

**VETERANS COUNCIL OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY**

**MINUTES OF 25 JUNE 2020**

**Officers Present: Chairman Bill Dudley; Vice Chair Ray Quinn**

**Chairman Dudley led the Pledge to the Flag and Vice Chair Quinn gave the invocation**

**Introduction of Guests: Chairman Dudley introduce Selena Hernandez Haines and**

**Candace Mabry of First Coast Honor Flight and Mr. Jay Smith of the St. Augustine Lighthouse and Maritime Museum. Other members introduced their guests for the evening.**

**Chairman Dudley explained reason for the new meeting place and announced that the council would be meeting at the Elks Lodge until further notice. It is intended to return to the County Human Resource building when available.**

**Minutes of the February 2020 meeting were discussed and approved by the membership.**

**It was announced that our Treasurer and Secretary are in voluntary quarantine and would be returning soon.**

**The Treasurer's Report was presented by Chairman Dudley and he obtained approval from the membership. It was reported that there is a balance of \$35,795.27. This total includes a \$5,000 grant to assist veterans in need due to the Corona Virus. This was awarded by First Coast Relief Fund Grant. During the report Chairman Dudley reported expenditures to a veteran's widow that needed assistance with her property taxes. In addition funds were expended to replace an air conditioner for one of our local veterans.**

**Steve Spickelmeir introduced the incoming Chair of the Duval County Veteran's Council David Trotti.**

**Selena Hernandez-Haines was our first speaker of the evening with an informative program about the First Coast Honor Flight. She gave a history of the Honor Flights to include the amazing number veterans that have made the journey. She reported that more than 244,000 so far have traveled to Washington D.C. The number of veterans per flight is 25 and each veteran must have a volunteer guardian. Guardians must pay their own way and the cost is \$400.00. Spouses are not eligible to travel along with their veteran. The flight is scheduled for April 2021. Donations are accepted and rest assured .97 of each \$1.00 is for the flight. Participants must apply to be chosen for the flight.**

**Mr. Jay Smith, Historian, St. Augustine Lighthouse and Museum, offered an overview of German submarine warfare against the United States shipping lanes. He stated that Hitler**

**gave the go ahead to attack the U.S. in January of 1942. There were nine subs assigned to harass the American shipping operation. Of the nine five were successful. There were 42 ships sunk or attacked from January 1942 to August 1942. Of interest to our veterans were the number of attacks off the southern coast. The most notable of the Gulf America torpedoed off the coast of Ponte Vedra.**

**Jay also shared the current projects undertaken by the Lighthouse and Maritime Museum to include a relationship with the Deland Naval Air Station Museum.**

**Chairman Dudley expressed appreciation to both of our speakers.**

**CSM McDermott our Veterans advisor provided an update on his office operation during the virus quarantine and current operation.**

**Ray Quinn offered comments about the upcoming Wreaths Across America drive and also provided an update on American Legion Post 37 status. It appears the Post will have the opportunity to function once again.**

**In his closing remarks Chairman Dudley provided:**

**Update on the construction of the new CBOC on SR 207**

**Update on the possibility of converting the existing CBOC to a Homeless Veterans Facility.**

**Expressed concern about the low number of citizens responding to the 2020 census.**

**Having no further business the meeting was adjourned.**

**Respectfully submitted;**

**RAY A. QUINN**

**VICE CHAIR**