

Veterans Council of St. Johns County, Inc. Minutes of January 30, 2020

Officers present: Chairman Bill Dudley, Vice Chairman Ray Quinn, Treasurer John Mountcastle

Chairman Dudley called the meeting to order at 1900 hours

Chairman Dudley led the Pledge to the Flag **Vice Chairman Ray Quinn** gave the Invocation

The St. Augustine US Navy Sea Cadets (4 of them) presented the Colors

Minutes were approved as presented

The **Treasurer's Report** was approved as presented, report available

Introduction of Guests:

Don Roberts, USA Lt. Colonel, retired with 33 years of service.

Kevin Souza – US Army, retired with Wounded Warrior Project

Selena Hernandez Haines –President, Honor Flight Committee

Larry Mull, US Navy, Commanding Officer with St. Augustine US Navy Sea Cadets

Sheryl Mull – Training Officer St. Augustine US Navy Sea Cadets

Jeff Lay – US Army, retired with Sea Cadets

Wendy Lay with Sea Cadets

Nick Howard – Firewatch, hired by Rory Diamond and General Fleming

Judge Howard McGillin – Veterans Treatment Court

Award Presented: Ray Quinn read about the Colonel Ed Taylor Award. This year this award was presented to Pastor Bobby Crum and

Bill Blalock from Anastasia Baptist Church. Chairman Dudley presented this along with a check for \$500.00 for their continued support to the veterans and communities of St. Johns County.

Speaker #1 - Joe Giammanco, US Coast Guard, LCDR, retired, gave a presentation on the youth programs from the Navy League point of view. Programs include:

St. Augustine Army ROTC, Matanzas High School Army ROTC, Nease High School Navy Jr ROTC, Flagler Palm Coast Air Force ROTC and Naval Sea Cadets Corp.

Today's program for our youth include:

1. Develop an interest and ability in seamanship and seagoing skills
2. Instill virtues of good citizenship and strong moral principles in each cadet
3. Demonstrate the value of an alcohol-free, drug-free and gang-free lifestyle

Expose cadets to the prestige of public service and a variety of career paths through hands-on training with our nation's armed services.

Cadets to drills, War Games, lots of physical fitness activities, educational training, culinary, scuba diving, aviation, swimming survival techniques and so much more.

Speaker #2 – Ryman Shoaf, USN, ret. He is the National Spokesperson for "We Can Be Heroes" foundation.

We Can Be Heroes Foundation is an all-volunteer nonprofit 501(c)3 public foundation.

Our name reflects the spirit and honor surrounding Americans that make sacrifices by serving in our neighborhoods, our country, and abroad. Unsung heroes walk among us. This Foundation is dedicated to all our heroes.

OUR MISSION

We Can Be Heroes Foundation recognizes courageous and admired acts performed by Americans, host events to honor heroes, and help Veterans, Senior Citizens, Low-income Families, and Students affected by government changes and other nonprofit organization's budget cuts.

OUR WORK

Remember and Honor American heroes

Honor courageous and admired acts in communities across the country

Share Hero's Stories

Continuous Homeless Veterans Food Drives

Quarterly Breakfast with Our Heroes

Frequent Luncheons for Homeless Veterans in Re-employment Programs

Ryman stated they hold quarterly breakfast and you can go to the website to see all the dates. The next one is on March 7th.

Speaker #3 – Beth Heath – Beth spoke about a Jr student from Ponte Vedra High School that started a club at the school titled Sharks for Veterans. The assist veterans and have worked several events in the areas.

Committee Reports – Joe McDermott, The VA has started processing in January claims for Blue Water for Navy veterans. They are gathering as much info as possible.

There is a new appeal system that started in Feb 2019. A veteran can take the route of the lowest level lane supplemental adding additional evidence to support their claim. They should receive an answer withing 120 days.

The veteran can also choose to take the higher-Level Lane asking the VA to look at the original claim with another claims officer. The Board of Veterans Appeal present the case in writing and ask for a personal hearing which can possibly take up to a year.

Joe also thanked everyone that was able to attend the service at the JNC for A US Army Veteran, John Meade, Jr., that possibly spent his last years on the street of St. Augustine. Ray Quinn spoke at the service and gave as much info that was known about this veteran. The PGR was there doing Flag Detail and over 300 people from the communities attended to honor this Mr. Meade.

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John Leslie, VTC Coordinator for Mentors and with VVA Chapter 1084 – spoke about the Veterans Treatment Court. They had 2 graduates at the Jan. 16th graduation and the next graduation is on Feb. 20th. Council members are invited to attend these graduations. The VTC currently has 20 mentors compared to Duval County which only has 4 mentors.
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Ray Quinn gave an AAR about the St. Augustine WAA service. All went very smoothly. Ray noted that the wreaths seemed to be smaller this year and that they came in somewhat dried with the needles falling off. He will be addressing this with WAA national.
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Chairman Bill Dudley spoke about the long-term plans for the CBOC. He met with the County Commissioner and the next meeting will be on Feb. 5th with the VA Director in Gainesville. Bill is pleased with elected officials involved with the CBOC.

Currently there is no place to house homeless veterans in St. Johns County so there are plans on the table to possibly turn the old clinic location into quarters for these veterans. There will be staff to get veterans help with getting in the VA Health Care System. Bill will continue to work on this with the elected officials.

Bill encouraged all members to be sure and fill out the census currently. Both Bill and Joe are on the Committee. We need to assure that all persons are counted for whether homeless or not. In 2010 they had 79% reporting and 71% in 2000. For every person that is not accounted for the counties loose \$1,450/person over a 10-year period which can surely add up.

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Selena Hernandez Haines – with Honor Flight, along with Bill Dudley and many other volunteers to get a new HF hub in northeast Fla. She was elected President for this committee and nominations were taken for other officers. Currently there are 9 hubs in Florida. It was voted to name this new hub First Coast Honor Flight. The goal is to have the first flight out of Jacksonville by the end of the year but there are many steps to process before this can take place. Selena stated she is very methodical and likes to do things the correct way. Currently no donations can be taken at this time nor can veterans names be submitted. There will be a Facebook page and a website established.
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Kathy Church – MIAP – Kathy stated that they have a new volunteer coming on board and this person will be able to assist Kathy at the Craig Funeral Home in St. Augustine so that this location can be completed. MIAP would like to be able to have a service at the JNC before the heat of the summer. Plans are in the works for a CTH #23 at the Cape Canaveral National Cemetery at the end of March. MIAP is having a meeting on Feb 18th in Orlando with volunteers to meet each other and do some volunteer training.
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There being no further business to come before the members, Chairman Dudley adjourned the meeting at 8:45pm.

The next meeting of the Veterans Council will be on **Thursday, February 27, 2020 at 7 pm** in the Health & Human Services Building, 200 San Sebastian View.

Future speakers:

Mar. 26 Sharon Unger, President Veterans Village of NE FL

Shiva Thompson, Yoga 4 Change

Apr. 30 Kathy Fleming, Exec Dir, Lighthouse WW II Coast Guard Project

Carl "Jeff" Lay, 1SG US Veterans Reserve Corps. FL

May 28 Dr. Roger Smith, Military History of Colonial St. Augustine

June 25 SJC Homeless Veterans Initiative panel