

## VETERANS COUNCIL OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY

### MINUTES OF GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING DECEMBER 19, 2024

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Dudley

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS: Chairman Dudley

INVOCATION: Chairman Dudley

PLEDGE: Chairman Dudley

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: Minutes of last meeting conducted November 21, 2024, were presented by Chairman Dudley. Copies of the Minutes are available on the sign-in table and were sent to members electronically by the Secretary. The minutes were approved by voice vote with no changes.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Treasurer Mountcastle presented the Treasurer's Report to the Council. As of November 20, 2024, the Council's total liquid cash balance was \$178,581.56. Treasurer Mountcastle went over the Treasurer's Report including all incoming funds and expenses going out. The floor was open for any questions. The Treasurer's Report was approved by voice vote with no changes.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW GUESTS: New attendees introduced themselves and who they represent.

SPEAKERS:

ALISON SIMPSON, COMMAND HISTORIAN, FL NATIONAL GUARD 14 Alison Simpson presented the Veterans Council with a slideshow presentation on the history of the Florida National Guard. The slideshow depicted the complete history, from the inception of to today's Florida National Guard, during her presentation. The floor was open to any questions.

STEPHEN HUDSON, FOUNDER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AI READY VETERAN Stephen Hudson presented the Council with his background information, including his service in the military. Mr. Hudson is the Executive Director AI ReadyVeteran.AI ReadyVeteran is a 501(c)3 program that helps the Veterans returning to civilian society with their transition from active duty. The platform of AI Ready Veteran is available to all Veterans and their families. Mr. Hudson gave a thorough, detailed slideshow presentation on what can be accomplished by Veterans in their return to civilian life through AI Ready Veteran. The information provided can be obtained on the website [AIReadyVeteran.org](http://AIReadyVeteran.org). The floor was open for questions and answers.

VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE, MAC MCDERMOTT Mr. McDermott spoke of the VA's implementing a new model of scheduling appointments with the VA clinics. The new application is known as ISS -Integrated Scheduling System. It will consolidate several scheduling applications into one location. This will help Veterans scheduling appointments in a more complete and timely manner. There are many complaints about the current system and hopefully this will correct the ease of scheduling. Mr. McDermott spoke of helping the widows of Veterans obtain the DICA compensation. If the 15 Veterans service-related disability caused his death, the widow can receive DICA compensation. With the "10-year rule" (Veteran has received disability for over 10 years), the widow will receive the benefit no matter the cause of death and it is immediately granted by the Veterans Administration without the Veteran Service Officer having to complete the paperwork. The Veteran's Administration is now using AI to help get these benefits to the surviving spouse immediately, Mr. McDermott gave an update on how the SJC Veterans Service Office is still in need of Service Officers to help with the influx of local Veterans coming for assistance. The procedure of hiring is in the process of happening.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT, JOHN LESLIE Mr. Leslie introduced himself and gave a history and what the Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) does for our Veterans in the legal system, now in its eighth year. Mr. Leslie gave an update on the VTC and the number of participants SJC has helped through the legal system process. There is always a need for mentors to help with the VTC program. Everyone was invited to attend the new Court Hearing for the VTC on December 20th. The floor was open to questions.

UNFINISHED/NEW BUSINESS Chairman Dudley spoke of the Veterans Council teaming with Home Again St Johns and Florida Power and Light completing a lighting program to provide Holiday Lights to the Veterans Village. There was a big turnout for help, and everyone had a great afternoon. FPL has also given the Veterans Council a \$7,000 check to help with the installation of the flags at Veterans Village. 16 The Wreaths Across America Program was a remarkable success again this year – the Veterans Council's 12th year of participating in the program. Every headstone in the National Cemetery in St. Augustine had a wreath placed on it. Veterans Council is already preparing for next year's program with Wreaths Across America. Chairman Dudley spoke of the Veterans Council helping the participants in the Veterans Treatment Court, some who have suffered financially this past year. The Veterans Council will hand out Christmas Cards on the December 20th court date with a gift card from Walmart for what their needs may be this Christmas. Anastasia Baptist Church also assisted with gifting these Veterans. The Veterans Council is in good financial standing at this year's end. It is because of all the grants that are applied for and the fact that this is a very giving community with great support with financial assistance. A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year was wished for all. The floor was open for discussion and

added information. Next Veterans Council meeting will be held on Thursday, January 30th beginning at 7:00 pm.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

William Dudley, Chairman