

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, April 5, 2023 – 9:30 a.m.
City Hall, Second Floor Training Room, Vero Beach, Florida**

PRESENT: Chairman, John Michael Matthews; Members: Curtis Paulisin, and Melissa Arndt **Also Present:** City Attorney, John Turner; Assistant City Engineer, Danessa Chambers; Assistant Director of Public Works, Richard Mutterback; and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Chartier

Excused Absence: Carolyn Lange and Michelle Dale

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. 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) March 1, 2023

Mr. Paulisin made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 1, 2023 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting. Mr. Matthews seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Tony Young stated that he would like to highlight the Veterans that are honored on the Island from World War II (WWII) who lost their life in April. He gave a brief account on the history of Henry Taylor Morgan, Ebert T. Blanton, and Richard Aquinn Tharpe (on file in the City Clerk's office).

5. NEW BUSINESS

A) Removing the Flag from the Island During the Bridge Construction – Mrs. Danessa Chambers, Public Works

Mrs. Danessa Chambers, Assistant City Engineer, said as you all are aware they are replacing the bridge to Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary and it is expected to be closed for 120 days. She would like to propose that the Committee consider taking the flag down during the construction. There will be limited access to the Island as well as limited electricity, so they will not be able to light the flag at night and they might not be able to lower the flag to half-staff when necessary. They are also concerned that the flag could get damaged, so instead of replacing it they would like to remove it. She is asking if the Committee would be okay with that or for any feedback. They would take it down the day construction starts and put it back up when they have safe employee access to go back and forth.

Mr. Matthews stated that the flag should not be flown at night unless it is lit, so that is a problem. He asked what is the estimated start date.

Mrs. Chambers explained that the start date has been pushed back to June, so they are confident that the Island will be available for the Memorial Day Ceremony and they will be able to lower the flag as normal. With Veterans Day being in November, that ceremony would fall during the closure period.

Mr. Matthews said the Veterans Council made plans to have the Memorial Day Ceremony at the gazebo in Riverside Park, but if the City can lower the flag at 8:00 a.m. and raise it back up at noon that would be good.

Mrs. Chambers said she would like to know if they have full support from the Committee.

Mr. Matthews made a motion that they accept the recommendation to remove the flag from Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary during the bridge construction. Mr. Paulisin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

B) Request to use the Island for a Memorial Service for USMC Veteran Brian Kane – Sharon Packard

Mr. Matthews announced that they received a request from Sharon Packard to use the Island for a memorial service for Brian Kane on April 21, 2023. Mr. Kane was a retired Marine and was honorably discharged per the DD form 214. There will only be about a dozen family members attending and they do not need electricity.

Mr. Matthews made a motion to approve application to use Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary for the memorial service for Brian Kane. Ms. Arndt seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

C) Memorial Day – May 29, 2023

Mr. Matthews stated that Mr. Carlos Halcomb is leading the charge of the Memorial Day Ceremony.

Mr. Young said that their plans were to have the Memorial Day Ceremony at Riverside Park, but if the Island is going to be available they should utilize the Sanctuary. The decision will be made by the Veterans Council, but his recommendation is to use the Island.

Mr. Matthews stated that he will discuss this with the Veterans Council at their meeting this afternoon. He will let them know that the recommended location would be the Island. They could still have their dry run at the Gazebo to practice for the Veterans Day Ceremony that will probably take place there.

D) Fundraiser for the World War II Tribute and Stage – 21st Amendment Distillery

Mr. Matthews announced that Jeff Palleschi, a Marine Veteran, is the owner of a new company across the street from the Post Office called 21st Amendment Distillery. He will be selling the first batch of 250 bottles of their “The Greatest Generation” of whiskey for \$250 each. It is a limited edition of their bourbon whiskey and the proceeds will benefit the WWII Tribute.

E) Florida's 35th Annual All Veterans Reunion

Mr. Matthews said this event used to be the Vietnam Veterans Reunion, but now it is called the Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion. It will be held on May 4th – 7th at Wickham Park in Melbourne, Florida. They will have live music, food and beverages, and military vendors and displays. He said he has attended this event several times and he always enjoys it.

Mr. Matthews stated they held a small ceremony on the Island on March 29, 2023 for Vietnam Veterans Day. He said there are 19 veterans honored on the Island from the Vietnam era, which is quite a few for a small community.

Mr. Young added that the ceremony was held at sundown and Mr. Duke Scales, Bugler, played taps. He said it was very rewarding to be able to acknowledge the men who fought in such a divided time. They were fortunate to have two (2) distinguished Veterans from the Vietnam War present who were recognized for Valor; Mr. John Michael Matthews and Mr. Sylvester McIntosh. He said that the recent Red, White, and Blue concert at the Vero Beach High School highlighted the Vietnam Veterans as well.

6. OLD BUSINESS

A) Update on the Bridge Replacement

This was item was addressed under Item 5-A).

B) Update on the Merchant Marine Monument – Mr. Ross Rowlinson

Mr. Ross Rowlinson, Merchant Marine, said it is a joy to get the project started. They are happy that the sidewalks are in and they are waiting on some final work to be done on the memorial. He said they are here to request the use of the Island on May 22, 2023 for a ceremony and the unveiling of the monument. He said May 22nd is National Maritime Day and it is a very important day for them. He introduced Captain Richard Martucci, member of the Merchant Marine Team working on the project.

Captain Martucci, said he belongs to the United States Merchant Marine, Navy Armed Guard, but unfortunately the Navy Armed Guard was disband and there are not many of them left. To finally have the Merchant Marine recognized is a great honor and this is one (1) of the few places that have done this. He continued with sharing some history and his accounts about the Merchant Marine and what they did.

Mr. Matthews said they are happy to be able to honor their service with this monument. He asked what day of the week is May 22nd.

Mr. Rowlinson replied it is a Monday.

Mr. Matthews said some people might not be able to attend, but it seems like the right day to have the ceremony. He asked if they have the monument yet.

Mr. Rowlinson stated that they are still waiting on the bronze plaques, but they should be done in the next couple of days. They will hand the plaques off to Public Work's and they will make the

monument. He thanked the Public Works department for their unbelievably fast work in getting things done. He said they do great work.

Mr. Richard Mutterback, Assistant Director of Public Works, said the Public Work's department will be installing the benches and once they have the bronze plaques they will construct the pedestal at the shop and transport it to the Island. He will let Mr. Rowlinson know when these activities take place.

The group discussed the procedures for the unveiling.

Mr. Matthews commented that if they choose to put together a program the Sheriff's office will print it.

Mr. Michael Hyde, Merchant Marine, said that he is anticipating a small intimate group of about 25 people, but it will still be an official unveiling. They will not need any electricity or podium.

Mr. Rowlinson asked if they need the Commission's approval on a program or flyers if they make them.

Mr. Matthews replied he does not think that is necessary.

Mr. Matthews made a motion to approve the use of the Island on May 22, 2023 for the unveiling of the Merchant Marine monument. Mr. Paulisin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Paulisin mentioned if they choose to have a program they can certainly bring a copy to their May meeting for the Committee to take a quick look at.

C) Update on the Stage and World War II Tribute

Mr. Young said they are moving along on the WWII Tribute, but their latest challenge is going to be the soil. Based on the soil boring sample that was analyzed, they were informed that they will have to make accommodations to support the weight of the stage. There are different ways to provide the needed support and he is confident the Engineer and the Contractor will pick the best construction. The whiskey fundraiser is the latest organization to help with the funding. He reported that the tiles for the ribbons have been selected and the artist will be directed by the Architect on the design. He said he will work with the Public Work's department to get the medallions ordered.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

Mr. Matthews said he received a call from a woman who lost her husband who was a veteran and she thought it would be nice to have him memorialized on the Island. He said it is always hard to tell someone no, but he informed her that the person had to have joined the service while a resident of Indian River County and died while in service to their Country.

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Ms. Arndt said that the Veterans Service Office is continuously working to reach out to the Veterans in the community to make sure they are aware of the changes to the PACT Act and what changes the

PACT Act brought about. This Act affects three (3) generations of Veterans from the Gulf War, Vietnam, and from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

Mr. Paulisin announced that the annual Vietnam Veterans Golf Tournament will take place on June 17, 2023 at Sandridge Golf Club and it always sells out. The fee is \$75 and they use both courses, so there are more than 200 golfers. The funds raised are used to assist the Veterans in the community and for housing for Veterans. He has forms for registering and for sponsorships if anyone needs them.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) May 3, 2023

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for May 3, 2023 at 9:30 a.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:36 a.m.

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