

**VETERANS MEMORIAL ISLAND SANCTUARY
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Wednesday, September 7, 2022 – 9:30 a.m.
City Hall, Council Chambers, Vero Beach, Florida**

PRESENT: Chairman, John Michael Matthews; Members: Melissa Arndt, Michelle Dale and Carolyn Lange **Also Present:** City Attorney, John Turner; Assistant Director of Public Works, Richard Mutterback; and Senior Administrative Assistant, Rita Chartier

Excused Absence: 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) July 6, 2022

Mr. Matthews made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2022 Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee meeting. Mrs. Lange seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Tony Young explained that there are 90 men honored on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary, but four (4) are still mysteries. When they started researching these Veterans it was not a simple task because there was no central account or history on these Veterans. He said when Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary was dedicated there were about 50 cenotaphs that contained etched names on them. When they looked those names up in the military records there were instances where several Veterans from the same conflict had the same name. However, the story of Fred D. Coleman has finally been figured out. He explained that Mr. Coleman's family came to Vero Beach when he was young and Mr. Coleman enlisted in the Army in 1940. He continued by giving a brief account of Mr. Coleman's military service and how he came to be honored on the Island. He said that Mr. Coleman was awarded the Silver Star, but he does not know the story behind him receiving that.

5. NEW BUSINESS

A) Request for use of the Island by Wreaths Across America – Mr. Rick Lewis

Mr. Rick Lewis, Wreaths Across America, explained that in 1992 a gentleman out of Maine began the Arlington Cemetery wreath project and in 2005, a photo of the Cemetery with all the wreaths

went viral. People started asking him how they could do this in their communities to honor their local service members. In 2007, Wreaths Across America created their 501(c)3 and 2008 was the first year Wreaths Across America began their project and serviced just over 300 sites. This past year they serviced over 3,100 sites across the United States and in Europe and they laid out over 2.4 million wreaths. The live laurel wreaths are used to remember, honor and teach people in the community. He explained that volunteers are asked to read the inscription on the Veteran's marker, take a moment to think about that individual, say their name out loud, and then honor them by placing a wreath on their grave. In doing this, it keeps the service members with them and remembered. The most important part of this ceremony is to teach. They want to educate young people and those who do not know where their freedom comes from. This year National Wreaths Across America Day is on December 17, 2022. The cost of a wreath is \$15.00 and if people purchase them through one (1) of the groups for Crowley and Lewis on the website they get three (3) wreaths for every two (2) that are purchased. They are here today to ask permission to use Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary to lay wreaths and to hold a ceremony.

Mr. Joe Crowley, Wreaths Across America, stated that they will start with laying wreaths at Crestlawn Cemetery at 10:00 a.m. Then they will go to Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary and lay wreaths there at 11:30 a.m. The ceremony starts at 12:00 p.m., which coordinates with the ceremony at Arlington Cemetery and thousands of other ceremonies across the Country.

Mr. Matthews asked if all the wreaths for Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary were paid for by the Rotary Club of Vero Beach.

Mr. Lewis answered yes. He noted that countywide they are only about half way to their goal. They still need several hundred wreaths to take care of Crestlawn Cemetery. Last year they reached their goal of placing wreaths in every cemetery in Indian River County with the help of several organizations taking care of the cemeteries in Wabasso, Fellsmere, and Gifford. They placed over 2,600 wreaths last year and they would like to reach that goal again this year.

Mr. Matthews made a motion to approve the request from Wreaths Across America to use the Island to place wreaths and hold a ceremony on December 17, 2022. Mrs. Dale seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mrs. Lange asked if they have a website.

Mr. Lewis replied that locally they have two (2) facebook pages for *Wreaths Across America Indian River County* and the National website is *wreathscrossamerica.org*. People can put in their zip code to find their local group or location they want to donate to.

B) Flag Pole Lighting

Mr. Matthews stated that they received a generous offer from Mr. Harry Zuker of a new solar light to light the flag on Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary.

Mr. Richard Mutterback, Assistant Director of Public Works, explained that the light was too small for the size of the flagpole on the Island. It was designed more for a residential size flagpole. They also tried it on the flagpole at Young Park, but it was still not bright enough compared to the flood

lights. Now it is at the Public Works compound and they are trying it on the flagpole there, which is only about 14-feet.

Mr. Harry Zuker, City resident, said he appreciates helping where he can. He loves the Island and they are doing a great job with it. His father was a World War II (WWII) Veteran and he supports the military. He said that he was sorry the light did not work out, but solar lights are not as bright without using much larger solar panels.

C) Veterans Day Ceremony – November 11, 2022

Mr. Matthews stated that Veterans Day is usually celebrated on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, but the ceremony in Vero Beach will be at 9:00 a.m. and the Sebastian ceremony will be at 11:00 a.m. The Veterans Council of Indian River County is putting the ceremony together and is working on the program.

Mr. Matthews made a motion to approve the application to set aside November 11th for the Veterans Council to use the Island for the Veterans Day Ceremony. Mrs. Dale seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

6. OLD BUSINESS

A) Update on the Iraq and Afghanistan War State Memorial

Mr. Matthews said a couple of months ago the Iraq and Afghanistan War Memorial Foundation was contacting cities to find a location to host a monument to honor Floridians who served in the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. He stated that the Foundation came here and checked out Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary, but even though they thought the Island was a wonderful place, they chose another location.

B) Update on the Stage and World War II Tribute

Mr. Tony Young stated that the World War II (WWII) Memorial Committee put together a video to help them with the fundraising for the WWII tribute and stage and he would like to share it with them.

At this time the video was shown.

Mrs. Barbara Ruddy, WWII Memorial Committee, said she is helping with the fundraising for the WWII tribute and no amount is too large or too small.

Mr. Young stated that every step along the way will be done in tandem with the City of Vero Beach.

Mrs. Lange asked if they know of any WWII Veterans who are still alive in Indian River County.

Mr. Young replied that there is not a roster of the Veterans in Vero Beach.

Ms. Arndt stated that there are approximately 15,000 Veterans in Indian River County. She can only account for about eight (8) from WWII because that is all she has come in contact with.

Mr. Young said they would love to know all of the WWII Veterans from this area. He asked that the community please get in touch with Mr. John Matthews, Mrs. Barbara Ruddy, the Veterans Council or himself if anyone knows of a WWII Veteran that is living in Indian River County. They want them to be a part of the Veterans Day Ceremony and be recognized.

Mr. Matthews commented that they are reserving the first two (2) benches for the WWII Veterans and they will be honored during the ceremony.

Mr. Young explained that there are WWII Veterans who are unable to attend do to health concerns and others might have mobility issues, but they are willing to meet with these Veterans at any time and get them to the Island if they want to go there.

Mr. Mutterback recommended that the WWII Memorial Committee meet with Mr. Jason Jefferies, Planning Director, and a member of the City's engineering staff to review their plans, permitting, etc. and try to get as much done as they can prior to the November election.

C) American Gold Star Mothers of Indian River County Walk-A-Thon – November 6, 2022

Mrs. Dale said they are actively seeking sponsors, walkers and anyone who would like to donate in any way to the walk-a-thon. This cause is extremely important because they are helping Veterans who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The money they raise is donated to three (3) organizations; Dogs for Life, the Mental Health Association, and the Next Generation Veterans. They all have a strong interest in helping Veterans with PTSD. Their help sessions are unique because they have Veteran facilitators, which means a lot to the Veterans who are seeking help. Their facilitators know exactly what the Veterans are telling them and what they are going through. The Mental Health Association can pick up and provide additional help that some Veterans might need. The walk-a-thon will be on Sunday, November 6, 2022. Last year, between their sponsors and walkers they had 387 individuals involved with the fundraiser. The event takes place at Riverside Park and they will meet at the Grand Pavilion. Part of their walk goes through Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary, which makes it extremely solemn. People can contact them or find more information on their website at Ircgoldstarmoms.org. They can also be found on facebook or they can email her at Michdaleircgoldstarmoms@gmail.com.

Mrs. Dale announced that September 25, 2022, is American Gold Star Mother's and Family Day. It honors the Gold Star Mothers and families and gives them the opportunity to talk and remember their loved ones. There are numerous services that will take place across the United States for this National event. In Indian River County, their small group will go to Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary at 9:00 a.m. to be together and remember all their family members.

Mr. Matthews made a motion to accept the request to use the Island on September 25th for the American Gold Star Mother's and Family Day. Mrs. Lange seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

D) A Walk to Remember - Alzheimer and Parkinson Association of Indian River County - November 12, 2022

Mr. Matthews reminded everyone that the Alzheimer and Parkinson Association will be holding their Walk to Remember event on November 12th at Riverside Park.

Mr. Matthews stated that November 12th is also the Marine Corps Birthday Ball.

7. CHAIRMAN'S MATTERS

A) 9/11 Remembrance Day

Mr. Matthews said there is a walk scheduled for 9/11, but he does not know if they actually go onto Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary.

B) POW/MIA Day – September 16, 2022

Mr. Matthews said that POW/MIA Recognition Day is not always on the 16th of September, but on the 3rd Friday of September. The Island has a POW/MIA Memorial, but they do not hold a ceremony.

C) Update on the Memorial Service for Mr. Rip Wieler

Mr. Matthews said that Mr. Rip Wieler was one (1) of the founding members of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee and was a big part of creating the Ordinance that protects the Island. He was an Artillery Officer in the Marine Corps and served in Vietnam. His memorial service is also on November 12, 2022, the same day as the Walk to Remember event.

8. MEMBER'S MATTERS

Mrs. Dale shared a story of how she met a WWII Veteran and how that lead to other WWII Veterans becoming friends.

Mr. Matthews opened public comment on anything they discussed or on the items they approved.

Mrs. Ruddy said what is going on in this community is outstanding. She would like to see this information put into a video and shared with all of the schools to educate them.

9. NEXT MEETING DATE

A) October 5, 2022

The next meeting of the Veterans Memorial Island Sanctuary Advisory Committee is scheduled for October 5, 2022 at 9:30 a.m.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Today's meeting adjourned at 10:31 a.m.

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