

**VETERANS COUNCIL OF ST. JOHNS COUNTY
MINUTES OF GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**

September 28, 2023

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Dudley

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS: Chairman Dudley

PLEDGE: Chairman Dudley

INVOCATION: General Mike Fleming

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKERS/GUESTS: Chairman Dudley

New attendees introduced themselves to the group.

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING: There were no minutes for the month of August. The August meeting was cancelled due to an approaching hurricane and the meeting venue is used for an evacuation shelter.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Treasurer John Mountcastle presented an updated Treasurer's Report. The Council's total liquid cash balance as July 26, 2023, was \$171,974.45. Treasurer Mountcastle went through some of the expenditures and deposits since that time and the new current balance is \$179,234.67. The Treasurer's Report was approved by voice vote with no changes.

AWARD PRESENTATION:

Chairman Dudley introduced two Veterans that will be inducted into the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame on November 14, 2023, in Tallahassee, FL. The two new inductees are Army Brigadier General Michael Fleming and Lieutenant Colonel Blair Craig. A well-deserved recognition for both gentlemen.

SPEAKERS:

ZACH MALAMUD, MARINE FOR LIFE

Zach Malamud gave a presentation on the organization, Marine for Life Network Program, and its mission. The mission statement of Marine for Life is to "Take Care of Our Own." The Marine for Life helps Marines, and their families transition back into the civilian world. They help Marines and soldiers but will turn no Veteran in need away. They help the Veterans find jobs, educational needs, refer them to Veterans Administration, tell them about the GI Bill and any other needs a Veteran may use during their transition period. They provide mentorship in order to help the Veteran adapt to their surroundings. Those in need can reach out to Marine for Life at their website, www.marineforlife.org. The floor was open to questions and answers.

MIKE O'BRIEN, 5-STAR VETERANS CENTER

Mike O'Brien introduced himself and gave a presentation of the 501(3)c organization 5-Star Veterans Center and how they can help the Veterans of St. Johns County. The 5-Star Veterans' mission statement is "Rebuild the lives of veterans in crisis to ensure they thrive in civilian life." The program has been operating for the last 12 years. Mr. O'Brien described the organization and what they want to accomplish and assist with the Veterans in need. They help the Veteran in crisis by providing a "Passport to Independence" with an intensive 12-month program. They

provide the stability of on-site housing and mental health services. An individualized treatment plan is developed to restore a Veteran's mental health and well-being. The goal is to get the Veteran back to independent living. After Mr. O'Brien presentation, the floor was open to questions and answers.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE UPDATE, JOSEPH MCDERMOTT

Mr. McDermott gave an update on the Veterans Service Office. Business has not slowed down in the Veterans Service Office; they are still working on many PAC ACT claims. Because of the number of claims going the Veterans Administration, it could take 4-6 months to receive an answer to the claim. Last month there were 600 veterans that came through the office. Unfortunately, there has been a turnover in the office. There are currently interviews taking place to replace these employees. The positions should be filled soon and the office back to working at full staff. The office will continue to move forward.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURT, JOHN LESLIE

Mr. Leslie introduced himself, Mentor Coordinator for the St. Johns and Putnam County Veterans Treatment Court. Although the Treatment Court is actually taking Veterans from 6 other counties throughout the NE Florida area.

The Treatment Court is in its 7th year and brought in 135 veterans into the program and has graduated 78 participants. There are 36 veterans currently inflow and 25-27 will be in court next session on the docket. The next session is scheduled for September 29th at 10:00am in Room 355 of the Judicial Complex. All are invited to attend and observe the Treatment Court. Mr. Leslie is looking for any new mentors that would be interested in helping in the future. Currently there are 16 mentors and 20 are needed. The Treatment Court has graduated 81 participants and 5 graduated in the last session. There have been 21 terminations, unsuccessful completions for various reasons. The Treatment Court will have a table with information at the upcoming Veterans Day event on November 11th.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Dudley also gave an update on the upcoming Veterans Day program that will be held on November 11, 2023. The theme for this year's program will be on the Global War on Terrorism and held at Anastasia Baptist Church. The program will honor all the Veterans that have served in the last 20 years on the war on terrorism. They will be recognized for their service and presented with a pin to honor them. The speaker will be Brigadier General William Temples. Gold Star Mothers will also be honored that day. A large turnout is expected with 1,000-1,200 people attending.

Chairman Dudley also discussed the upcoming induction ceremony for the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame that will be held in Tallahassee on November 14th that the Council will be attending. Twenty Veterans will be inducted on that day.

The Wreaths Across America Program will be held on December 16th and the forms are available to order the wreaths. Prices were discussed.

Chairman Dudley also talked about the new homeless shelter that will coming to St. Augustine on SR 16. Other properties are also being looked at to add to the space available. Site work should start around the end of November. Completion is hoped to take place around the end of

July 2024. Due to cost, a new design has had to be implemented and Chairman Dudley shared pictures of what the new site will look like.

There will be a golf tournament held by the Marine Corp League on October 9th. The tournament proceeds will go to the Toys for Tots campaign.

Danny and Jackie Garcia discussed their organization, "Global Walk," and the World Changers Concert that will be held on December 8, 2023, at the Amphitheater. The theme of the concert is to Honor and Thank God, Veterans, First Responders, and families. They are asking companies and corporations for sponsorship to help in accomplishing this concert. Twenty tickets were presented to the Veterans Service Office and 20 tickets were presented to the Council for distribution.

The floor was opened to all others that had information to share with the Veterans Council.

Next Veterans Council meeting will be held on Thursday, October 26th beginning at 7:00pm.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

William Dudley, Chairman