

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

**October 6, 2022**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Dudley

**WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS:** Chairman Dudley

**PLEDGE:** Chairman Dudley

**INVOCATION:** Vice Chairman Quinn

**OPENING:** Chairman Dudley announced that this is the meeting that was postponed from September 29, 2022, due to Hurricane Ian hitting the State of Florida. The speakers that were scheduled to give presentations on that day would not be speaking this evening due to conflicts in scheduling.

**MINUTES OF LAST MEETING:** Minutes of last meeting conducted on August 25, 2022, were presented by Chairman Dudley. Copies of 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 John Mountcastle provided a detailed report showing that as of August 24, 2022, there was a balance of **\$108,808.71** and as of September 30, 2022, there is balance of **\$122,795.07**. Appreciation was given to Chairman Dudley and David Shoar for reaching out to major donors, two of which donated contributions of \$10,000 each. This gives the Council an extra \$20,000 to help with the ever-rising costs of shelter expenses for our homeless veterans. A continued effort will continue to obtain funding from those "deep pocket" donors. A chart was provided to show that shelter costs for lodging homeless veterans exceeds 3x the other costs held by the Council. St. Johns County has become a very expensive to temporarily house of veterans. The Council's credit card was used **\$4,554.05** in September, payments were made continuously to keep the credit card active and up to date. There is now a **\$776.53** balance due on the credit card by October 20, 2022. The Treasurer's Report was approved by voice vote with no changes.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

## **VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER UPDATE, JOSEPH MCDERMOTT**

Mr. McDermott spoke of the major push that is being put on to try to come up with transition housing for the Veterans in our area and the need for such housing. It's not cheap to house these veterans in local hotels.

Mr. McDermott mentioned the upcoming Veterans Homeless Standdown that will be held on October 8, 2022, at 9:00 am at the Elks Lodge. Set up will be on Friday, October 7, 2022, at 9:15 am for volunteers that would like to help. Last year's turnout for the Standdown was a disappointment and hopes that will not happen again this year. Every homeless camp within the county was visited by the Veteran's Service Office but many were empty due to the flooding from the hurricane. Fliers and information were left at the camps and other locations throughout the county in hopes of better attendance this year.

The Veteran's Service Office had a very good year this year with a number of increase of clients searching for help. There were 70 new clients added. The VSO has a very good crew helping all the veterans in our county. VSO will keep working hard for our county Veterans.

On the side, the "Camp Lejeune Lawsuit" was discussed and how that effects the VA funds that are received.

## **VETERANS TREATMENT COURT, JOHN LESLIE**

Mr. Leslie informed that the Treatment Court has graduated 62 members currently in its 6 years of existence. There are 112 veterans that have been inducted. There have been 14 that have left the program, 2 by death. The court has been going very well and is successful. The Mentor Corp is growing and may be adding one more that was a recent graduate. It's a good way for the graduates to stay engaged in the court system. Next session is October 7, 2022, at the Courthouse Annex and is open to the public. The Treatment Court participants can achieve their community service credits by volunteering in events such as the Veterans Homeless Standdown and 7 are going help with this year's event.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

Vice Chairman Ray Quinn spoke for "Wreaths Across America" to place wreaths on the graves of our Veterans in the oldest National Cemetery in America here in St. Augustine. A handout was provided for donations. The price of the wreaths has not

changed, \$15 per wreath, if you purchase two, the sponsor gets an additional wreath – so that is three wreaths for \$30. We need to raise \$12,000 and need more sales to get a wreath on every headstone. Saturday, December 17<sup>th</sup> is when the wreaths will be placed. Volunteers will place the wreaths at the event. Everyone and their families are invited to attend.

Chairman Dudley spoke about the Veterans that we are helping in homeless situations within the county. St. Johns County is one of the richest in the state and has the least amount of affordable housing for our Veterans. Many agencies are helping to find housing and affordable housing just cannot be found in SJC. Expenses to house our homeless veterans are too high and the county has to come around in some way to assist in helping these veterans. If it were not for the Veteran's Council, there would be no help for these homeless veterans. Patriot Place update was given and the problems they are running into getting a Certificate of Occupancy. San Marco Heights is a new development that is supposed to have 10 units within the complex to help with veteran housing needs.

Erick Saks, Operation Lifeline, new nonprofit here in SJC. Their focus is on improving veterans housing. Will help veterans with needs by helping repairs and rehab to homeowner veterans in the lower income bracket.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**William Dudley, Chairman**

**Ray A. Quinn, Vice Chairman**