

VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, May 18, 2006
County Council Room and Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)
3:00 p.m.

Present

Members

Denny Austen
Penny Fox
Richard Highley
Roy Hinokawa
Morris Kihara
George Mukai
Gilbert Sampaia
Hideo Segawa

Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)

Members

Richard Stevens

Guests (Kona)

Antonio Gaspar
Boss Hanato
Minoru Hanato
Herb Lum
Joe Pretsch
Lee Pretsch
Alfredo Tobias

Guests (Hilo)

Ex-Officio (Hilo)

Pamela Mizuno, Deputy Director, P&R
Keith Ribbentrop, OVS

Also Present (Hilo)

Nathalie Santos, Secretary
Herring Kalua

Absent

Don D. Bennett
Wendall Kekumu
Patrick Pavao
George Yamamoto

CALL TO ORDER

- Chairman Richard Highly called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm

- Director Engelhard absent today, Deputy Director Pamela Mizuno representing the County.

STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No Statements from the public.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS MINUTES – APRIL 20, 2006

- The minutes of the April 20, 2006 meeting were approved as submitted.

REPORT ON CEMETERIES – STATE VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Hawaii Island Representative Mr. Herring Kalua

Mr. Kalua reported that he did not receive any update from the Director of the Office of Veterans Services. The next State Veterans Advisory Board meeting will be held on June 2nd.

Veterans Cemeteries I And II - Columbariums

Chairman Highley asked if there has been any decision on assessment of Columbariums on Cemeteries I and II.

Mr. Kalua said they are looking at fixing columbariums so that each niche will have its own separate cover instead of having 4 niches under one cover.

Committee's Recommendation On Columbariums for Veterans I and II

Following a discussion, committee voted to recommend removal of both Columbariums from Veterans Cemetery I and II and to install new temporary columbariums similar to the ones at West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery with approximately 96 niches at Veterans Cemetery II only. Mr. Kalua will inform Director and State Veterans Advisory Board.

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii

The veterans group in Kona received a map from Major Neil Mitsuyoshi and inserted recommendations they feel is more practical. Minoru Hanato requested Mr. Kalua pick up the marked up map to take to the next meeting on Oahu.

VETERANS CEMETERY III - WEST HAWAII

Graveliners

Chairman Highley read an email that Major Mitsuyoshi sent to Director Engelhard regarding the graveliners.

Everything seems to be going well. Your involvement with this has really helped expedite the review and approval process with DPW and Planning. Getting the plans reviewed and approved for signature by DPW and Planning will allow DAGS to advertise signed/approved plans for bid. The Contractor (once selected) will come in for the grading permit. DAGS (Gina & Joe) also just coordinated and completed the selection committee for the Architect that will be used on future phases of work at the West Hawaii Cemetery, Phase IIB. The hurdle that we have right now is that we are still awaiting Governor/B&F approval for the delegation of expenditure of funds, advertisement for bids, and

allotment request. Hopefully, this will happen shortly.

I also wanted to clarify the concerns surrounding construction of the chapel. The VA wants to revisit the design of the chapel that they had previously approved (Note: They are concerned that it needs to be more similar in "style" and consistent with the facilities that are provided in Hilo). We do not need State funding for the construction of the chapel, as it will be 100% federally funded by the VA. However, we do need 100% of the design funded with state funding upfront (Note: These funds will be reimbursed back to the state once the plans are approved by the VA and the construction is completed).

Hoe Ram for West Hawaii

Chairman Highley reported there were (2) urn burials recently that the County could not dig down (2) feet into the ground for. The families wanted urns buried in the ground instead of placed in the columbarium. Fortunately, Mr. Harold Denis who was constructing the fence surrounding the cemetery had his hoe ram at the site and was agreeable to help the County dig for the (2) urns. This equipment has since been removed from the cemetery because he no longer needs it for his work there.

Chairman Highley said there is a suggestion for the County to obtain a Hoe Ram to be adapted to the Back Hoe to be used in all of West Hawaii by the County not just at the cemetery. He said currently if there is any hoe ram work to be done in West Hawaii, the equipment and an operator has to be brought over from East Hawaii.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

VETERANS CEMETERY II – EXPANSION PROJECT

Deputy Director Mizuno reported status has not changed since last month's meeting.

VETERANS CEMETERY III – WEST HAWAII

(Reforestation Project)

Vice Chairman Stevens reported 125 volunteers showed up at the April 28th planting. Over 400 plants were planted that day, for a total of approximately 1,000 Hawaiian plants. Very fortunate that the PTA Commander has brought troops at every planting thus far and there have also been many volunteers from throughout the island. The next major planting will be scheduled during the latter part of August in order to allow the University to be back in session.

Vice Chairman Stevens thanked Minoru Hanato and Rick Highley for their hard work to help erect the greenhouse, which should be up soon.

Chairman Highley reported that the fence posts are erected surrounding the cemetery and they are now awaiting materials to come in which couldn't be purchased locally.

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii

Gates - Locks

Chairman Highley said some of the materials (some wooden poles and two gates) were stolen from the cemetery. Suggested that it may be time to change the combination on the lock. There were concerns about how families would get to gravesites - the cemetery is only open 8 am to 12 noon on the weekdays and closed during the weekends. There is a suggestion to request help from the state, the cemetery is on state land maintained by the County and there are two state parks nearby; Kua Bay right across the street of the cemetery and Kekaha Kai approximately (1) mile towards Kailua which have gates that are opened and closed daily by state employees (opened at 8 am and closed at 5pm - including weekends). That could solve the problem about the combination numbers being released. If people needed access to the cemetery for times other than those hours, they would need permission from the County. Besides the stolen items, people have been coming in to haul rocks from the Kukio property using the HELCO utility roadway; they even brought in a backhoe (Kukio staff was notified and security guards spoke to rock gatherers).

Keith Ribbentrop of OVS will make request with someone responsible from the state to have their employees open and close gate at the West Hawaii Cemetery.

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii

Expansion

George Mukai said he was concerned about the amount of space left at Cemetery III.

Chairman Highley said that County personnel are trying to use spots that can't be used for casket burials for urn burials.

Minoru Hanato stated that he doesn't have an exact count of number of plots left especially since employees are having difficulty digging plots. That's why its important they talk to Mr. Kalua before he goes to their next meeting to share their concerns and recommendations about the expansion and parking lot area.

Chairman Highley said in response to the number of plots left, it is estimated around (8), however, depending on what is underneath the surface they are unsure what areas can be dug.

NEW BUSINESS

VETERANS CEMETERY I

Pavilion - Open Wall for Viewing

Mr. Austen said that sometime back he mentioned cutting the wall at the pavilion to provide viewing of the flagpole and County Band during ceremonies at Cemetery I. The 442nd Veterans constructed pavilion, he wouldn't consider suggesting anything without first obtaining their consent. He doesn't know the cost of removal of approximately (2) feet of the wall, but hoping that funding requests could be made to the Mayor, Senator

Inouye and Representative Case. Possibly Herring Kalua could help with obtaining funds for this project.

George Mukai announced that matter was discussed at a 442nd Meeting and members have said they will go along with whatever the County of Hawaii decides, however, they are unable to provide funds or labor for this project. The wall is made of hollow tile and has reinforcement in it.

Penny Fox asked if it would be easier to put more concrete on the floor to raise it, but George Mukai said that would be difficult because you would have to grade the entire floor. Mr. Mukai feels the most economical way would be to cut the wall - there is a cement cap and it could be cut depending on the size of the blocks either 16" or 24".

Chairman Highley asked how funds could be obtained to proceed with this project, should we solicit funds from the County Council?

Penny Fox recommended that this item be put on next month's agenda so that it can be discussed with Director Engelhard. Deputy Director Mizuno said members first need to come up with an estimated cost and then try to insert into County budget. She also shared that she is unsure where that project would fall in the list of priorities and its too late for this fiscal year's budget as Council just past first reading of the budget last night.

George Mukai asked if its too late to make a request for funds for this project. Deputy Director Mizuno said you can try to make a request from a councilmember for discretionary funds, but its important to first have an estimated cost. She also said that P&R currently has 115 projects.

Chairman Highley suggests that members keep on top of this project and if its something that cannot be done this year, possibly look at it for next year.

COST OF GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

Chairman Highley read the letter members received from the Cost of Government Commission dated April 10, 2006.

Mr. Mukai asked if this committee only handles business concerning the cemeteries.

Mr. Austen responded that other matters such as the parade, etc. are only discussed at the request of the Mayor.

Members did not have any comments to offer the Cost of Government Commission.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

NO REPORT

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Memorial Day Ceremony – East Hawai‘i

The Memorial Day Ceremony in East Hawaii will be held at Veterans Cemetery I on Monday, May 29th beginning at 9:45 am. Mr. Mukai asked that members go to Kalakaua Park at 9 am on that day prior to the service at the cemetery to support the Mayor as he makes a presentation there. Normally there are only 3 or 4 people at Kalakaua Park.

Mr. Austen said he puts flags on each of the (11) memorial stones around the Downtown Hilo Post Office Building honoring (11) veterans of World War I.

Memorial Day Ceremony – West Hawai‘i

Chairman Highley announced there will be a Memorial Day Observance at Veterans Cemetery III also on May 29th beginning at 11 am and the guest speaker will be Senator Akaka.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, June 15, 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 4:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathalie Santos, Secretary