

VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 15, 2007, 3:00 p.m.
Hawaii County Council Room (Hilo) and Kona Mayor's Office (Via
Videoconferencing)

Present

Members

Don Bennett
Penny Fox
Roy Hinokawa
Edward Lee
George Mukai
Delbert Nishimoto
Gilbert Sampaia
John Young

Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)

Members

Antonio Gaspar
Minoru Hanato
Richard Highley
Robert Welter

Guests (Kona)

David R. Carlson

Ex-Officio (Hilo)

Patricia Engelhard, Director, P&R

Also Present (Hilo)

Nathalie Santos, Secretary
Herring Kalua - State Veterans Advisory Board - E HI Representative
Herb Lum - State Veterans Advisory Board - W HI Representative
Barbara Cooper - Wreaths Across America - East Hawaii

Absent

Wendall Kekumu
Norman Stahl
Richard Stevens
George Yamamoto

Call to Order

Chairman Highley asked Vice Chair Penny Fox to conduct the meeting in Hilo since he attended the meeting at the Kona Mayor's Office. Vice Chairwoman Fox called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm - (12) members present.

STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No Statements from the public.

INTRODUCTION

P&R Director Patricia Engelhard introduced Deputy Corporation Counsel Julie Mecklenburg as the new attorney signed to the Veterans Advisory Committee.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS MINUTES – October 18, 2007

- The minutes of the October 18, 2007 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

Veterans Cemetery - Maintenance Funds

Mr. Herring Kalua confirmed that the OVS Director used the funds received from the legislature for maintenance of the cemeteries to purchase graveliners for all cemeteries throughout the state. He will ask Director Engelhard to provide budget proposal again so he and Mr. Lum can present to the legislature and work together to obtain additional funding for maintenance and other needs statewide.

Veterans Cemeteries I and II - Columbariums

Mr. Kalua reported they would try to order new columbariums through the legislature.

Vice Chair Fox asked if they would purchase the same temporary kind as Veterans Cemetery III in West Hawaii. Mr. Kalua confirmed that was correct.

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii - Landscaping Project

Lama Tree

Mr. Lum reported that all is going well. The result is that the VA Arborist approved leaving the tree in its place. Tree will be saved and volcanic rock will be placed around it.

Phase II - B - Restoration of Burial Field

Mr. Lum reported that burial field has been excavated and refilled. Conversation with Major Mitsuyoshi indicates that project may be ahead of time in terms of completing the burial field, however, some of the members on the West side may have comments.

Mr. Lum said he received a copy of the October 5th Engineering Report at last weeks Board Meeting, he had not seen it before and was shocked. He read from report: "A decision has been made to completely abandon development of Phase II-C work on the south side of the cemetery. This decision was made based on the adamant position by the VA to develop the left side of the property."

After reading the report Mr. Lum called Major Mitsuyoshi right away. Major Mitsuyoshi stated definitively that it does not mean the work scheduled for the restrooms, committal shelter, etc. is being stopped. He was referring to the other activities on the south side burial grounds. VA wants the concentration to be on the north side, which makes sense because that's where the restrooms and maintenance shed will be. At this point after burial field #2 is finished we will see the logical priority. Mr. Lum will follow up again, but was told that it's not to be construed that they will stop the work on aspects of Phase II-C.

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii - Update on Expansion Project

Mr. Minoru Hanato reported that he went to the cemetery today and contractors spread cinder soil on the new burial area and are working on the waterline.

Instructions for Maintenance Staff - Digging New Area

Mr. Minoru Hanato asked if P&R maintenance employees would receive instructions on digging the new area to install liners. He said if they don't receive instructions on compacting the material holding the liners, when they dig grave right next, the grave could cave in.

Director Engelhard said the contractors assured her that they were compacting as they went, so that shouldn't be a problem.

Mr. Hanato said he did witness the contractors compacting the ground, however, after they dig the hole, put in the graveliners and casket, and cover with material there should be instructions on how to compact so that when they dig the hole next, it doesn't slide into the other side.

Director Engelhard will ask DAGS to provide those instructions.

West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Development & Expansion Association Exploring Drilling a Well

Mr. Lum shared that there was a West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Development & Expansion Association Meeting a week ago with well drillers. The company they met with will submit different optional proposals to include cost of drilling itself, pumping systems, storage facilities, distribution system, power generation - whether its solar, gas, propane or electrical generators. He emphasized at this point it is only for information and exploration. He stressed that the committee is in discussion to study various options, costs, and to determine whether or not it's feasible to go ahead with drilling.

Strategic Plan

Mr. Lum said the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Development & Expansion Association is in the process of completing a strategic plan under the guidance of a strategic plan consultant. A significant statement of the plan defines and formulizes the respective responsibilities of the OVS, State and County and the coordination and

conduct of operations with these organizations. No ifs and buts about keeping these organizations involved in what the cemetery association is doing, particularly in those projects that have been initiated by the Association. The plan will be finalized shortly.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii

Reforestation Project

Mr. Gaspar reported that Dr. Stevens would schedule the next workday sometime in January. The last planting was held on September 29th. The plants look very healthy.

Mr. Highley again suggested that Dr. Stevens attend the next Veterans Advisory Committee meeting to update members on the Reforestation Project.

Vice Chair Fox suggested that someone ask Dr. Stevens to attend. Mr. Highley said he would invite Dr. Stevens to the next meeting.

Water Allotment

Director Engelhard said she received a response from Kukio contact person Kevin Hinkle on November 12th relating to water at Kukio. Mr. Hinkle said they would be able to commit to 10,000 gallons per day. Their commitment is for 3,600 gallons of non-potable water and 4,200 gallons of potable water. That has been demanded of them by the state and they are willing to provide that amount. They think they can come up with at least 10,000 gallons and possibly more, but they still haven't gone through their entire water system yet so they're asking us to wait. Mr. Hinkle stated in his email "I feel fairly confident we will be able to accommodate this request."

Director Engelhard feels that 10,000 gallons should be enough to accommodate what we are doing now, but it may not be enough to take care of the trees all the time.

Veterans Cemeteries I and II

Columbariums

Director Engelhard said that members of this committee were to discuss columbariums for Veteran Cemeteries I and II with their organizations and return with their recommendation. She asked if members had any reports.

Vice Chair Fox asked if committee members had an opportunity to find out if veterans of their organizations would prefer columbariums or having an area for urn burials. She said DAV Chapter 9 has not had a meeting yet, she will discuss at the next meeting scheduled for this coming Saturday.

Mr. Young reported that the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) organization said as long as we have room for urn burials we don't need columbariums and liked the idea of the monument wall for veterans whose ashes have been spread elsewhere.

Mr. Young said he is not the representative of the Marine Corp League, but their representative wasn't present so he brought subject up and members had the same feelings as VFW.

Wreaths Across America Project

Barbara Cooper (East Hawaii Liaison) shared that as of last night they collected \$9,900.00 which accounts for 660 wreaths which will be placed at Veterans Cemeteries I and II. Funds are still coming in, but wreaths will not cover the 4,018 gravesites at both cemeteries, however, it's a good start for the first year. We may receive additional wreaths, depending on the number of extra sponsorships they get on the mainland, which may be divided among all the veteran cemeteries.

Barbara asked members if someone in their veterans groups would like to speak during the ceremony to please contact her to be put on the program. She is also looking for people to present the special wreaths for each branch of the military. Hoping to get two representatives from each branch to carry the wreath, one veteran and one active duty person dressed in uniform, holding flag for their branch of military.

Vice Chair Fox has a veteran representative for the Merchant Marines. Barbara Cooper asked if they could also get a Merchant Marine Flag since obtaining flags is difficult.

Barbara said she spoke to veterans visiting graves of their widows at Cemetery II who said they feel left out since all of the ceremonies were held at Veterans Cemetery I. For the Wreaths Across America Project she is trying to incorporate both cemeteries into ceremony by getting a speaker system or as someone suggested getting a radio station to broadcast live. She checked with KHBC to see if Myna Bird was willing to, but they don't have the technology so they said maybe next year. Broadcasting would also be a way for widows who can't get to the cemetery to listen to the ceremony.

Barbara said she will link both cemeteries by having high school band students from both Waiakea and Hilo do echo taps set up from Veterans I, spaced across the baseball fields at the Hilo Boys and Girls Club and up to Veterans II. They will stop the baseball games for this part of the program. She said the general wreath lying will begin at 10 am and the ceremony begins at noon.

Barbara reported that the Civil Air Patrol Unit of West Hawaii is organizing the ceremony at Veterans Cemetery III. The only wreaths to be presented there will be for the (7) branches of the military. Contact person for West Hawaii is Valerie Hoke.

Mr. Highley said he spoke to Joy Hofer who won't be able to do the ceremony due to a death in her family. The Civil Air Patrol unit took it over and asked him to be the speaker. The program is scheduled to begin at 7 am at Veterans Cemetery III.

Mr. Highley said Mr. David Carlson just reported there are (50) wreaths for Cemetery III.

Graveliners

Mr. Delbert Nishimoto shared a sample of a miniature graveliner that will be used at all veteran's cemeteries.

Director Engelhard reported that the OVS would be sending over (30) graveliners per quarter to be stored here whenever they can get a C-17 to transport.

Estimated (30) per quarter needed based on current number of burials - 10 per month - (3) for West Hawaii and (7) for East Hawaii. Graveliners are stackable and don't take much space. First shipment expected before the end of the year.

Cost for Maintenance of Cemeteries

Mr. Highley asked if the amount for maintenance of the cemeteries for this island was increased to \$100,000.

Director Engelhard said that information is incorrect. The actual cost is close to \$160,000 and the County still receives only \$22,500 from the state. She said we would again ask for more this legislative session; whether or not we get it is another story.

Director Engelhard said Representative Cindy Evans put in money for us, however, instead of giving it to the County for maintenance, it went to graveliners for all of the cemeteries throughout the state.

NEW BUSINESS

Elections

RESULTS - 2008 Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

CHAIRPERSON - Penny Fox

VICE CHAIRPERSON - Edward Lee

Flags at Veteran's Cemeteries - Should be flown 1/2 Staff during Ceremonies

Mr. Nishimoto said he attends services and ceremonies at Veterans Cemetery I and noticed that the flags are flown full staff during ceremonies. It happened both during Memorial Day and Veterans Day Ceremonies. The flag should be flown 1/2 staff during the ceremony and then full staff when done. He suggested making it a rule or SOP for maintenance employees so they know whenever there is a ceremony; the flag should be flown 1/2 staff.

OVS - Engineering Office

Mr. Nishimoto asked Mr. Kalua and Mr. Lum (Big Island representatives on the State Veterans Advisory Board) to ask OVS who will oversee design and engineering work for Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii Project during the absence of Major Mitsuyoshi who will be deploying to Kuwait in June 2008. Mr. Nishimoto said when Major Mitsuyoshi deployed to Iraq around 4 years ago all projects came to a stand still.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on January 17, 2008. The Hilo location will change to the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, at Aupuni Center (same building as the Department of Parks and Recreation). Entrance facing Ace Hardware. Please contact Nathalie with any agenda items (2) weeks prior to meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathalie Santos

Secretary