

VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 20, 2008, 3:00 p.m.
Prosecutor's Office (Hilo) and Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)

Present

Members

Don Bennett
Carolle Brulee-Wilson
Penny Fox, Chair
George Mukai
George Yamamoto
John Young

Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)

Members

Antonio Gaspar
Minoru Hanato
Richard Highley
Robert Welter

Guests (Kona)

Boss Hanato

Ex-Officio (Hilo)

Patricia Engelhard, Director, P&R

Also Present (Hilo)

Nathalie Santos, Secretary
Herring Kalua - State Veterans Advisory Board - E HI Representative
Herbert Lum - State Veterans Advisory Board - W HI Representative
Keith Ribbentrop

Absent

Wendall Kekumu
Edward Lee, Vice Chair
Delbert Nishimoto
Gilbert Sampaia
Norman Stahl
Richard Stevens

Call to Order

Chairwoman Penny Fox called the meeting to order at 3:07 pm - (10) members present.

STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS MINUTES – February 14, 2008

- The minutes of the February 14, 2008 meeting were approved as submitted.

REPORT ON CEMETERIES – STATE VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Hawaii Island - East Hawaii Representative Mr. Herring Kalua

Hawaii Island - West Hawaii Representative Mr. Herb Lum

(Department of Defense - Engineering Report - Dated March 7, 2008 - Distributed at 3/20/08 Meeting - Copy Attached)

Mr. Herring Kalua - Report

Veterans Cemeteries I & II - Columbariums

Mr. Kalua reported that columbariums would be erected at Kauai, Molokai and East Hawaii Cemeteries I and II. Maui and Lanai have also been added to list.

Legislative Update

Mr. Kalua said he was unsure if the House Bill relating to providing maintenance funds for County of Hawaii Veterans Cemeteries passed or not. Mr. Lum thinks the Legislative Bills in both the House and Senate got deferred, but they will need to wait until the session ends.

Chairperson Fox asked if West Hawaii would be receiving additional columbariums. Director Engelhard responded that West Hawaii isn't listed because additional columbariums and an urn burial section are a part of the next segment of the Expansion Project which is due to begin either late this year or early next year.

Mr. Herb Lum - Report

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii

Mr. Lum reported that Phase IIB has been completed, but the final inspection is not due until the end of this month. There already was (1) burial in that field. There's a change order in process for the Lama Trees and rock barriers around the perimeter of the cemetery. There will be a bid opening in late July for the Phase IIC preliminary design phase, which is two months ahead of the original schedule of September 8th. This is to meet requirement of the deadline to submit a grant application to the VA by July 15th. After they receive the bid, construction is expected to take approximately (1) year.

Mr. Lum said both the Senate and House Bills to support the County of Hawaii's maintenance budget of \$167,000 has been deferred and it doesn't look like its going to go through. Suggests planning to have people testify next year on behalf of those bills. There is another bill anticipating transferring the administrative responsibilities of OVS from Department of Defense, under the Adjutant General to the Department of Health. It looks like that bill has also died for this session.

Mr. Lum reported that the OVS provided percentages of veterans statewide for informational purposes only. On the Big Island there are about 13% of all veterans in the State; City and County of Honolulu 73%, Kauai 5% and Maui 9%.

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii

Mr. Minoru Hanato read part of the attached Engineering Report (dated 3/7/08):

- *State Maintenance flew out to Kona and conducted training with the County of Hawaii cemetery operations personnel on burial procedures on February 25, 2008.*

Mr. Hanato said according to County cemetery workers, the state maintenance crew came to watch them dig a hole on the old side of the cemetery which is almost full and said they are doing a good job. They were supposed to come over and supervise the first burial on the new side, which they didn't do. The new side would include teaching the method of using new graveliners. Mr. Hanato said their concern has always been about the graves caving in. In Kona they only have a vibrator, but a compactor should be used which compacts it good. The vibrator only vibrates the top a few inches, when the next grave is dug the sides will slide in. Mr. Hanato said the new burial site (gravel all the way down) has a different ground consistency compared to the old burial site (dirt and all kinds of stuff).

Director Engelhard said arrangements weren't made for the state cemetery staff to come. Miles Okamura was supposed to come, but he left, so the other Herring Kalua came. There weren't any confirmed arrangements made with the State Cemetery. So State Cemetery staff did the best they could with what somebody else promised they would do, but without making arrangements with them first.

Mr. Kalua will request a follow up report on what happened when state maintenance came over.

Chairperson Fox also asked Mr. Kalua to check if they can correct problem by getting someone from state maintenance to go out and actually watch a burial in the proper area.

Mr. Lum asked Minoru Hanato if there is a problem with depths of burials for double burials? Mr. Hanato responded that Boss Hanato said since it was a single burial and there is no spouse, they didn't go all the way down so he is unable to comment at this time.

Mr. Highley commented that we aren't complaining, but because they are far away from the OVS and County Maintenance facility, we're just making the County aware of conditions at the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery to avoid having future problems with burials.

Mr. Highley said he noticed that on the Engineering Report - Phase II-C bid opening is anticipated in mid June, item 3 under Cemetery states:

- *The consultant is making corrections and additions to the Master Plan*

He asked Mr. Lum if the corrections/additions would come before the bid opening and if Design Partners and Office of Veteran Affairs would be presenting the Master Plan to the veterans of West Hawaii to keep everybody on the same page. Mr. Highley shared that volunteers would like to proceed with projects, but they first need to review plans to avoid conflicts such as the problem they had with the greenhouse.

Mr. Lum said there isn't any meeting scheduled, the greenhouse problem was due to lack of communication. We assume that OVS knows all the details because they were at the cemetery and should've seen. The point is if we have an issue, we should define it, put it in writing and bring it up to OVS. If you think a meeting is necessary within the timeframe that is available, request a meeting and he will relay request to Mark Moses, Director of OVS. It's a matter of communication.

Mr. Highley said aside from the greenhouse, Phase II is scheduled to be completed at the end of next year. If we can review the master plan instead of the proposed plan, we can continue with projects to improve the cemetery by utilizing volunteer efforts.

Mr. Lum said the master plan is done, but they are talking about ironing things with the VA and if it goes back and forth, its a question of practicability. If you feel its important enough, define it and ask for a meeting, but when the machinery goes on, it doesn't come up with our own schedules. They are trying to move up the schedule a bit, but if you want to hold up the schedule to have a meeting, he will put in that request.

Director Engelhard said if you see the master plan, you don't like it and request a change, it is going to hold the process up.

Mr. Highley said it wasn't his point to see the master plan, the reason is not to change or make objections and hold it up, only to work around the master plan where things can be developed outside the plan. It doesn't even have to be a meeting, we would just like to see what it will look like. He gave an example of a proposal in the past that Representative Cindy Evans wanted to build a war memorial at the cemetery. They wouldn't want that to be in conflict with what the VA was planning.

Director Engelhard will email the conceptual plan for Veterans Cemetery III - Phase II-B to John Grogan, President of the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Development & Expansion Association (WHVC).

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii

Reforestation Project

Mr. Gaspar reported that he went to the cemetery last Monday and the trees that were planted along the side of the road look great. He doesn't know when the next planting will be.

Mr. Minoru Hanato shared that Dr. Stevens had a group of marines from Pohakuloa Training Area plant trees this past Sunday.

Mr. Lum said there were 30 marines from the Third Marine Regiment and a group of veterans helping with that planting. They planted 57 trees on Palm Sunday.

Veterans Cemeteries I and II Columbariums

Chairperson Fox asked if anyone had reports from their veterans organizations as to the preference of what they would like to see done with the columbariums at East Hawaii Veterans Cemeteries I and II.

Director Engelhard said we have been asking for reports for approximately six months and said a decision has been made to tear them down.

Mr. Young said he reported that VFW wanted them torn down about 4 months ago.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

No Reports.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Training Notice "Sunshine Law"

Chairperson Fox said that Nathalie mailed training notices out to members. There will be a Sunshine Law Training Session presented by Corporation Counsel offered to Members of Boards & Commissions:

April 17th - Kona Liquor Control Conference Room (9:30 am to 12 pm)

May 1st - Hilo Aupuni Center Conference Room (9:00 am to 11:30 am)

Director Engelhard said the training is about what you have to do to have a meeting of a government board or commission. There will also be a "government records law training" at a later date in both Hilo and Kona.

Chairperson Fox said if anyone would like to attend, please inform Nathalie as soon as possible so she can register you for the session.

State Veterans Home

Keith Ribbentrop wanted to advertise the new Hilo State Veterans Home which use to cost \$311 a day to live in, but since they've received certification by medicare and medicaid that is no longer the case. It can now cost up to -0- per day depending on finances, there is no longer just one answer to the daily cost. They are desperately trying to bring in (20) veterans in order to pursue VA Certification. They have to have 20 people in residence for 30 days before the VA will come in and do certification. As soon as that certification is done, we'll receive per diem from VA for both State Home and Adult Day Health Program. If members know any veteran in need of a skilled nursing facility, please call them at 961-1500.

There were 7 people in residence when they received certification on the 4th of March. Avalon Corporation which is the manager/contractor said to start bringing in more people so they are now up to 12.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on April 17, 2008 which is the same day as the Sunshine Law Training in Kona, but training is held in the morning and the Veterans Advisory Committee meeting begins at 3pm.

Meeting will again be held in Hilo at the Office of the Prosecutor and in Kona at the Mayor's Office.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 3:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathalie Santos, Secretary