

VETERANS COUNCIL OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY

MINUTES OF GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING March 28, 2024

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Dudley

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS: Chairman Dudley

PLEDGE: Chairman Dudley

INVOCATION: Bill Jefferson, Chaplain

INTRODUCTION OF NEW GUESTS: Chairman Dudley

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: Minutes of last meeting conducted February 29, 2024, were presented by Chairman Dudley. Copies of the Minutes and Agenda 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 February 28, 2024, the cash balance was \$164,691.43. As of March 27, 2024, the balance is \$164,267.75. Available cash totals \$176,489.82. Treasurer Mountcastle went over the Treasurer's Report, explaining funds for the Dudley Foundation and Money Market accounts. Details of the month's expenses were also covered. The Treasurer asked if there were any questions regarding the Treasurer's Report. The Report was approved by voice vote.

SPEAKERS:

CAPTAIN ED TURNER, EXEC. DIR., NATIONAL POW/MIA MEMORIAL & MUSEUM Capt. Turner spoke of the project of establishing a National Memorial for POW/MIA for all Branches of the Military. The Memorial and Museum will be at Cecil Field as there are already 14 Memorials for POW/MIA existing there. The City of Jacksonville donated twenty-six acres of land for the establishment of the Memorial and Museum, including the Chapel 4 that is located at Cecil Field. Capt. Turner gave a thorough breakdown of the history and plans to build the Memorial and Museum, including a video providing information on POW/MIA's. The floor was opened to questions and answers.

BRANDON PATTY, ST. JOHNS COUNTY CLERK OF COURTS Mr. Patty gave his background and being elected to serve in office. He explained how the Clerk of Courts serves by retaining all the official documents of St. Johns County (SJC). He passed around the original book of discharge papers for residents of SJC that served in the Military. Mr. Patty gave a history of the function of the Clerk of Courts and their purpose for SJC accurate records. Records go back as far as the establishment of SJC in 1821. The Clerk's Office is

now recording DD214's to help people who served obtain that information and more efficiently. The floor was open for questions and answers.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE UPDATE, JOSEPH MCDERMOTT Mr. McDermott discussed two benefits available from the Veterans Administration, the Service-Connected Compensation and Pension Benefit. He explained the difference between the two benefits. He spoke of the need when on the Pension Benefit that any income changes must be reported to the VA to avoid an overpayment. The VA will check the reported income of the Veterans each year. The VSO collaborates with the Veterans to get a waiver for the overpayment. There appears to be a better understanding of PACT ACT and the Veterans exposure to toxins while serving. It is similar to the Veterans that have filed for exposure to Agent Orange. Mr. McDermott gave a breakdown of what is needed and expected to be able to file these disability claims. With the new Veteran Service Officers now staffed, the intake of Veterans is moving faster and more efficiently. Annual training will take place in May in Clearwater. 5 Mr. McDermott opened the floor to any questions regarding the Veterans Service Office.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT, JOHN LESLIE John Leslie introduced himself to those in attendance and explained the operations of the Veterans Treatment Court (VTC). The Treatment Court is starting the third month of its seventh year of operation. In that time VTC processed a total of 145 Veterans. A total of 91 Veterans have graduated and moved on, 33 Veterans are currently inflow. There have been 21 Veterans that have either timed-out or they were terminated for multiple reasons. Next court date is on the 5th of April and there will be three graduations on that day. Everyone is invited to attend the VTC on April 5, 2024, starting at 10:00am. There is also a need for more mentors. Mr. Leslie opened the floor to any questions and answers regarding the VTC.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS: Chairman Dudley discussed the acquisition of the Veterans Village and operation duties were taken over on March 16, 2024. There are two full-time employees, the manager of the facility during the day is Renee Morris. There will be twenty rooms available for Veterans to occupy and as of this date, ten rooms already have Veterans in them. They are "checked in" as a hotel guest because they still have to be vetted for Veterans coming into the system. There was a walk through the Veterans Village with the FDVA and a punch list was generated for fixes that have to be satisfied to the FDVA standards. Home Depot Managers have also done a walk through, and they offered to supply materials and labor to construct a privacy fence around the Veterans Village. Home Depot has asked that we prepare a "wish list" of needs and they will help with painting both inside and outside the building. They will provide lawn furniture and picnic tables for the

courtyard. Home Depot is very community-minded when it comes to helping Veterans in the State of Florida. The sign will be replaced soon to Veterans Village and will be lit at night. The fountain out front will be removed and an American Flag will be installed in that location and then around the periphery of that location, all the Service Flags will be flown. A request to the city has to be made to fly those flags so it will take a little longer to get those installed and they will also be lit at night. The new facility that will be built off SR 16 will have eight individual cottages with each cottage housing two people. The Veterans Council met with Home Again St. Johns and selected the contractor that will be constructing the facility. Clearing for the facility will start around the 1st of April. Completion is hoped for around the end of the year. The floor was open to questions, answers and all others that had information to share with the Veterans Council. Next Veterans Council meeting will be held on Thursday, April 25th beginning at 7:00pm.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

William Dudley, Chairman