

VETERANS COUNCIL OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY

MINUTES OF GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING MARCH 27, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Dudley

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS: Chairman Dudley

PLEDGE: Chairman Dudley

INVOCATION: Chaplain Jefferson Chairman Dudley reminded those in attendance that April 24, 2025, meeting will be held upstairs in the Kingfisher Room due a St. Johns County event that will be utilizing our usual meeting room.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: Minutes of last meeting conducted February 2, 2025, 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 March Treasurer's Reports to the Council. The Council's February 26, 2025, total liquid cash balance was \$159,394.00. As of March 26, 2025, the Council's total liquid cash balance was \$152,026.62. 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.

SPEAKERS:

GEORGE ANN RICE Speaker George Ann Rice had to be rescheduled due to technical problems connecting through Zoom.

ANN KAZEL-WILCOX, AUTHOR OF WEST POINT '41 Ms. Kazel-Wilcox spoke of the book she co-authored, West Point '41 –The Class That Went to War and Shaped America. The Class of 1941 was the last class to graduate from West Point before the United State entered World War II. Ms. Kazel -Wilcox went into detail of her collaborations with the surviving members of the 1941 class, including several Generals from the class. Ms. Kazel-Wilcox went through the history of the Class of 1941 and the graduates' involvement in World War II. The floor was open for questions and answers.

VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE, MAC MCDERMOTT Mr. McDermott gave an update on the Veterans Service Office and the hiring of a new Veterans Service Office that will begin on March 31, 2025. He will go through training that is now available online with the required course, which makes the certification go quickly. Mr. McDermott discussed the VA local Clinic (CBOC) and that Dr. Keck, Chief Medical Officer, is leaving and the Chief Medical

Officer that manages Putnam County and will now be in charge of both St. Augustine and Palatka. This transfer will take place April 2025. Mr. McDermott spoke of AI and its use by the Veterans Administration. The example explained was that if a Veteran is service connected at 100% and the Veteran passes away, it makes no difference the cause of death the widow of the Veteran will get the Dependent Indemnity Compensation if it has been over 10 years. In the past, forms had to be submitted for benefits for the widow. Now VA will immediately grant all the benefits to the widow without the forms being submitted by using this through AI it makes the process much more thorough and quicker. If it is less than 10 years, the form process still has to be completed and submitted. The floor was open for questions.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT, JOHN LESLIE Mr. Leslie introduced himself and gave the history of and what the Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) does for our Veterans in the legal system. The VTC is now in its ninth year. The next Treatment Court session will be held March 28, 2025, at 10:00 am in Room 355 and all are invited to attend. Mr. Leslie gave a breakdown in the numbers of Veteran Treatment Court participants and the number that have graduated. There will be a graduation held on April 5, 2025, with four new graduates. Mr. Leslie also introduced the VTC Mentors in attendance at this meeting. The floor was open for questions regarding the VTC.

UNFINISHED/NEW BUSINESS Chairman Dudley spoke of the next event coming up, the Memorial Day Program, which will be held at the St. Augustine National Cemetery. The Speaker for the Program will be General Craig McKinley. Everyone is invited to attend the Program on Memorial Day. The new facility on SR 16 is moving along but is not expected to be finished until later in May and the Certificate of Occupancy received. Veterans Village continues to run into obstacles with construction updates. The flagpoles are up but electricity still needs to be completed for the lighting of the poles. As soon as electricity is operational, there will be a ceremony for the Flag Raising. The floor was open for questions and new business.

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

William Dudley, Chairman