

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES  
Wednesday, September 6, 2023 – 9:30 a.m.  
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

**PRESENT:** Chairman, John Matthews; Vice Chairman, Michelle Dale; and Member: Carolyn Lange **Also Present:** Public Works Director, Matthew Mitts; Civil Engineer, Austin Linville; City Attorney, John Turner and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Chartier

**Excused Absences:** Melissa Arndt and Curtis Paulisin

**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) August 2, 2023**

Mr. Matthews stated that there is one (1) correction to be made to the August 2<sup>nd</sup> minutes under item 7. He said Veterans Day is November 11<sup>th</sup>, not November 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Mr. Matthews made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 2, 2023 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting as corrected. Mrs. Dale seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.**

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Tony Young said he would like to take the opportunity to highlight three (3) servicemen who are honored on the Island and lost their lives in September. He gave a brief account of the history of Lawrence Courtney Jones, Jimmie Doles, and Howard Pevey.

Mr. Matthews said that it is nice to keep their memories alive. He thanked Mr. Young for taking the time to do that.

**5. NEW BUSINESS**

**A) Veterans Day Ceremony – November 11, 2023**

Mr. Matthews announced that Veterans Day is November 11, 2023, and the Ceremony will take place at Riverside Park at the Grand Pavilion because the Island will still be closed. They will have a keynote speaker, the placing of the wreath, and the traditional sights and sounds for the ceremony. He said the Veterans Day Proclamation will be read at a City Council meeting before Veterans Day.

Mr. Matthews announced that the Marine Corps Ball will be held on November 11, 2023, at Oak Harbor Club starting at 5:30 p.m. He said tickets are still available for purchase at his business, John Michael Matthews Fine Jewelry.

## **6. OLD BUSINESS**

### **A) Update on the Bridge Replacement**

Mr. Austin Linville, Civil Engineer, reported that the actual closure date of the bridge was Monday, August 7, 2023, which started the 120 days to construct the new bridge. Since then, the contractor has demolished the old bridge and removed it from the site and they are in the process of installing the piles for the new bridge. He said overall the project is going well and there have not been any significant delays and they are still anticipating it to be completed in December 2023.

### **B) Update on the Stage and World War II Tribute**

Mr. Tony Young, World War II (WWII) Tribute Committee, stated that the City Manager signed off on the paperwork that went to the County's Building Department for the monument. He said the coordination of all of the contractors for the sub-work to prepare the Island is taking place right now. Also, 10 days ago they did a portion of the filming on the individuals who are honored on the Island. This video will be incorporated as part of the tribute on the Island. When people visit the tribute, they can go to a kiosk and scan a barcode with their cell phone and hear an account of the individuals who gave their lives during WWII. In this first video, they spoke about Robert Hurst, Charles Harlock, Robert Harlock, and James Loudermilk Jr., who all have family members here who spoke about their loved ones. In addition to that, they had a Marine and a Sailor speak about the Pacific Theater of Operation. He reported that the remains of Robert Hurst have been identified and recovered from a cemetery in Manila, the capital of the Philippines, and in the near future the family will have him reinterred in Vero Beach or another location of their choice. He said that James Loudermilk's half-brother still lives here locally, but he lost his other two (2) brothers in the war. He reported that the pieces of the tribute are coming together and the tile work creating the ribbons is moving along. He said anyone interested in donating or assisting with the WWII tribute can reach out to Mr. Matthews, Mrs. Barbara Ruddy, or himself. He said he would like to thank Mr. Jeff Palleschi, who had a soft opening of his distillery downtown because he is recognizing the Veterans who have given so much to this community.

Mrs. Lange stated that Mr. Palleschi, 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment Distillery, has a wall of honor where people can bring in the flag of their loved one along with their picture and he will display it. If the family does not have a flag he will get one (1) and display it with their picture and a brief biography.

### **C) Update on the Bakari Mosley Cenotaph Marker**

Mr. Matthew Mitts, Public Works Director, stated that he will follow up with Ms. Nanette Haynes, Grounds Maintenance Manager, on the status of the marker for Mr. Mosley. He explained that it will not be installed until the bridge is complete.

Mr. Mitts introduced Mr. Joseph Berenato and stated that he is the City's new Assistant Public Works Director.

Mr. Berenato said that his past work experience is with Ocean City, New Jersey, where he spent 27 years with the City's Public Works department. He said he hopes to bring some of his knowledge and skills here to the City of Vero Beach and learn more about what the City does.

Mr. Matthews explained that they have recast the bronze plaque for the Alex MacWilliam monument, but they have not decided if they are going to trim back the vegetation or move the monument forward onto the Island.

Mr. Mitts reported that they have discussed multiple options and they certainly want to take direction from the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee. He has discussed this with his Facilities Department and the simplest thing for them to do is build a monument similar to the other ones on the Island. However, if the Committee desires to recreate the original design they can look at that. He said they have some time since they cannot access the Island, but they will try to have it done soon after the bridge is reopened.

## **7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS**

### **A) 9/11 Remembrance Day**

Mr. Matthews said he would like to remind everyone about 9/11 Remembrance Day. It is hard to believe how many years ago that was and the number of people who lost their lives, but it is still fresh in many people's memories.

### **B) POW/MIA Day – September 15, 2023**

Mr. Matthews stated that September 15<sup>th</sup> is POW/MIA Day. He said it is hard to imagine that there are still 1,578 individuals unaccounted for from the Vietnam War and over 81,000 are unaccounted for from all wars. Many were not prisoners of war, but they were missing in action and most were killed in action and their bodies were never recovered. He said the POW/MIA monument on the Island is a regional monument and it was part of the original visioning process for the Island.

Mrs. Dale reported that several of the local Veteran clubs have services on POW/MIA Day. She knows the Vero Beach Veterans and the Elks Club have services, and the American Legion Post 189 in Sebastian has a POW/MIA service in the evening and it is very touching.

Mr. Matthews announced that Mr. Cory Price, West Palm Beach VA Medical Center Director, will be at today's Veterans Council meeting, which will be more like a Town Hall meeting. It will be at 1:30 p.m. at the County Administration office, building B and anyone is welcome to attend.

Mr. Matthews announced that Mr. Harold Granitur, a WWII Veteran, will be the speaker at the next Military Officers Association (MOA) meeting. He will be turning 100 years old and he received two (2) Purple Heart awards.

## **8. MEMBER'S MATTERS**

Mrs. Lange explained her brother was a Navy fighter pilot and a friend of his was Mr. Jim Sibley (spelling might not be correct) and somehow her brother had in his possession Mr. Sibley's Bible. She said her brother tried to locate Mr. Sibley to return it to him, but he was unsuccessful. She said she gave it to the Archives Center at the Indian River County Library to see if they could find the family, but they could not locate them either. The Bible originally belonged to Dr. Jack Norris, who

was the grandfather of Mr. Sibley. She read an inscription from inside the cover that explained that the Bible had been through the battles and invasions of Saipan, Guam, Philippine Islands, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa during WWII from 1941 to 1945. She said she talked with Mr. Young about the Bible and he said he might be able to locate the family, so she hopes it might eventually get back to them.

Mrs. Dale announced that the Military Veterans Suicide Awareness Walk-A-Thon will take place on November 5, 2023, at Riverside Park. They are currently signing up walkers, accepting donations, and getting their sponsors. All of the proceeds from this event go to Dogs for Life and the Mental Health Association to help the Veterans who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Registration on the day of the Walk-A-Thon starts at 9:00 a.m. and the walk begins at 10:00 a.m., but people can preregister to walk, make donations, or become a sponsor by going to [ircgoldstarmoms.org](http://ircgoldstarmoms.org). She stated that checks can also be mailed to 6400 Nevis Court, Vero Beach, Florida 32967.

Mrs. Dale announced that two (2) local WWII Veterans turned 100 years old in August. She said Elmer Duncan's birthday was on August 4<sup>th</sup>, but he was unable to attend a birthday party. So instead, she and Mr. Young went to visit him where he lives to document his story. The other Veteran was Chuck Starcevich who turned 100 on August 19<sup>th</sup>. He attended a birthday party they had planned for him at the American Legion Post 39 and they had quite a few WWII Veterans in attendance. She said at 100 years old he walked into the American Legion without any assistance of a cane or walker. They had a great lunch and a cake for him and they sang happy birthday. She stated that she and Mr. Young have been doing periodic lunches with these wonderful WWII Veterans.

Mr. Matthews said that these Veterans saved the world and they deserve to be recognized.

## **9. NEXT MEETING DATE**

### **A) October 4, 2023**

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for October 4, 2023, at 9:30 a.m.

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:02 a.m.

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