

VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, March 16, 2006
County Council Room and Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)
3:00 p.m.

Present

Members

Don D. Bennett
Richard Highley
Roy Hinokawa
Louis Kaiwi
Wendall Kekumu
Morris Kihara
George Mukai
Gilbert Sampaia
Hideo Segawa

Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)

Members

Richard Stevens

Guests (Kona)

Antonio Gaspar
Ted K. Funk
Herb Lum

Guests (Hilo)

Boss Hanato
Minoru Hanato
Herring Kalua
Alfredo Tobias

Ex-Officio (Hilo)

Patricia Engelhard, Director, P&R
Keith Ribbentrop, OVS

Also Present (Hilo)

Nathalie Santos, Secretary

Absent

Denny Austen
Penny Fox
Paul Johnston
Patrick Pavao
George Yamamoto

CALL TO ORDER

- Chairman Richard Highley called the meeting to order at 3:00pm

STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii

Minoru Hanato expressed his concern relating to the shortage of space left for burials at the Cemetery (room only for approximately 9 more graves). He also said that vandals splattered paint on the Cemetery sign located on the Queen Ka'ahumanu Highway. Director Engelhard will contact State Highways about repairing the sign. Mr. Kalua who is an employee of State Highways will also check on sign.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS MINUTES – FEBRUARY 16, 2006

- The minutes of the February 16, 2006 meeting were approved with the following correction: Page 4, under Meeting with Cindy Evans:
Correction: Minoru Hanato, Commander of Chapter 7 sent the letter to Cindy Evans, not Richard Highley.

REPORT ON CEMETERIES – STATE VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Hawaii Island Representative Mr. Herring Kalua

Veterans Cemetery III – West Hawaii – Funding Update

Mr. Herring Kalua reported that nothing important was discussed at the last State Veterans Advisory Committee Meeting because OVS Director Colonel Cruickshank and representatives from other state departments did not attend. He did request update on graveliners and hopes to get information at the next meeting scheduled for April 7, 2006. He will also request graveliners for East Hawaii cemeteries.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

VETERANS CEMETERY II – EXPANSION PROJECT

Director Engelhard reported there was a meeting/site review on March 10th with representatives of M&E Pacific, GW Construction, Island Landscaping and the County.

The following six (6) items must be corrected:

- 1) Graded areas including the adjacent transitions to provide smooth surfaces with uniform levels and slopes in conformance with the grading plan.
- 2) Provide Hilo grass with healthy growth and a minimum of 95% coverage as specified. The invasive weeds and alien grasses will not exceed 10% of overall grassed area.
- 3) Provide Mock Orange with healthy growth at Committal Area and Equipment Sheds as specified.
- 4) Repair damaged existing landscape.

- 5) Remove CMU block fronting drywell along Laimana Street and establish and/or repair roadway shoulder grass cover as required.
- 6) Remove silt run-off from existing drywells along Laimana Street.

Park Planner James Komata estimates these corrections will take 3 to 4 months to complete. Looking at approximate completion date of July 2006.

In response to Member Penny Fox's question at last month's meeting regarding making the new and old roofs for the Maintenance Enclosure a uniform color, Director Engelhard responded that won't be done. The contracts called for the contractor to add on to the roof and that is what they did. Maybe sometime down the line, the roofs will be painted to match, but colors will not be handled with this current contract.

Louis Kaiwi said that initially the question regarding the colors of the roof came up when State Cemetery Grants Program Project Manager Scott Gebhardtsbauer of the federal government when he visited the cemetery. Mr. Kaiwi feels it's unfair that the County has to deal with this problem.

Chairman Highley asked if the contract had already been funded and by whom. Director Engelhard responded that the state had already funded the contract.

Director Engelhard said she doesn't feel its that much of an eyesore, it would be nicer if both were one color, but it's a light green and a dark green so its not that bad. We wouldn't be able to get the state to agree to another contract for the roof.

VETERANS CEMETERY III – WEST HAWAII **(Reforestation Project)**

Chairman Highley said that funds issued to West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Expansion Development Association have been used towards a contract for the fencing of the cemetery. That project is waiting on materials from the fencing contractor Mr. Harold Deniz.

Vice Chairman Richard Stevens reported that there are about 500 plants in the ground which are all doing great. Some plants are among the rarest species that still remain in Hawaii.

Vice Chairman Stevens invited everyone to the next planting scheduled for April 28th not April 7th as previously reported. The date was changed to accommodate the students who will be a main part of the planting force. The slogan for this planting will be "Keiki Planting Trees". The last planting was dedicated to the Hawaii National Guards who just returned home. The April 28th planting will begin at 9am and lunch will be held at 11am.

Vice Chairman Stevens also reported that the greenhouse should be arriving any day and the sign project should be done soon.

VETERANS CEMETERY III - West Hawaii
(Funding for Improvements, Expansion of Grave Sites and Graveliners)

Chairman Highley said that Mr. Kalua reported at the last meeting that there was an increase from \$25,000 to \$275,000 funding to improve and enlarge the plan for the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery III. He asked Mr. Kalua the status of the new plan and requested that this committee review a copy of the plans.

Mr. Kalua responded that DAGS is working on design planning which should be ready for review approximately June or July, but because no one attended the last meeting, there was no current report. He is hoping they will attend the April 7th meeting and provide more information.

Chairman Highley said it was reported earlier by Mr. Hanato that there are just nine burial plots left and this plan probably also encompasses the graveliners. He asked Mr. Kalua if we would run into a dead end on burials while waiting for that plan. Mr. Kalua responded that he hopes not, the preparation for the next area should be in place with the liners and he hopes to have more to report at the next meeting.

Mr. Kalua said he would ask for a report from Mr. Morita of DAGS who is handling all of the cemeteries statewide.

Chairman Highley said that over a year and a half ago there was \$100,000 allotted for graveliners which never materialized. He asked Mr. Kalua to inform the state it is a critical situation as there is only a small amount of plots left, we may have to turn veterans away. If we start to bury in the new section, we will have the same problems as there were in the first section.

Mr. Kalua said when he came on board in July there was a problem with the columbariums which he's been working on and the State admitted they dropped the ball in that situation. He said they reassured him that the funds would be encumbered in June and July so he will wait for the next report from DAGS and follow up.

VETERANS CEMETERIES I AND II
Columbariums

Chairman Highley asked Mr. Kalua about the status of improvements to the columbariums at Veterans Cemeteries I and II. Mr. Kalua said he still needs to go with someone to look at the problems of the columbariums at both cemeteries. Director Engelhard scheduled to meet Mr. Kalua at Veterans II the next day at 9 am.

VETERANS CEMETERY III - WEST HAWAII
Meeting with Representative Cindy Evans

Chairman Highley said the letter written by Chapter 7 Commander Minoru Hanato was sent to Representative Cindy Evans and other legislators, however, a response was not received. It's discouraging when responses aren't received or at least acknowledged.

FUNDING FROM THE STATE FOR MAINTENANCE OF VETERANS CEMETERIES

Request for Funding Not Sent to Legislators

Chairman Highley asked if responses were received when funding requests were sent to the legislature in the past. Director Engelhard explained that we did not receive a response and we never do.

Chairman Highley said he wished someone would at least respond to committee, otherwise committee meetings may just be ceremonial and efforts would not be effective.

Director Engelhard explained that a request for funds submitted to the legislature does not require a response. If funding were available, the response would be here are the funds. If they can't fund request, there will be no response.

Chairman Highley informed committee that he did not write the letter to the legislature requesting funds for maintenance of the Cemeteries on the Big Island. He felt that if Mr. Kaiwi never received a response then he would just be wasting time.

Chairman Highley said committee should think of some way to get the attention of the legislators, state and federal government officials, so they know that members of the committee are veterans and deserve the same honor and regard as veterans across the nation.

VETERANS CEMETERY III – WEST HAWAII

Cemetery Hours

Director Engelhard said extending the hours at the cemetery would require a more than half time position, which we don't have. The request last month came too late, the budget process started in August. She will put the request in August 2006 for the following fiscal year.

Chairman Highley said there also is a problem due to heavy traffic during late afternoons. It would take approximately 3 hours to get to and from the Cemetery from Kailua if closure is around 5pm. Director Engelhard said that even if you get a full time person at the cemetery, the hours would be from 6 am to 2:30 pm or if she can receive union approval, she may be able to get it open from 7:45 am to 4:30 pm.

NEW BUSINESS

RULE 7 - RULES RELATING TO VETERANS CEMETERIES BURIAL TIMES

Mr. Delbert Nishimoto shared concerns from constituents about the burial times at Veterans Cemetery II, not familiar with burial hours at Veterans Cemetery III. Initially, families could select a time between 8am until 4pm or 8am until 3pm. He heard that Rule 7 was recently changed, midday there is a lunch break, which at times causes a hardship for mortuaries and St. Joseph church because of the time of their services. He asked committee to look at the issue and discuss in an executive session. This issue was

also published in the paper at one time. He said that no one is taking action and the public is concerned.

Mr. Kaouiwi said when the article came in the newspaper, he went to see a UPW Union Business Agent to ask why this issue came up of overtime and why they are putting this hardship on the director. They claimed it wasn't them, it came from the top of the union. He said he asked the business agent to get back to him after checking with top union representatives on Oahu about what can be done and he hasn't heard yet. He will go back to the union again. The employees did not ask for compensation, they were adjusting their hours, completing the burial and then taking their lunch break. It was the union that said you must take your break at regular time, or receive compensation.

Action - Meeting Set

Director Engelhard suggested that a few members set up a meeting with her to discuss burial times at Veterans Cemeteries. Chairman Highley and Delbert Nishimoto will meet with Director Engelhard in her office prior to the April 20th meeting at 2:00 pm.

PURPLE HEART MONUMENT

Chairman Highley said at a recent Military Order of the Purple Heart meeting there was a discussion on the possibility of the County accepting a Purple Heart Monument at Veterans Cemetery II. At this point it is for informational purposes only. Member Don Bennett commented that it was too early to bring up request. (The rest of Don Bennett's comments were inaudible).

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

HAWAII COUNTY CODE AMENDMENTS - CHAPTER 15

Director Engelhard announced that the Hawaii County Code Amendments approved during the February 16th meeting proposing to change Military Order of the Purple Heart, Chapter 731-Hilo to just MOPH and to add a slot for Korean War Veterans was scheduled to be heard at the Council Committee on Public Safety and Parks and Recreation on March 21, 2006. Due to minor changes requested by staff of the Legislative Auditor's Office, the matter will be withdrawn from that meeting and brought up at a future date possibly on April 7th.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Highley shared information regarding events scheduled at KMC:

March 17th - St. Patrick's Day Buffet

March 18th - A Halau Performance

March 19th - Hawaii Volcanoes National Park presents people and land of Kahuku

March 31st - Luau Day Bingo

April 1st - 11th Annual Spring Dance Concert

April 16th - Easter Egg Hunt

MEMBERSHIP - VACANCIES

Chairman Highley shared concerns about filling vacancies to avoid the lack of quorum at future meetings. Since it's been difficult filling the American Legion vacancy, there may be someone in the Hilo Post interested in serving. The Independent slot must be filled by the Mayor. Other vacancies include Veterans of the Vietnam War - Wendell Kekumu will be renewed, awaiting paperwork. There is also a vacancy for a representative from the Korean War Veterans.

Chairman Highley mentioned filling the DAV vacancy (however, representative Roy Hinokawa is serving a term which expires in 2007).

Louis Kaiwi - Farewell - Thanks

Past Chairman Louis Kaiwi expressed his sincere thanks to Director Engelhard and other members for their help during his term on the Veterans Advisory Committee. Mr. Kaiwi's term officially ended in December 2005. He shared that he may attend meetings from time to time as a concerned citizen.

MAHALO TO PAST CHAIRMAN AND MEMBER LOUIS KAOIWI

Mr. Mukai asked that the Committee show their appreciation to outgoing Chairman Louis Kaiwi who served for many years during the April 20th meeting. He asked Director Engelhard if we have funds for gathering and she will check. Mr. Mukai said that if we don't have funds, to assess each member a fee.

Mr. Highley will also contact members to plan something.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, April 20, 2006 at 3:00 p.m. in the Hawai'i County Councilroom and video-conferencing at the Kona Mayor's Office.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 3:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathalie Santos, Secretary