounds Maintenance Supervisor, Josh Chandler; Recreation Director, Jim O’Connell; and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Hawkins

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 3, 2021

Mr. Herman made a motion to approve the minutes of the February 3, 2021 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting. Ms. Fallon seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

5. NEW BUSINESS

A) Vietnam War Veterans Day – March 29th

Mr. Matthews stated that they like to mention what is coming up and special dates that are of interest to Veterans and people who visit Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. There is not a ceremony, but March 29th is the National observance of Vietnam War Veterans Day. There were approximately 2,780,382 individuals who served in the Vietnam War and less than 850,000 are still alive. They lost more than 58,000 during that war, so if anyone sees a Vietnam Veteran on March 29th take the time to thank them for their service or welcome them home.

B) Request for use of the Island – Indian River County Victims’ Rights Coalition

Mr. Matthews announced that they received an application from the Indian River County Victims’ Rights Coalition to use Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. They will be holding a memorial vigil on April 22, 2021 from 5:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. and they are estimating that 50 people will

be attending. He said they have been using the Island for decades for memorial services and it is an appropriate use of the Island.

Ms. Fallon made motion to approve the application from the Victims' Rights Coalition to use Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. Mr. McIntosh seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

C) Discuss Options to Repair or Replace the Stage on the Island

Mr. Matthews explained that the stage they use on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary is in a bad state of repair. The canvas covering is torn and the plywood base is broken. Pretty soon they will not have a stage, so they might just have to assemble on the ground. The big covered stage that the City recently purchased is too large to be brought on to the Island.

Mr. Jim O'Connell, Recreation Director, stated that the stage was removed from the Island and was taken to the Public Works compound to be assessed. It was in bad shape, so it has been taken out of service. He explained that they have another stage that is larger than the one (1) they had been using, but it is not covered. The only issue of getting it on to the Island is that it is wider and it will need to roll over the grass, so they will have to get it into position while the ground is dry. It can be used for their events, but they might want to look at other long term options.

Mr. Matthews asked if he knew what a new stage might cost.

Mr. O'Connell replied that the new stage that does not fit on the Island was over \$100,000, but there might be less expensive options if it does not have to be mobile. They have not priced out what it would cost to construct a permanent stage, but in the meantime they can use the larger uncovered stage if they choose that option.

Mr. Matthews said the stage was mainly used by the Veterans Council for the Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies. He asked if any other organizations used the stage on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary.

Mr. O'Connell replied not that he is aware of.

Ms. Fallon asked if the other stage could be retrofitted with a canopy.

Mr. O'Connell said he is not an expert on stages, but it might be possible to put a covering over it or rent something for the day. He suggested they start thinking more long term about a permanent stage area with or without a covering. They might be able to design something that could be covered when needed.

Mrs. Lyon said she likes the idea of pursuing a permanent stage. They should at least find out how much it would cost and the possibility of having sun shading when they need it. They have some older dignitaries that need the sun protection.

Mr. Matthews said if they choose to go with a permanent stage they might want to think about including the logos of the Veterans Organizations or Military Organizations as part of the design.

Mr. Paulisin suggested that they speak with the Engineering and Public Works department to find out what would be involved in the construction, permitting, and what their thoughts are on a project like this.

Mr. Matthews stated that if they have several days of rain before an event they will have a problem getting the stage out there.

Mr. O'Connell explained that they will watch the weather and plan ahead even if they have to have it out there the week before. That stage does not get used as often as the new covered stage, but they will plan ahead and have it available for their events.

6. OLD BUSINESS

A) Status of the Ball from the Flag Pole

Mr. Matthews asked if there is an update on the status of the ball from the flag pole.

Ms. Jenny Flannigan, Assistant City Attorney, said that she discussed this with City staff. The main concern is that it is City property, so they would handle it as an item on loan for a specific purpose.

Mr. Josh Chandler, Grounds Maintenance Supervisor, stated that the ball has been located and it is at the Public Works compound.

Ms. Flannigan explained that this is not a matter that will go to City Council, so it is in the hands of City staff right now. She will let them know when a decision is made and there will be a letter to sign stating that the ball is on loan.

Mr. Herman asked if the Veterans Service office does not accept it what will the City do with it.

Ms. Flannigan replied that she is not sure if they have a plan, but they were more concerned about the ball's state of disrepair. There was a question on whether it would even be subject for display. She suggested that Mr. Herman take a look at it before he decides to move forward.

B) Update on the World War I Monument and Donations

Mr. Matthews introduced Mr. Carlos Halcomb, Retired Air Force Colonel.

Mr. Carlos Halcomb, Director of Military Officers Association (MOA) and Veterans Council Secretary, said that both of these organizations would be interested in supporting them financially for some type of stage for Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. He likes the idea of a permanent stage where they could drop posts into the foundation so canopies could be attached to provide shade when needed. He also likes that it can be an open air stage because they have so many great days here when a covering is not necessary. He said as for the World War I (WWI) monument, Mr. Michael Di Scipio, MOA member, has been locating various vendors who create memorials for display at cemeteries or other locations in order to obtain some figures on what items might cost for this project. He is waiting on input from the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign

Wars (VFW) on their design ideas. Today at 1:30 p.m. is the Veterans Council Meeting and MOA will be discussing the project, so he hopes to get some more information.

Mr. Matthews stated that they received a list of the people and organizations who have made donations to the WWI monument and they currently have a total of \$2,650 (on file in the City Clerk's office).

Mr. Halcomb stated that there are private donors waiting in the wings to help out if they should go over budget. As of right now, they are thinking it will cost about \$3,000, but it might cost more. They just need to come up with the cost and the construction plan. They want it to honor those who served in WWI, the community, and Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary.

Mr. Matthews said that they do not have enough information to present anything to City Council yet, but they have heard some ideas that have been recommended.

Mr. Halcomb asked if the Committee has seen any of the conceptual designs they have come up with so far.

The Committee members replied that they have not seen them.

Mr. Matthews announced that he had a few copies of the four (4) design options that MOA put together. He passed them out so the other Committee members could see them (attached to the original minutes).

Mr. Herman suggested they check with the MacWilliam family to see if they have any memorabilia or pictures from Mr. Alex MacWilliam that they could use for ideas on the monument. The MacWilliam family is instrumental in having a monument and if they want to provide any input that would be a good place to start.

Mr. Halcomb replied that he would be glad to reach out to them. He said that most of the design options offer panels around the base so maybe one (1) of them could be dedicated to Mr. Alex MacWilliam.

Mr. Matthews stated that there was an idea of including a bronze casting or an etching of a Poppy flower and perhaps they could include the first few words of the poem "In Flanders Field". There is also the idea of casting the WWI Victory Medal in bronze and placing it on the monument. They will keep this on their agenda to get updates on their progress.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

Mr. Matthews stated that he will invite Mr. Bruce Caddy, Next Generation Veterans Chairman, to come speak at their April meeting about the Words From War monument.

Mr. Matthews said that in the near future the bridge is scheduled for a \$130,000 repair, but eventually it will be replaced at a cost of \$1.3 million. He is not sure how all the funding is being handled or if it is covered by grants. At some point the Committee would like to be provided with more information.

Ms. Flannigan reported that City Council approved the contract for the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Bridge repairs at yesterday's City Council meeting. The cost for this project will be \$129,600. The Public Work's department could provide the Committee with an update, so perhaps they can put that on next month's agenda.

Mr. Matthews stated that when they replace the bridge the Island might be closed for six (6) months or even longer, so they might have to schedule their events at alternate locations.

Mr. Matthews explained that anyone who wants to use Veterans Memorial Island for an appropriate event, a memorial service, etc. can get the application to use the Island from the City's website under the Recreation Department and then go to forms.

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Mr. Paulisin announced that the Vietnam Veterans will be holding their annual Mary Snyder Golf Tournament on June 19, 2021 at Sandridge Golf Club. He said that same day there will also be a business expo at the fairgrounds and it is being sponsored by the Veterans of Indian River County, Inc.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) April 7, 2021

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for April 7, 2021 at 9:30 a.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:08 a.m.

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