

VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, June 21, 2007, 3:00 p.m.
Hawaii County Council Room (Hilo) and Kona Mayor's Office (Via
Videoconferencing)

Present

Members

Penny Fox
Richard Highley
Roy Hinokawa
Edward Lee
George Mukai
George Yamamoto

Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)

Members

Antonio Gaspar
Minoru Hanato
Robert Welter

Guests (Kona)

Herb Lum

Ex-Officio (Hilo)

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

Also Present (Hilo)

Nathalie Santos, Secretary
Carolle Brulee-Wilson
John Young

Absent

Denny Austen
Don Bennett
Wendall Kekumu
Patrick Pavao
Gilbert Sampaia
Richard Stevens

Call to Order

Chairman Highly called the meeting to order at 3:10 pm - (9) members present.

Announcement

Director Patricia Engelhard announced that newly appointed Deputy Corporation Counsel Renee Schoen is now assigned to advise the Veterans Advisory Committee on behalf of the County of Hawaii. She replaces Diane Noda who formerly assisted with matters concerning this committee.

STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No Statements from the public.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS MINUTES – March, 2007

- The minutes of the March 15, 2007 meeting were approved as submitted. The meetings for April and May were cancelled.

REPORT ON CEMETERIES – STATE VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Hawaii Island Representative Mr. Herring Kalua

Mr. Kalua did not attend the meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Veterans Cemetery II - Status of Expansion Project

Director Engelhard reported that the County of Hawaii has finally accepted the Veterans Cemetery II Expansion Project and this item can now be removed from future agendas.

Veterans Cemetery I and II - Columbariums

Director Engelhard reported that P&R employees installed metal framework with (1) niche closed at Veterans Cemetery II to see how it works. If that works, staff will do the same to all of the niches. The cover is made of stainless steel and only (1) niche is exposed at a time, not like the initial set up which exposed (4) niches at once.

Members were asked to look at the Columbarium and share their thoughts at next month's meeting on whether or not this set up would work for all columbariums.

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii

Reforestation Project

Chairman Highley said that work is continuing on the Greenhouse and irrigation supply line.

Mr. Antonio Gaspar reported that 175 volunteers helped plant trees and pull weeds at the April 28th work day. Volunteers from BISAC (30), Pohakuloa Training Area (1 squad of soldiers), Four Seasons Resort (10), students and various community and volunteer organizations also participated. Dr. Richard Stevens coordinated the work day.

Fence Project

Mr. Minoru Hanato reported that (2) gates at the entrance of fenced area has been completed and is being used for approximately 2 to 3 weeks. The gates on the inside is not being closed in order to first check if there are any goats left on the inside of the property. So far there are no goats in there. Elderly women also have a hard time opening the gates so it's being left open. The electric gate opener is on order and will be

installed upon receipt. Eventually the fenced area on the inside will need to be removed for the expansion of the burial sites on the west side.

Veterans Cemeteries - Information on Locating Graves

Mr. Hanato shared that mainland visitors came to Veterans Cemetery III during a weekend to look for a family member's grave. They could not find the name on listing stapled on bulletin board, and they also checked at the Hilo cemeteries, but were unable to find grave there either. Mr. Hanato suggested improving system for people to locate graves at the cemeteries.

Director Engelhard will check possibility of posting that information on the website and report results at the next meeting. She said to have a listing for the Veterans Cemeteries at the sites would be difficult. Mr. Hanato said most people don't bring computers on vacation and Director Engelhard said they could go to internet cafes if posted on website or call the P&R office.

Graveliners

Chairman Highley said he believes the Department of Defense will be supplying (30) graveliners. Director Engelhard said if we run out of graveliners and aren't able to get anymore from DOD, we will have to charge the families.

Mr. Hanato reported that the families paid for the graveliners for the last burials at Veterans Cemetery III.

Chairman Highley said P&R employee Norman took (5) hours to dig a grave recently because he hit blue rock. That portion was never intended for graves, the next one should be okay because its inside, but space is a problem. Norman shared that if the fence came down; he could do more burials along the last row. Permission needed to remove fence.

Director Engelhard asked Chairman Highley to call her about it since she needs more information about fence removal. She thought there was plenty of room between the last row and fence, however, Chairman Highley suggested she speak to employees who told him there isn't enough room to get a bulldozer in.

Mr. Lee asked if the Veterans Cemeteries in Hilo would receive graveliners too?

Chairman Highley said the West Hawaii Cemetery needs graveliners because of the dangers of graves collapsing due to the large boulders that was in the original fill. He said he didn't know if that was a problem in Hilo too.

Director Engelhard said it is a problem in Hilo as well and the families have been providing graveliners. The grant gave 30 graveliners specifically for the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery.

Chairman Highley suggested the state fund purchases for new backhoes that have tracks, which would be more appropriate for the cemeteries.

Director Engelhard said she could make that request.

Mr. Hanato shared a story about a collapsed grave in West Hawaii, which had no graveliner. During a new burial, while the workers covered with fill, the sides of the casket caved in. About two weeks later the top also caved in. Some of the caskets are made with pressboard. That is why graveliners are needed.

Mr. Welter also shared that the rain causes some of the problems and not the type of backhoe.

Master Plan

Chairman Highley was hoping to ask Mr. Kalua about the Preliminary Schedule for the Master Plan. Veterans Administration only approved the grave expansion and is not approving the rest of the master plan. A Pre-Bid meeting was held recently, Chairman Highley was unable to attend.

Director Engelhard will report on the Master Plan and the status of the bids at the next meeting.

Chairman Highley said that \$300,000 was budgeted for project design, he understands that the contract for Design Partners cost \$105,000, he would like to know what the balance would be used for. This information is just to be a part of the record.

NEW BUSINESS

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Director of Office of Veterans Services

Mr. Keith Ribbentrop of the Office of Veterans Services announced that Ed Cruickshank resigned and has been replaced by newly appointed Director of Veterans Services Mr. Mark Moses effective June 15th. Mr. Moses is a retired Marine Corp Major and a former congressman who represented the Ewa and Makakilo districts. He is planning to visit Hilo during the first week of July.

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii - Expansion Project

Bid Closing - June 28, 2007

Mr. Ribbentrop reported that (6) contractors and West Hawaii Veterans attended the Pre-Bid meeting on June 6th. Unsure if any bids were submitted yet for the bid closing date of June 28th. The newspaper article written by Ken Eaton generated additional inquiries, smaller contractors requested bid documents for their use. He believes there is more interest during this cycle compared to the last time.

Certificate of Appreciation to Commanding Officer - Pohakuloa Training Area

Mr. George Mukai recommended that the Committee send a Certificate of Insurance to Lieutenant Colonel Kimberly A. Rapacz the Commanding Officer at the Pohakuloa Training Area as she departs for a new assignment. The committee approved this request, especially for the volunteer assistance she and her troops provided at the Veterans Advisory Committee Reforestation Planting Project. Vice Chairman Penny Fox will sign the Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of the Veterans Advisory Committee.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

No Report.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 3:45 pm.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on July 26, 2007.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathalie Santos, Secretary