

VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, February 14, 2008, 3:00 p.m.
Prosecutor's Office (Hilo) and Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)

Present

Members

Don Bennett
Carolle Brulee-Wilson
Penny Fox, Chair
Edward Lee, Vice Chair
George Mukai
Delbert Nishimoto
Norman Stahl

Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)

Members

Antonio Gaspar
Minoru Hanato
Richard Highley
Robert Welter

Guests (Kona)

John Grogan (WHVC)

Ex-Officio (Hilo)

Patricia Engelhard, Director, P&R

Also Present (Hilo)

Nathalie Santos, Secretary
Herring Kalua - State Veterans Advisory Board - E HI Representative
Keith Ribbentrop

Absent

Wendall Kekumu
Gilbert Sampaia
Richard Stevens
George Yamamoto
John Young

Call to Order

Chairwoman Penny Fox called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm - (11) members present.

STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr. John Grogan shared that he is attending his first meeting as a guest and is the president of the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Development & Expansion Association. He said there is an email from him on the agenda which he will comment about at that time.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS MINUTES – November 15, 2007

- The minutes of the November 15, 2007 meeting were approved as submitted.

REPORT ON CEMETERIES – STATE VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Hawaii Island - East Hawaii Representative Mr. Herring Kalua

Hawaii Island - West Hawaii Representative Mr. Herb Lum - Absent

Legislative Update

Mr. Herring Kalua said he did not attend the February State Veterans Advisory Board Meeting, but he knows there are bills in the house and senate for maintenance for the Island of Hawaii.

Veterans Cemeteries I, II and III - Columbariums

Mr. Kalua reported that columbariums would be done at all cemeteries statewide.

He'll know more when he attends the State Veterans Advisory Board meeting in March and asked members if they had any concerns to address to the Board. Mr. Lum is doing a good job and is up to date on everything. He is also a part of the State Veterans Advisory Board's Legislative Committee.

Mr. Highley wanted to put on record that the columbarium at Veterans III has been in use for approximately 18 months and 38 spaces have been filled out of the possible 96. When discussing the installation of columbariums at the other cemeteries recommends including another 1 or 2 units for West Hawaii.

Grave Vaults

Mr. Minoru Hanato asked if the County was given any specifications for assembling the vaults. During a recent burial the first vault was assembled; the vault has holes on the top and bottom that looks like should be bolted together, but they used snapties that could break and cause plastic liners to cave in.

Director Engelhard said we were initially told that staff from the Oahu Veterans Cemetery would come to give instructions when the contract with DAGS was done, which obviously is not complete yet, but is almost done. Vaults were sent over from OVS and additional vaults came from an order that Mark Moses submitted when he gajied the money from Representative Cindy Evans. He bought vaults for all of the islands using the funds that were suppose to come to Hawaii County for maintenance, however, we got vaults and will continue to receive them for awhile, hopefully forever, but don't know for sure. Miles Okamura of Oahu Veterans Cemetery in Kaneohe said the vaults are suppose to be ziptied shut. The P&R Kona staff was ready to bolt them shut, but it's a much more time consuming process than ziptying. Its suppose to happen by using a lowering device to lower the casket into the grave; the bottom flat piece goes on top of that lowering device while the ceremony is on. After everybody leaves or when they are ready for the burial, they're suppose to put the dome top on and ziptie it shut. Six or eight holes line up on the top and bottom and then they are suppose to lower casket into the ground. The zipties is the recommended method and the method used in Honolulu.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii

Reforestation Project

Mr. Gaspar couldn't attend the January 26th work project. Guest Mr. John Grogan reported that at least 100 community volunteers planted and pulled fountain grass for several hours. It was well attended and very productive.

Veterans Cemeteries I and II

Columbariums

Director Engelhard said we didn't have a quorum last month and she still wanted to know if Veterans Advisory Committee Members were able to poll members of their organizations as to what they wanted to do with existing columbariums for Veteran Cemeteries I and II. She asked if members had any reports.

Chairwoman Fox reported that DAV Chapter 9 is interested in columbariums, and liked the idea of utilizing the existing one for a monument wall.

Mr. Norman Stahl wanted the issue clarified since he wasn't present at the last meeting. Chairwoman Fox explained that the existing columbariums at Veterans I and II are unuseable. We've been told that we will have new columbariums built so we would like to know from the organizations what they would like done with the existing ones. Just remove them or use them for memorabilia.

Director Engelhard said once the wall is full, we wouldn't continue the practice of putting up memorabilia. It wouldn't be easy to make it look nice and she feels the best thing would be to tear them down.

Chairwoman Fox asked members again to ask their organizations for their recommendation and report at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery III - Fence

Director Engelhard reported that President John Grogan of the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Development and Expansion Association sent an email dated January 8, 2008 (VAC - Comm. 08-02) providing a commitment to maintain the 62 acre perimeter hogwire fence for at least ten years. She said we appreciate it, however, Scott

Gebhardtshauer, of VA (Project Manager, State Cemetery Grants Program, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs) would like to wait and since they will be spending approximately 5 million dollars on the cemetery in West Hawaii she thinks it would be a good idea to wait a little while.

West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery III - Complaint Regarding Charges

Mr. Hanato said while at the cemetery the other day a veteran whose stepfather passed away complained that he had to pay \$300 for the burial. Mr. Hanato explained to him the only time families have to pay is if burial is during the weekend, holiday or overtime. He said the funeral is tomorrow.

Director Engelhard reported that he knows that the burial must be completed by 1:30pm so that staff can be back at the baseyard by 2:30pm or there will be overtime charges. With traffic it may take approximately one hour to get back to the baseyard in Kailua-Kona. That is the reason burials are normally scheduled before noon, anything after that will probably result in overtime.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery III - Columbariums

Director Engelhard said in response to Mr. Highley's request for additional columbariums, there are more columbariums in the new plan. Just yesterday she spoke with Dwayne Hamada and another guy from Design Partners (Company that did the most recent upgrade of the facility) about the new sections in the conceptual plan. The new section will also have an area for ground urn burials.

Maintenance Cost for Veterans Cemeteries on the Big Island Requested by Senator Lorraine Inouye

Director Engelhard reported that Senator Inouye requested cost information for maintaining all three veterans' cemeteries on the Big Island. The budget for maintaining all three cemeteries this year is \$167,000 and we still receive only \$22,500 from the state. Unsure if we will be successful in obtaining additional funds this year, but as Mr. Kalua pointed out not only is the OVS asking for money for all of the veterans cemeteries and at least \$100,000, they are asking Representative Cindy Evans for another appropriation specifically for the Big Island. We also asked Mark Moses of OVS to speak on our behalf.

Mr. Kalua said there is a Legislative Bill with funding specific for Hawaii Island. Last year the \$100,000 wasn't specific so they were able to move it around. He told them that this year it would be for the Big Island. He also stated that Senator Inouye and Representative Evans are both Chairs of their Military Affairs Committees.

Mr. Kalua told OVS that everybody has their own representatives, councilmembers and Mayors so if they want to be a part of the package it should be put in altogether, but he didn't want to wait.

West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery III

Mr. Highley asked the status of the budget request to allow a later closing of Veterans Cemetery III.

Director Engelhard responded that P&R is requesting for \$25,000 to close Veterans Cemetery III which is in the budget process. She is unsure as to how successful keeping it there would be. She said that the Department of Parks and Recreation will present their budget to Council on April 3rd (sometime between 9 am and 12 noon) and the Mayor will present the overall County Budget on April 1st. If the funding passes through the budget process, we will contract the closing of the cemetery for 7pm.

Mr. Highley asked if there would be public hearings relating to the budget.

Director Engelhard said there will be public hearings and he can go to the County website: www.hawaii-county.com to get the public hearing schedule. (***CORRECTION: At the meeting Director Engelhard said budget public hearings are held all over the island, however, this year there will be (one) public hearing held on March 24th at 5pm in the County Councilroom in Hilo and will be Videoconferenced to both Waimea and Kona Council Office sites.***)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on March 20, 2008.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 3:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathalie Santos, Secretary