

VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, November 17, 2005
County Council Room and Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)
3:00 p.m.

Present

Members

Denny Austen
Penny Fox
Richard Highley
Roy Hinokawa
Louis Kawai
Wendall Kekumu
George Mukai
Gilbert Sampaia
Hideo Segawa
Richard Stevens
George Yamamoto

Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)

Members

None

Guests (Kona)

Boss Hanato
Minoru Hanato
Herb Lum
Joe Pretsch
Lee Pretsch
Dick Scritchfield
Alfred Tobias

Ex-Officio (Hilo)

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

Also Present (Hilo)

Nathalie Santos, Secretary

Absent

Don D. Bennett
Paul Johnston
Morris Kihara
Patrick Pavao

NEW MEMBERS - SWORN IN

P & R Director Patricia Engelhard conducted a swearing in ceremony for the following two new members:

Mr. Don Bennett of HIVM, Inc.

Dr. Richard Stevens of Military Order of the Purple Heart

Call to Order

- Chairman Kaouiwi called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm.

STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

OVS Representative Keith Ribbentrop thanked P&R staff for assistance at the Veterans Day Ceremony and for the performance of the Hawaii County Band.

Mr. George Mukai thanked the County for the maintenance and preparation of Cemetery I for the Annual Veterans Day Ceremony, however, a portion of the mowing was incomplete at Veterans Cemetery II.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS MINUTES – OCTOBER 20, 2005

- The minutes of the October 20, 2005 meeting were approved as submitted.

REPORT ON CEMETERIES – STATE VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Hawaii Island Representative Mr. Herring Kalua reported that OVS Director Ed Cruickshank should be contacting P&R Director Engelhard to schedule a meeting to discuss various concerns including funding and engineering problems due to the constant change in staff. Governor Lingle has signed the bill to release design funds for West Hawaii Cemetery III - \$25,000 for Design of Committal shelter and Columbaria.

Mr. Highley apologized for being tardy to the meeting and thanked Mr. Kalua for his help with the columbarium. He shared that he is happy the \$25,000 was released for the design of Phase II and requested to see design plans as soon as completed.

Veterans Cemetery III – West Hawaii – Temporary Columbarium

Mr. Kalua said the Veteran volunteers did an excellent job helping to install the temporary columbarium. Currently addressing concern that the empty holes for plaques may have bee nests in them.

Veterans Day Ceremony – West Hawaii

Mr. Kalua thanked P&R employees for preparing the cemetery for the Veterans Day Ceremony – the grounds are well kept.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

VETERANS CEMETERY II – EXPANSION PROJECT

Director Engelhard said nothing new to report; the County has not yet accepted the project, it's still incomplete.

VETERANS CEMETERY III – WEST HAWAII

(Reforestation Project)

Dr. Richard Stevens reported that the second major planting was done on November 5th and will be held every two months over the next year. On the 5th there were 100 volunteers including a few active duty military personnel and plant restoration employees from Pohakuloa Training Area, UH students, veterans, families, etc. Volunteers lined up

shoulder to shoulder at the base of the Pu'u and dug out fountain grass, then planted large Hawaiian trees which is creating an instant forest in the middle of the cemetery. He thanked all volunteers for their participation.

VETERANS CEMETERY III – WEST HAWAII – FLAG POLE LIGHTING

Mr. Richard Highley reported that at the last West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Expansion Development Association Meeting he found out, thanks to Chairman Kaiwi, that Mayor Kim has approved funding for the lighting and HELCO is willing to do installation. Will work on getting factors together.

SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT – COLUMBARIUMS

Chairman Kaiwi said he spoke to Patrick Pavao about the Columbariums at Veterans Cemeteries I and II. Their suggestion is to write a letter to the state OVS Director recommending that they make changes to cover each individual niche instead of having one cover for 4 niches as in original design.

Mr. George Mukai said that he knows the status of the columbarium at Veterans Cemetery I, but wanted to know about Veterans II.

Chairman Kaiwi said that Veterans II located near the committal shelter also needs a gate and a plate for individual niches to avoid tampering. It also has one cover for every four (4) niches.

Action

Mr. Highley volunteered to write the letter to the state requesting that they make improvements to the columbariums at Veterans I and II.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Kaiwi relinquished chairmanship to Vice Chairman Denny Austen to bring up the following concern.

Reforestation Project – Grant Funds

Mr. Kaiwi said he heard that there are problems with the funds for the reforestation project and making payment to the contractor, since (3) bids were needed prior to services rendered.

Dr. Stevens reported that he and Mr. Highley just today attended a meeting with Director Engelhard to discuss funds. Director Engelhard is investigating possibility of turning funds (both from federal grant and from Council Member Virginia Isbell) over as grants-in-aid to the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Expansion Development Association in order to begin the next phase of the fencing project.

Mr. Highley added that the County is required to follow procurement laws.

Mr. Kaiwi suggested that since the association is a 501(c)-3, funds could be transferred to association and members should be accountable instead of the County.

Vice Chairman Austen returned chairmanship to Louis Kaiwi.

ELECTIONS

Chairman - Nominations

Chairman Kaiwi asked for nominations for new Chairperson.

Richard Highley nominated Denny Austen. Denny declined.

Denny Austen nominated Richard Highley. Richard suggested nominating someone who has been a member for a longer amount of time. Following a short discussion, Mr. Highley accepted the nomination and Penny Fox seconded it.

Chairman Kaiwi asked for any more nominations from the floor. There were none, nominations were closed for Chairmanship.

Vice-Chairman - Nominations

Denny Austen nominated Roy Hinokawa. Roy declined.

George Yamamoto nominated Gilbert Sampaia and Wendall Kekumu seconded that nomination. Gilbert declined.

Penny Fox nominated Wendall Kekumu, but he declined because his term expires on December 31, 2005.

Denny Austen nominated George Mukai. George declined.

Richard Highley nominated Dr. Richard Stevens. Dr. Stevens asked if it's possible to serve as Vice Chair and attend meetings in Kona. Director Engelhard responded that it is possible. Dr. Stevens also asked if members would be okay with having two people from the west side, and asked if it shouldn't be more balanced. The response was that officers have both been from the east side before and it is okay. Penny Fox seconded the nomination of Dr. Richard Stevens as Vice Chairman. Dr. Stevens accepted the nomination.

ELECTION RESULTS

MR. RICHARD HIGHLEY ELECTED CHAIRMAN

DR. RICHARD STEVENS ELECTED VICE-CHAIRMAN

All in attendance unanimously voted for Richard Highley to serve as Chairman of the Hawaii County Veterans Advisory Committee.

All in attendance unanimously voted for Dr. Richard Stevens to serve as Vice-Chairman of the Hawaii County Veterans Advisory Committee.

MEMBERSHIP

Wendall Kekumu said that the American Legion Organization was not listed on the Membership Roster distributed at the last meeting. Chairman Kaiwi responded that Mr. Callahan represented American Legion from Kona and a replacement has not been named since he moved away. Secretary Nathalie Santos confirmed that a letter has been sent to American Legion – West Hawaii and they have not yet recommended/nominated a replacement. Chairman Kaiwi asked Richard Highley to check with the American Legion commander and ask them to submit a nomination.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

VOLUNTEER – CLOSE GRAVES AT VETERANS CEMETERIES I & II

Director Engelhard announced that a resident of Mountain View (Jerry Bragdon) saw the news article about burials not being able to occur at certain times of the day and has volunteered his services to help shovel dirt if needed. She has provided his name and contact information to mortuaries on the east side. One staff member of an East Hawaii mortuary called to ask a few questions such as if there are fees for his services. The response is there is no fee, his services would be declined if there were a fee. A review of burial records reveals that over the last six months the most burials held were one every two days. So these volunteer services may hardly be requested.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Kaiwi announced that he received information from Alice Moon & Company regarding events occurring in Hilo in November if anyone was interested.

EXPIRING TERMS

MEMBERS TO ATTEND MEETINGS WHILE AWAITING A REPLACEMENT

Chairman Kaiwi asked members whose terms are expiring to continue attending meetings for at least three more months while a replacement is made.

MAHALO

Chairman Kaiwi expressed his sincere thanks to members for working together to make all of the Veterans Cemeteries on the island a better place. He also thanked the West Hawaii Veterans for their dedication and hard work to make the West Hawaii Cemetery a beautiful place.

Vice Chairman Denny Austen thanked Chairman Kaiwi for his hard work and dedication stating that he enjoyed working with him. Members applauded Chairman Kaiwi.

Mr. Minoru Hanato thanked Director Engelhard for her help with his wife's interment at the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Columbarium. He also thanked Steve Morifuji of P&R for sending surveyor's to cemetery to assist with leveling ground for placement of columbarium.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on January 12, 2006 at 3:00 p.m. in the Hawai'i County Councilroom and video-conferencing at the Kona Mayor's Office.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Nathalie Santos
Secretary