

VETERANS COUNCIL OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY

MINUTES OF GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING JULY 25, 2024

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Dudley

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS: Chairman Dudley PLEDGE: Chairman Dudley

INVOCATION: Bill Jefferson, Chaplain

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: Minutes of last meeting conducted June 27, 2024, 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 June 26, 2024, the cash balance was \$163,705.37. Total liquid cash balance as of July 24, 2024, was \$155,509.99. Treasurer Mountcastle went over the Treasurer's Report, explaining funds for the Dudley Foundation and Money Market accounts and amounts spent during the month to assist our Veterans. The Treasurer asked if there were any questions regarding the Treasurer's Report. The Report was approved by voice vote.

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

SPEAKERS:

ALAN J. KENNEDY, PROVISIONS4PATRIOTS Al Kennedy introduced himself and his organization, Provisions4Patriots. Mr. Kennedy founded his organization in 2017 in Lafayette, Indiana, and now, as of May 2024, is located in Jacksonville, Florida. Mr. Kennedy gave his and his family's military background and the discovery of the homeless Veteran population and the need to provide the things that are required by them. Clothing, hygiene products, etc. are collected by Provisions4Patriots to disperse among the Veteran population in need. Mr. Kennedy gave an example, in 2022 one of the Board Members for the organization and his boot company that provided footwear for Federal prisons. The Federal prisons made a change in their requirements and that Board Member donated eight hundred pairs of unused boots to Provisions4Patriots. The same happened with sneakers and they obtained 1300 boxes of shoes for donation, all sizes were available to help Veterans and their families. The floor was open for questions and answers.

VICKY OAKES, ST. JOHNS COUNTY SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS Vicky Oakes introduced herself and the duties of the St. Johns County Supervisor of Elections Office. She spoke of the upcoming Primary Election and the duties and responsibilities that election will entail.

She spoke of mail-in ballots, early voting and the Primary Election that will be held on August 20th. She also spoke of the accuracy having your vote counted in St. Johns County and the duties and needs to hold a perfect election. St. Johns County always has a large voter turnout in Presidential Elections and spoke of the need for residents to vote in the Primary Elections, which routinely have a low voter turnout. The floor was open to questions and answers.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE UPDATE, JOSEPH MCDERMOTT Mr. McDermott gave an update on the SJC Veterans Service Office. There have been no major changes currently when filing claims with the Veterans Administration. Business in the Veterans Service Office is staying very steady and busy, with seventy-seven new clients being assisted this month. Mr. McDermott spoke of the need for existing clients to continue to stay in touch with the Veterans Service Officer to keep updated on what they are entitled to – he gave a homestead exemption filing of a current Veteran client as an example of the need to stay in contact with the Veterans Service Office. 5 Mr. McDermott also spoke of “claim sharks,” individuals that are not certified to take Veteran claims. When these individuals assist the Veteran in filing their claims, they want a percentage of the money that the Veteran will receive once their claim is approved. The current Veteran Organizations want them outlawed. The Veterans need to be aware of what they are getting into with these individuals. The floor was open to questions and answers.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT, JOHN LESLIE Mr. Leslie introduced himself and what the Veterans Treatment Court does for our Veterans in the legal system. In the seven years of the VTC, 157 Veterans have entered into the VTC; twenty-one fell out for several reasons, including death. The VTC has graduated 104 Veterans and on July 26th three more will graduate bringing the total graduated to 107. There are currently fourteen mentors in the VTC and there is always a need to add more to help Veterans through the Veterans Treatment Court System. All were invited to come check out the next Veterans Treatment Court and see how it operates. Representative Cyndi Stevenson will be the guest speaker. The floor was open to questions and answers.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS: Chairman Dudley spoke of the Veterans Treatment Court being recognized by the Board of County Commissioners for their 100th graduate completing the VTC. The BCC entered a Proclamation in recognition of that accomplishment. There was a tremendous turnout at the Board Meeting for that Proclamation. The graduate spoke at that meeting and gave major credit for what the VTC has done for him and his successful accomplishments in life. Chairman Dudley gave great praise to Veterans Treatment Court and its success. Chairman Dudley talked about the Veterans from Northrop Grumman that

conducted a walk-a-thon to help raise money for The Veterans Village. They started at 7am on Friday, July 19th, at Veterans Village and walked for 24 hours straight – putting in over 100,000 steps, fifty miles, around St. Augustine. The donation amount is currently \$9,500 and they are leaving it open in hopes of raising a total of \$10,000 to assist with the needs of The Veterans Village. Chairman Dudley spoke of meeting with some people from the Veterans Administration at The Veterans Village for them to inspect the facility so that we can start qualifying some of the Veterans in there for HUD-VASH. There are currently 19 Veterans being housed at The Veterans Village and a couple more rooms to finish for availability for Veterans in need. Restaurants in the area are donating food for those staying there and volunteers are always coming in to help. The planning has started for the Veterans Day Program that will be held in November at Anastasia Baptist Church. This year's theme will be "The Gulf War." The next planning meeting will be held on August 13th. Chairman Dudley also talked about the upcoming Wreaths Across America to be held on December 14, 2024. Applications for purchase of wreaths will be out soon as it takes about \$12,500 in donations to put a wreath on every headstone at the National Cemetery in St. Augustine. The floor was open to any new business to be addressed and any questions and answers. Next Veterans Council meeting will be held on Thursday, August 29th beginning at 7:00pm.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

William Dudley, Chairman