

## VETERANS COUNCIL OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY

### MINUTES OF GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING May 30, 2024

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Dudley

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS: Chairman Dudley

PLEDGE: Chairman Dudley

INVOCATION: Bill Jefferson, Chaplin

INTRODUCTION OF NEW GUESTS: Chairman Dudley

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: Minutes of last meeting conducted April 25, 2024, 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 Treasurer's Report to the Council. As of May 29, 2024, the cash balance was \$155,123.61. Available cash totals \$167,023.24. Treasure 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.

#### SPEAKERS:

WENDY LAYTON, BLUE STAR FAMILIES Wendy Layton, Chapter Director for Blue Star Families introduced herself and her background experience. Blue Star Families launched in 2009 and is a national nonprofit with 13 Chapters throughout the country. Blue 4 Star Families serves close to 9,000 families in the Jacksonville Chapter, which covers most of NE Florida and some southern counties of Georgia. Ms. Layton provided information as to their involvement with military families and helping them with the isolation felt by having someone in the military. Blue Star Families serves not only active-duty families but all Veterans within the system. Ms. Layton went over the programs that are offered by Blue Star Families to help military families and Veterans. The floor was open for questions and answers.

DENNIS GRAVES, CJ3 FOUNDATION Dennis Graves introduced himself as the Ambassador for the State of Florida for the CJ3 Foundation. The CJ3 Foundation is headquartered out of Virginia. They are a non-profit public charity organization serving our nation's wounded warrior heroes. The Foundation has a 4-part mission and those are Advocacy, Mental Health and Wellness, Service Dogs and Field Ops. Mr. Dennis went over those four

missions and introduced his service dog that was with him at the meeting. He also gave his military background and the incident that made him a wounded warrior. Mr. Dennis gave information on all the programs that are offered for our wounded warriors through the CJ3 Foundation. The floor was open to questions and answers.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Mac McDermott was not in attendance for the meeting as he is on vacation. John Leslie was not in attendance due to family obligations.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS: Chairman Dudley spoke of the success of the Memorial Day Program at the National Cemetery here in St. Augustine. There was an estimated attendance of more than 500 people, many elected officials, some judges and law enforcement. There was a reading of names of the Veterans that we lost this year, including Sgt. Major Ray Quinn. The planning will immediately be starting for our Veterans Day Program in November and the Wreaths Across America in December. Veterans Village is still an ongoing process of work and improving to house our local Veterans. There are currently 17 Veterans housed there and 3 rooms that are still under renovation. There is currently a waiting list for those rooms. Once those rooms are available and filled, we will be at capacity for that facility. There has been a tremendous outpouring from the community for help in getting this facility up to date and ready for occupancy. Chairman Dudley spoke of the expenses incurred in helping the Veterans in our area. He gave an example of helping a local Veteran with his rent to help him and his family not receive a notice of eviction to vacate their home. Chairman Dudley spoke awarding the first scholarship for the Sgt. Major Ray Quinn Scholarship Program. The floor was open to questions, answers and all others that had information to share with the Veterans Council. Mr. Jim Bush, FPL Director, (and a Mentor in the Veterans Treatment Court) awarded the Council a donation from FPL in the amount of \$10,000. Next Veterans Council meeting will be held on Thursday, June 27th beginning at 7:00pm.

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

William Dudley, Chairman