

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, August 4, 2021 – 9:30 a.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

PRESENT: Chairman, John Michael Matthews; Members: Barbara Fallon, Curtis Paulisin and Alternate Member, Sylvester McIntosh **Also Present:** Assistant City Attorney, Jenny Flanigan; Recreation Director, Jim O’Connell; and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Hawkins

Excused Absence: Peggy Lyon

Unexcused Absence: Melissa Arndt

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) July 7, 2021

Ms. Fallon made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 7, 2021 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting. Mr. Paulisin seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

5. NEW BUSINESS

A) Honoring Commander John Papageorge and Colonel Samuel Playdon Eschenbach – Barbara Ruddy

Ms. Barbara Eschenbach Ruddy said she came to today’s meeting to make a donation of \$2,000 to Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary. She and her sister, Ms. Joan Ohl each donated \$1,000 in honor of Veterans John Papageorge and Samuel Playdon Eschenbach. She said that Mr. Papageorge was bigger than life. When he and his wife moved to Vero Beach in 2004 they lived near her mother and they became great friends early on. She will never forget seeing Mr. Papageorge in his Navy dress whites while attending various galas and events. She explained that her father served during World War II (WWII) and was in Sicily, then moved on to the mainland of Italy. He was gone for three (3) and a half years and many of the letters he sent home never arrived. There were no phone calls, emails, or text messages back then, so what these men and women went through was unbelievable. They are often referred to as the people who saved the world. She explained that she was trying to figure out what she was going to do to honor these two (2) Veterans, so she contacted Mr. Tony Young. She said Mr. Young advised her that she could make a donation to Veterans Memorial Island

Sanctuary in their honor. She visited Veterans Memorial Island for the first time for the Memorial Day service and she was very touched by the beauty and the people who spoke. She explained that Mr. Young informed her that they want to build a podium/stage for the Island, so she hopes that their contributions will help with that. She will continue to promote Vero Beach and encourage people to contribute funds to their Committee so they can speed up the process of building a podium/stage.

Mr. Matthews said he agrees that her father and those that served during WWII did save the world. He remembers seeing Mr. Papageorge in uniform at the Marine Corps Birthday Balls.

Mr. Paulisin said he had the honor of meeting Mr. Papageorge on numerous occasions. He has some great pictures of him with other Veterans and with Helen Glenn and Alma Lee Loy. If the family would like any of these pictures he would gladly email them. Mr. Papageorge was a great man and it was an honor to have met him.

Ms. Fallon said unfortunately she never had the opportunity to meet Mr. Papageorge.

B) Bridge Repairs

Mr. Matthews said that there is a storage box and a boat near the bridge for Veterans Memorial Island, which is probably part of the bridge repairs. He reported that it will cost \$130,000 for the bridge repairs and to replace the bridge it will cost \$1.3 million. The repairs are necessary to carry it through until the replacement is done in a couple of years.

Mr. Tony Young, City resident, explained that the top side of the bridge does not appear to have any issues, but the problem is under the bridge where the cement has broken away and exposed the rebar. The repairs that they are doing now is to address the damage that has occurred over time. He said he understands that the design work for the new bridge is already being done at this time.

Mr. Matthews said right now there is a weight limit on vehicles going on and off the Island.

C) Alex MacWilliam Monument

Mr. Matthews said he noticed that the plaque and the monument for Alex MacWilliam is getting covered by the trees growing around it and pretty soon it will be hidden. He does not think that the grounds maintenance crews will cut back the vegetation, so in the near future they might want to consider moving the monument out into the open area. It does appear that they can just use a fork lift to move it forward. It looks like it might have to be dismantled and reassembled, or they might have to move it to the other side of the Lest We Forget monument.

6. OLD BUSINESS

A) Update on World War I Monument

Mr. Matthews said he will be traveling to Kansas City, Missouri for a jewelry convention and seminar. He explained that Kansas City is the home of the national World War I (WWI) Museum, so he will visit it while he is there and bring back some more history about WWI.

Mr. Carlos Halcomb, Military Officers Association, thanked Ms. Ruddy for her donation to help keep the City beautiful. He said he submitted a picture of the area that is framed out for the foundation of

the WWI monument. The Public Work's department is getting ready to pour the cement, but they need to discuss the timeline and how they are going to pay for the materials for the foundation and the pedestal. His first thought was to use the money from the account they have with the Marine Corps League. They can cover the cost and then they can approach City Council about reimbursing them from the funds the City is holding that were donated for the monument. He asked if that is feasible or are there road blocks that will not allow them to handle it that way.

Ms. Jenny Flanigan, Assistant City Attorney, replied that she will have to check with the Finance Department to see what the mechanism is for how that should play out. She can report back on this at the next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee.

Mr. Halcomb said he spoke with the American Bronze Foundry, which is the company that is building the Doughboy monument. He was informed that it is coming along nicely and it looks good. A majority of the pieces have already been cast and in a couple of weeks they will start to assemble it. Brevard Granite has the black granite available for the pedestal, but they are waiting on the foundation to be poured in order to get the final measurements before they start cutting it.

Mr. Matthews said it might be easier to go to City Council and explain what they are doing and ask to use the \$2,900 that was donated and set aside for the monument.

Mr. Halcomb reported that the cement might cost a bit more than \$2,900, because there is a minimum delivery amount. They might have three (3) times more than what they need for the foundation.

Mr. Matthews said he does believe the cement will be wet when it is delivered. He thinks they will have to mix it on site. Either way they will need to go before City Council.

Mr. Halcomb stated that they probably want to pour the foundation before they go to City Council in order to save time.

Mr. Matthews said that the classic look of the Doughboy is going to be a great addition to the Island.

B) Update on a Stage for Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary

Mr. Matthews stated that they will continue to discuss a stage for the Island, because they need to either purchase a portable stage or build a permanent platform. If they built a platform they could possibly honor the WWII Veterans around the base of it. He explained that the County provided them with a small stage for their last event, but it only held five (5) or six (6) people. The large stage that the City has for their events is too big to bring onto the Island.

Ms. Ruddy asked if they could use the extra concrete from the WWI monument to build a stage.

Mr. Matthews said that is a good idea, but they do not know if the concrete is coming premixed or if it is in bags. It might be a year or so before they are ready to create a platform.

Mr. Halcomb agreed that it is a wonderful idea, but the timing is so far off. The idea would be to shape a platform around the curve of the circle where they hold their events. They might be able to convince City staff to go out and take some measurements so they can get an estimate of what it would cost to create. If they built a concrete podium they could place a bronze plaque on the front of it dedicating it to the WWII.

Mr. Matthews said even if they have a good idea of the cost and the design it could still take years to accomplish.

Mr. Halcomb suggested that they make this a topic of discussion at the Veterans Council meeting this afternoon. They can stress that they need a solution for this soon rather than later.

Ms. Fallon asked what concrete company are they using.

Mr. Halcomb replied that the Public Work's department would know.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

Mr. Matthews explained that they previously approved a request to use the Island from the Indian River County Sheriff's office to hold a remembrance ceremony of the attacks on 9/11. It is the same day as the Tunnels to Towers event, which is a huge event that has over 500 runners. He explained that the runners pass by Veterans Memorial Island as part of their run. With all the people, vehicles, and vendors at Riverside Park that day it might be hard for the Sheriff's Office to get 100 to 150 people on the Island, so they might shift their event to Under the Oaks and use the City's large stage if it is available.

Mr. Matthews announced that in September there are a few dates to remember. Patriots Day is September 11, 2021. POW/MIA day is September 17th and the 28th is Gold Star Mother's Day. He said in a few days, on August 7th is the national recognition of Purple Heart Day and it is to honor all those that were wounded in combat while serving our Country. He announced that they have a combat wounded Veteran on their Committee, Mr. Sylvester McIntosh. He was awarded the Silver Star for his heroism during the Korean War and he is one (1) of the highest decorated Veterans in the community.

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Mr. Paulisin announced that they broke another record for the Veterans Golf Tournament this year. It was a huge event with 260 golfers and they raised approximately \$25,000 to \$30,000. He thanked the County and everyone in the community who supported this event. All the money raised goes to the homes for the homeless Veterans in Indian River County.

Mr. Young said with Ms. Ruddy's donation it made him think about Veterans Memorial Island and all the activities that take place in the community. It is pretty amazing how much goes on daily and that it is part of what they do for the Veterans and their families in the community. He said Veterans Memorial Island is not just a simple sanctuary on the coast of Florida, but it is truly a magnificent tribute.

At this time, Mr. Young read a prepared thank you letter (attached to the original minutes).

Mr. Matthews stated that was great and Mr. Young is amazing. Mr. Young does so much for the community and he did a wonderful job when he chaired the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee. He thanked Mr. Young and said his thank you letter was very personal and it should be part of their history for future generations to read.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) September 1, 2021

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for September 1, 2021 at 9:30 a.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:09 a.m.

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