

**VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday, June 15, 2006**  
**County Council Room and Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)**  
**3:00 p.m.**

**Present**

**Members**

Don D. Bennett  
Richard Highley  
Roy Hinokawa  
Louis Kaoiwi  
Wendall Kekumu  
George Mukai  
Hideo Segawa  
George Yamamoto

**Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)**

**Members**

Richard Stevens

**Guests (Kona)**

Antonio Gaspar  
Boss Hanato  
Minoru Hanato  
Herb Lum  
Alfredo Tobias

**Guests (Hilo)**

Delbert Nishimoto

**Ex-Officio (Hilo)**

Patricia Engelhard, Director, P&R  
Keith Ribbentrop, OVS

**Also Present (Hilo)**

Nathalie Santos, Secretary  
Herring Kalua

**Absent**

Denny Austen  
Penny Fox  
Morris Kihara  
Patrick Pavao  
Gilbert Sampaia

**CALL TO ORDER**

- Chairman Richard Highly called the meeting to order at 3:10 pm.

## **STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

### **Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii**

#### **Columbarium Vases**

Mr. Minoru Hanato reported that (75) columbarium vases were received, (100) were ordered. He said they may have to fill marble plate to mount it and wondered if they need a county employee there while performing that task. Director Engelhard will check and get back to Minoru on whether or not a county employee should be present.

## **PREVIOUS MEETINGS MINUTES – MAY 18, 2006**

- The minutes of the May 18, 2006 meeting will stand in record per Chairman Highley since there were no corrections as submitted.

## **REPORT ON CEMETERIES – STATE VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD**

### **Hawaii Island Representative Mr. Herring Kalua**

Mr. Herring Kalua reported that he met with veterans in West Hawaii regarding their concerns relating to the meeting held with Colonel Cruickshank and DAGS representatives. He also shared with the West Hawaii veterans the plans he received at the June 2<sup>nd</sup> State Veterans Advisory Board Meeting. The veterans have major concerns relating to those plans and have requested changes.

Mr. Kalua submitted those requested changes along with the letter from Mr. Highley to the state. The state has concerns, so he recommended they set up another meeting to discuss plans further.

Chairman Highley said letters were written by Vice Chairman Stevens and himself to Mr. Morita of DAGS addressing these concerns. Chairman Highley again read the email response from Major Mitsuyoshi dated May 16<sup>th</sup>, which was also shared at last month's meeting.

Chairman Highley said he wrote to Representative Cindy Evans regarding the use of the \$300,000 since he was concerned if it could be used in such a manner. Representative Evans response sounds like she is well aware of what is going on and doesn't object to it. Representative Evans also wrote that the weather in Hilo is totally different from Kona, the hot and dry weather can be unbearable, second the \$300,000 by the State Legislature has to be encumbered by June 30<sup>th</sup> or funds are lost. Chairman Highley says he hopes funding issue has been handled, as obtaining those funds is the current priority.

Chairman Highley shared he was informed that \$150,000 would go towards design of cemetery and the other \$150,000 would go towards installation of 56 grave liners. We're happy to hear that the 56 grave liners will be going in, however, we feel that a lot more grave liners could be put in if they utilize funds in the area we suggested. In order for the funds to be encumbered, the contract had to be out so it looks like the grave liners will be put in where state projected. As far as other concerns relating to design of chapel and other facilities, hoping the state can work with veteran community to find out what they would like to have there.

Chairman Highley read an email Ralph Morita of DAGS sent to Vice Chairman Stevens:

Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS), Public Works Division Staff provide technical support assistance for the implementation of Capital Improvement Program (CIP) funded work at all the State Veteran Cemetery facilities. All requests including West Hawaii Cemetery Improvement Projects need to be coordinated through the State of Hawaii, Department of Defense, Office of Veterans Services.

In accordance with the primary concerns raised by the West Hawaii (Kona) Veterans Council Advisory Board members during the field meeting on April 20<sup>th</sup>, there is an immediate need for installation of additional "grave liners", because the existing soil is non-cohesive and do not jeopardize any of the available project funds. DOD and DAGS staff expedited coordination work for West Hawaii (Kona) Veterans Cemetery Improvement Projects that provided the "best use" of \$300,000 total in current available state funds that lapse on June 30<sup>th</sup> and the 1.2 million in federal funds from the US Veterans Administration accordingly. West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Phase II-A DAGS Job No. 11-14-7244 which is for the installation of grave liners is out to bid and will encumber about \$150,000 in lapsing state construction funds by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

Chairman Highley said that means grave liner project is already out to bid which means that the design is the original plan. Stopping that now would lapse the funds and it would be lost which is Representative Cindy Evans concern.

West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Phase II-B Job No. 11-14-7244 which involves planning work for development of a revised master plan document based on plans with feedback from DOD, DAGS and the West Hawaii Veterans Council Advisory Board that USVA staff supports/approves the design for design work permit for long term CIP funded improvement projects to be constructed using the 1.2 million dollars available federal grant funds from the USVA.

It also noted the request to relocate the additional grave liners to be installed under DAGS cannot be accommodated at this time because proposed changes to the existing master plan document which was previously approved will have to wait until work on the revised master plan document is completed. The bidding process will have to be terminated and termination will cause about \$150,000 in available state funds to lapse.

Chairman Highley shared at the Kona meeting held with state representatives, Mr. Morita offered their West Hawaii non-profit group to apply for a grants-in-aid. Vice Chairman Stevens wrote emails on April 25<sup>th</sup> and June 6<sup>th</sup> to Mr. Morita to get more info on grants

and has not yet received a response. Chairman Highley asked Mr. Kalua to follow-up on grants with Mr. Morita.

Vice Chairman Stevens shared information, but it was inaudible. After adjusting the microphone, he continued: In speaking for the entire veterans community Dr. Stevens said the main point is the state is not paying any attention to veterans. Plans they are proposing have some serious flaws in it and the state seems unwilling to discuss any possible changes. Its like the train has left the station, is rolling down the tracks and we have been left behind. This is causing a great deal of concern in the Veterans community. Our concerns have not been addressed at all. Hoping that through the Mayor's Veterans Advisory Committee, the Mayor can get involved. We have been trying to go through all political representatives including Senator Inouye, Senator Akaka and Representative Case yesterday up at PTA. Hoping that there is a way that the state can discuss concerns.

P&R Director Engelhard shared that part of the reason that you're not getting anything is that you're not telling the County anything. She said that she is only hearing about these concerns today and the County will be responsible for maintaining this cemetery. The County needs to know what's being proposed. She was unable to attend the meeting that she was invited to in Kona, however, she knows nothing about what has happened subsequent to that meeting.

Vice Chairman Stevens said that the Chairman has information that he can share to bring the County up-to-date.

P&R Director Engelhard said its very important that the landlord knows what is going on.

Vice Chairman Stevens said that County could be the key to getting the best use of taxpayers money on this project.

Member Louis Kaiwi stressed the importance of keeping Director Engelhard informed of what is going on because when the VA calls her if she doesn't know what you folks are trying to do she wouldn't be able to answer. Everything needs to go through the Director of P&R. He begged members to go through P&R and keep Director Engelhard in the loop.

Vice Chairman Stevens reported that Chairman Highley has been keeping everyone copied in his letter of June 8<sup>th</sup> including Director Engelhard. Mr. Kaiwi has made an excellent point and we will definitely keep P&R informed.

Mr. Delbert Nishimoto (Field Representative for Daniel K. Inouye) said he just heard yesterday about the problems. Mr. Herb Lum gave him copies of letters submitted, listed on the letters are James Nakatani and Chris Abbott from Congressman Case's office. He asked if they have responded to the letter. He also said yesterday was the first they heard, so please put Senator Inouye on the list, and do not grumble after the fact when we are so close to the deadline.

Chairman Highley said he has been corresponding with James Nakatani of Congressman's Case office. He will try to communicate with everyone.

Mr. Herring Kalua, Hawaii Island Representative on the State Veterans Advisory Committee said that we identified the problems and tried to put everything together. We got to be on one team and work together. Very proud of the West Hawaii Veterans community team, he will be a part of that team and the County will be the main part of that team. He said he doesn't like to hear excuses, if he cannot make things happen, he will resign. Things are working well, just need to work on communication and things will happen.

### **Veterans Cemeteries I and II - Columbariums**

Mr. Kalua told Major Neal Mitsuyoshi while he was here to check on the grass at Cemetery II, about the committee's recommendation to install a columbarium like Cemetery III at Cemetery II. This item will be discussed at the July State Veterans Advisory Meeting and he will have a report to this committee next month.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **VETERANS CEMETERY II – EXPANSION PROJECT**

Director Engelhard reported that Veterans II is still being worked on (weed removal and drainage issues) and as previously reported is expected to be completed by July or August.

### **VETERANS CEMETERY III – WEST HAWAII**

#### **Grave Liner Project - Grave Sizes**

Director Engelhard reported that the grave liner project is moving ahead, however, tried to make a change because the rules state that the gravesites should be 4' X 9'. The grave liners may be 3' X 8', but will still try to make plot sizes 4' X 9'. The issue with that is that culturally people in Hawaii have problems regarding stepping on graves and people spend more time at cemeteries with their loved ones than other people may, so felt that the gravesite size should remain the same at West Hawaii as East Hawaii. We may not be successful and may need to change rules to accommodate the size of the graves, nationally grave sizes are 3' X 8'.

Chairman Highley asked if they will be putting in the 56 grave liners at one time and Director Engelhard responded that her understanding is that they will be putting in as many as they can. They haven't gotten the actual contract amount so all they can do is estimate until project is put out to bid and find out what cost will be.

### **(Reforestation Project)**

Vice Chairman Stevens reported they are still waiting for the next part of the fence to be put up, a great part of the makai side is in so far, very concerned about goats getting in to the planted areas. Trying to move it quickly to get the fence completed. Had to

accelerate planting plans recently because of the plant supplier's need. Received much cooperation from P&R staff especially June Luke, and including Dee Ann and James.

Vice Chairman Stevens said that (10) big trees were planted beside the road today for the first large tree planting. He invited people to join them on Saturday for another planting project, which will begin at 9 am and lunch to follow at 11 am.

### **Hoe Ram**

Chairman Highley asked about the possibility of obtaining a hoe ram for West Hawaii as discussed at last month's meeting.

Director Engelhard responded that they will submit a budget request for a hoe ram attachment, and if possible will try to get it during this fiscal, but the deadline of June 5th has passed. The budget cycle starts in August and gets approved by February. If it's not possible this fiscal year, the next potential is in next year's budget - July 1, 2007. Another piece of equipment that will be requested next year is a Caterpillar Backhoe to dig graves in the new side of the cemetery. In the future we will need different equipment to maintain both separate sides of the cemetery. One with a hoe ram for the old side and one with Caterpillar treads for the new side, which will have grave liners.

In summary, Director Engelhard said can't get a hoe ram right away, but will try as soon as possible.

### **VETERANS CEMETERY I**

#### **Pavilion - Open Wall for Viewing**

Chairman Highley asked the status of this item, which was discussed during the May 18<sup>th</sup> meeting. Director Engelhard said wall removal project will probably have to go out to bid, therefore, it gets put on the list with other projects. Since its not a critical matter (its critical only for viewing purposes during ceremonies which occur a couple times a year) not critical compared to the court case for ADA projects so its not going to happen right away.

Chairman Highley asked if Mr. Kalua examined possible funding sources for this project. He will check and report at the next meeting.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **VETERANS CEMETERY III - WEST HAWAII**

##### **Gates - Locks**

Chairman Highley said that Keith Ribbentrop of OVS suggested he contact State Parks District Superintendent Glenn Taguchi. Mr. Glenn Taguchi told him that the State has (3) gates to be locked - 1) Kua Bay; 2) Kekaha Kai Beach Park; and 3) Old Kona Airport. He will be trying to contract a security company to lock those gates at 7:00 pm at night.

Chairman Highley said this is not something that the committee or Kona veterans can decide, the County has to decide. He gave information to Director Engelhard who will have the final say and if interested she can contact Mr. Taguchi directly. Director Engelhard commented that 7:00 pm is a good time because there is no need for anyone to be there when it's dark.

### **EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS**

NO REPORT

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **Memorial Day Ceremony – West Hawai‘i**

Mr. Minoru Hanato thanked everyone for their help during the Memorial Day Service held at the West Hawaii Cemetery and for their attendance.

#### **Memorial Day Ceremony - East Hawaii - Ceremony at Kalakaua Park**

Chairman Highley asked if there was better representation at this year's Memorial Day Ceremony held at Kalakaua Park and Keith Ribbentrop responded that there were at least 18 people there, numbers way up from only 3 last year.

#### **Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii - Requested Changes to Master Plan**

Mr. Minoru Hanato asked Chairman Highley to give the envelope with plans of the States plan and the West Hawaii Veterans proposed changes to Director Engelhard. Chairman Highley did not bring it with him, but will get that as well as other information previously discussed to Director Engelhard.

#### **Birthday Party for US Army at Pohakuloa Training Area (PTA)**

##### **Honoree - Guest Speaker - Member George Mukai**

Mr. Delbert Nishimoto announced that there was a birthday party at Pohakuloa for the US Army - 231<sup>st</sup> Birthday yesterday. The honoree was Mr. George Mukai who celebrated his 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday on the same day and served as Guest Speaker. (Members applauded Mr. Mukai to honor him.) Mr. Kaoiwi shared that Mr. Mukai also celebrated his 55<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary. Chairman Highley thanked Mr. Mukai for representing veterans so well.

### **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, July 20, 2006, at 3:00 p.m. in the Hawai‘i County Councilroom and video-conferencing at the Kona Mayor’s Office.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 4:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathalie Santos  
Secretary