



**FORT ORD REUSE AUTHORITY  
VETERANS ISSUES ADVISORY COMMITTEE (VIAC) MEETING MINUTES**

**3:00 P.M. Thursday, August 25 2016**

920 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, Ste A., Marina California | FORA Conference Room

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Confirming quorum, Chair Jerry Edelen called the meeting to order at 3 p.m.

**Committee Members:**

James Bogan, Disabled American Vets

Colonel Lawrence Brown, Presidio of Monterey

Mayor Jerry Edelen, City of Del Rey Oaks (Chair)

Richard Garza, Central Coast Veterans Cemetery Foundation (CCVC Foundation)

Edith Johnsen, Veterans Families

Jack Stewart, Fort Ord Veterans Cemetery Citizens Advisory Committee

Sid Williams, Monterey County Military & Veterans Advisory Commission (VAC)

**FORA Staff:**

Michael Houlemard

Robert Norris

Nicole Valentino

**Others in Attendance:**

Erica Parker, Office of CA Assemblymember Stone

Bob Schaffer, member of the public

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Edith Johnsen led the pledge of allegiance.

**3. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

Chair Edelen acknowledged Colonel Lawrence Brown of the Presidio, who was in attendance.

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

**None.**

**5. July 28, 2016**

**MOTION:** Sid Williams moved, seconded by Richard Garza, to approve the July 28, 2016 Veterans Issues Advisory Committee minutes.

**MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## 6. BUSINESS ITEMS

### a. California Central Coast Veterans Cemetery Status Report

Cemetery Administrator's Status Report - Cemetery Administrator Daria Maher was unable to attend the meeting. In her absence, Michael Houlemard distributed aerial photos (compliments of Sid Williams) along with a map of the cemetery to show committee members the current status of the construction. Mr. Houlemard stated that he had visited the site and said that all seems to be on schedule for the October 11<sup>th</sup> opening. Sid Williams stated that most of the items on the Cal Vet donations list have been donated at this point, and other donations have been committed and are expected to be received well before the opening. Jack Stewart agreed with Sid Williams, and shared that monetary donations have also been generous.

Cemetery Advisory Committee (CAC) Working Meeting Agenda Mr. Norris reported that conversations and coordination with Senator Monning's office continue.

Endowment Parcel MOU -Robert Norris shared that the proposed draft has been submitted to The Marina Foundation and the City of Seaside. The next step is for the County of Monterey to do their part.

- i. Opening Ceremony - Michael Houlemard shared that he had been in contact with June Ilijana of the CDVA to begin a discussion about the opening ceremony at the cemetery. He stated CDVA appears to be enthusiastic about co-creating an opening event that would include and honor veterans in the planning and the execution. He suggested the possibility of more than one event at more than one local venue, to accommodate the crowds as well as to ensure that both a somber and a festive honoring can happen. It was agreed that there should be a solemn opening ceremony at the cemetery, possibly followed by a festive honoring at a local venue. All agreed that an opening ceremony must happen on site. Michael Houlemard suggested there may be some issues with the site that need to be resolved. He also stated that CDVA proposed a phone conference call next Wednesday, August 31<sup>st</sup>. He suggested that at least a few VIAC members be on the call. All agreed that they would like Michael Houlemard to speak for the VIAC. When asked by Michael Houlemard, to consider what message the veterans would like to be communicated to CDVA, the consensus response was to make the event veteran centered. Mr. Bogan suggested that there be a Monday pre-conference call meeting at FORA to discuss how to optimally involve veterans in the opening ceremony. He offered to go back to speak to veterans and to report back their wishes and ideas on Monday. Sid Williams stated that the ceremony be an honoring of and for veterans, and that speeches ought to be directed towards veterans. Chair Edelen suggested veterans who can, wear their old uniforms. He concurred that he would like to see the empty symbolic chairs be included in the ceremony. Jack Stewart suggested including the ashes if possible. He suggested that the deceased soldiers' ashes be displayed. Robert Norris offered to follow up with Dan Fahey of CDVA. Rich Garza suggested that a photo array of the memorial wall, might reflect a deserved acknowledgment of the donors. It was suggested that a banner might serve the same purpose. Sid Williams asked Colonel Brown if it might be possible to request a cannon as part of the ceremony. The colonel

agreed to take the request back to the Presidio. The planning discussion regarding possibilities and preferences was preliminary and in preparation of the meeting with CDVA. No final decisions were made.

- ii. Military and Veterans Affairs Pre-Enrollment Report - Mr. Norris stated that there were nearly 700 applications, with an approximately 5% rejection rate. He also stated that some of the applications include an application for a spouse or other family member. Given the numbers, he said the cemetery may be well positioned to apply for an expansion grant to accommodate in ground burials in a future phase. Mr. Edelen shared with the group that Supervisor Edith Johnsen's husband's is one of the applications. There were brief comments made regarding the back log of burials based on the limitations imposed by the current burial and maintenance schedule.

**b. Fundraising Status**

CCVC Foundation Status Report

- i. Richard Garza stated that fundraising efforts continue, including tabling at the County Fair, but there have been no major developments since the last report.

**c. VA/DoD Veterans Clinic Status Report**

- i. Historic Flag Pole Variance Update - Mr. Williams stated that there has been little progress. He has not heard back from the land owner's representative. Chair Edelen suggested that Sid Williams contact Frank O'Connell. Sid Williams stated that the City of Marina is not the obstacle; the primary obstacle appears to be the VA and the land owner. James Bogan suggested that Sid Williams him in the meeting on September 6th. Sid Williams agreed. He also said that he had spoken with Bob Schaefer, who may be interested in becoming more involved with the process. There is no construction schedule at this time.
- ii. Clinic Construction Schedule - Mr. Norris said the clinic is on track for a scheduled October 14<sup>th</sup> "soft" ribbon cutting ceremony, as it will not be fully equipped and operational. Mr. Garza said the clinic posters say "Spring" 2017. Colonel Brown stated that the pediatric ward may be open soon, but he does not have the timeline. Mr. Bogan said that he will report back what he learns at an upcoming meeting on September 6<sup>th</sup>.

- d. Veterans Transition Center (VTC) Housing Construction** - Mr. Houlemard provided an update to the Committee. He shared that he and Colonel Brown have been in contact with Chief of US Army BRAC Tom Lederle, and that they hope to receive a signed letter of commitment from the BRAC in support of an increase in the water access that is needed to continue construction of the veteran housing. Colonel Brown endorsed the letter, and he and Mr. Houlemard are waiting to hear back from the BRAC Office.

- e. Historical Preservation Project** - Jack Stewart reported that he has been in coordination with the City of Marina's City Manager, and that they are waiting to

hear back from the architect. He stated that he does not know when that will take place, but will continue to be in touch with the city manager, and will report back to the VIAC.

## **7. ITEMS FROM MEMBERS**

Sid Williams shared that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Homeless Veterans Stand Down was a success, and that according to James Bogan approximately 400 veterans accessed the offered services made available to them. The event was well attended. It was also a lot of work, and volunteer efforts were acknowledged by the group. Rich Garza expressed disappointment that there as not more media coverage. Michael Houlemard suggested that in addition to traditional media, social media can be utilized as well. He offered the FOR A website and Facebook page to promote the event. Sid Williams agreed, and reminded all that there are many who do not access either traditional media or social media. Individuals need to be reached by other means, including flyers and word of mouth. Robert Norris stated the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans Newsletter July and August editions both listed the local Stand Down, as well all Stand Downs throughout the country. Every two months the publication also includes a section on policy decisions that impact veterans.

Monterey vets converted a yacht into a dive boat for disabled veterans. On September 26<sup>th</sup>, there will be a ribbon cutting at Moss Landing with a visiting naval commander.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Edelen adjourned the meeting at 3:38 p.m.

**NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING: 3PM, SEPTEMBER 22, 2016**