

**VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday, November 18, 2004**  
**County Council Room and Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)**  
**3:00 p.m.**

**Present**

**Members**

Denny Austen  
Penny Fox  
Richard Highley  
Roy Hinokawa  
Paul Johnston  
Louis Kaiwi  
Wendall Kekumu  
Morris Kihara  
George Mukai  
Hideo Segawa  
Dale Wilson

**Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)**

**Members**

Peter Callahan

**Guests (Kona)**

Jim Browne (KWV)  
Les Chess (Big Island Golf)  
Ted Funk (American Legion)  
Minoru Hanato (DAV Chapter 7)  
Herb Lum (Korean Veterans)  
Richard Stevens (UH)  
Ken Tashiro (For Bob Welter – Korean Veterans)  
Alfredo Tobias (DAV Chapter 7)

**Ex-Officio (Hilo)**

Patricia Engelhard, Director, P&R

**Also Present (Hilo)**

Delbert Nishimoto  
Nathalie Santos, Secretary

**Absent**

Patrick Pavao  
Gilbert Sampaia  
George Yamamoto

**Call to Order**

- Chairman Kaiwi called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m.,

## **STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

### **Veterans Cemetery III – West Hawai'i – Maintenance of Newly Landscaped Area Maintenance Responsibilities**

Les Chess stated that there was a meeting this morning attended by County representatives Steve Morifuji and Jeff Alani, Richard Highley, Minoru Hanato and himself. They discussed maintenance of new sod area, the County will mow grass every other Wednesday, Veteran volunteers will remove flowers, beer cans, flags, vases, and various items left at the gravesites prior to that Wednesday. The Big Island Golf Course Superintendent's Association will do all of the fertilizing on a monthly basis and all of the herbiciding as needed. Irrigation will be the responsibility of the County, but the Golf Course Superintendent's Association will help if needed. Watering will be reduced from (4) times a day to (3) times per day.

### **Previous Meeting Minutes – September 23, 2004**

- The Minutes of the October 14, 2004 meeting were approved as submitted.

### **STATE VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD – REPORT**

On behalf of the OVS Director and all members of the State Veterans Advisory Board, Big Island Member Delbert Nishimoto, commended and congratulated Les Chess and all volunteers on the outstanding job and community involvement for the landscaping improvements, including creating a beautiful lawn at the West Hawai'i Veterans Cemetery III.

### **Graveliners – Veterans Cemetery III – West Hawai'i**

Delbert announced that the specs for the graveliners have been submitted to the Feds and are still being worked on. It is taking awhile, at least 60 days. They are continuing to work on this project. Graveliners will be provided piece meal, maybe just 10 at a time. Excavation will be done incrementally. The \$100,000 allocated for graveliners comes from federal funds (grant-in-aid).

Mr. Highley shared his concern relating to the high cost of excavating incrementally and suggests that the entire area be excavated at once. Delbert suggested that when the plans are complete, the engineer be advised and matter discussed at that time to see how far the funds can go.

Director Engelhard recommended that the entire \$100,000 be spent on graveliners one time rather than spending portions at a time.

Mr. Lum asked if veterans benefits include graveliners and Delbert responded that it does not. It is newly developed and the most economical solution for the conditions at the West Hawaii cemetery. Chairman Kaowi explained that the veteran entitlement includes the opening and closing of a grave, headstone and a flag. Mr. Wilson said he will check information on veterans benefits and confirm with Mr. Lum via a phone call.

### **Temporary Columbarium**

Delbert stated that the current refocus is on a temporary columbarium which will cost approximately \$26,000 each. Funds will be provided by a grant-in-aid from the federal government at no cost to the County except to develop or pour concrete foundations. Specific dimensions are required. State Cemetery Grants Program Project Manager Scott Gebhardtshauer visited West Hawai'i Cemetery recently and was informed that the urns are currently buried in the ground just as casket burials. He was astounded and suggests utilizing temporary columbariums instead. In 2005, permanent columbariums should be available.

Mr. Highley suggested utilizing community volunteers to pour concrete slab for the temporary columbarium.

Mr. Nishimoto said that the concrete slab needs to be poured as soon as possible and is only temporary. Once the permanent columbarium is constructed, the temporary one would be removed and the slab broken up.

Director Engelhard stated that urns do not have to take up a regular size cemetery plot. There can be a designated urn section which would only take small spaces.

### **Permanent Columbarium**

Mr. Nishimoto said that Scott Gebhardtshauer and Keith Ribbentrop have photos and a schematic drawing of a sample national memorial columbarium burial site. In the center will be a memorial and then a hub.

### **Funds - \$300,000 (Allocated in 2004 Legislative Session)**

Delbert shared that the \$300,000 allocated in the 2004 session is in House Bill 1800 (the Budget Bill) and the Governor still needs to release those funds. The Office of Veterans Services needs to write a letter to the Governor requesting that she release funds. The funds are to be used for West Hawai'i Veterans Cemetery maintenance, and is designated for the pavilion/shelter.

The OVS is expecting to hire a retired Engineer on a 180 day contract to oversee projects and funding. Currently the engineer in charge has been difficult to contact.

### **Veterans Cemetery III – Damaged Gate**

Mr. Highley shared that during the landscaping project, De Luz Trucking delivered 450 cubic yards of soil and a lot of gravel. Unfortunately, the mauka rolling gate was accidentally damaged during delivery, however, Mr. Minoru Hanato welded and repaired the gate.

### **Veterans Cemetery I – Columbarium**

Mr. Mukai asked about columbariums for Hilo and Mr. Nishimoto responded that they were told indirectly to remove the one in Hilo since its not the standard design which poses privacy issues. When you open a panel, four cubicles or four different families will be in view. The new columbariums are individual, neat, small and very appealing. Punch Bowl has the most recent design. Waiting for the VA to replace with the new type, however, there are also security problems in Hilo, whereas, the cemetery on the west side is secured with double gates and fencing. There have been problems in various cemeteries throughout the united states with vandalism of columbariums.

### **Veterans Cemetery II – Urn Burials**

At Cemetery II there is a designated urn section which saves a lot of burial space and is secure. Mr. Nishimoto suggests that a columbarium could be erected against Halai Hill similar to Kaneohe or Punchbowl. He also confirmed that urn burials would remain, the placement of urns in the columbarium would start after erected.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **VETERANS CEMETERY II – EXPANSION PROJECT UPDATE**

Director Engelhard reported that P&R has requested an inspection date and include Veterans Advisory Committee members, however, local contractor M&E is unable to set a final inspection with the Department of Defense until the sign is installed in the rock wall and project complete. DOD is also short handed because of deployments and unable to send someone here to answer questions relating to project.

Chairman Kaouiwi shared concerns relating to the height of the lawn in the new section at Veterans Cemetery II. Director Engelhard responded that the grass has since been cut because she received a call from a neighboring property owner that the grass was being mowed too early in the morning.

### **VETERANS CEMETERY III – WEST HAWAII**

#### **Landscaping Improvement Project Update - Burials**

Mr. Highley shared that the project has been completed, however, one concern is how burials are done at the cemetery utilizing a large backhoe and 2 ½ ton dump truck. Driving equipment over the sod would damage the landscaping. After approximately a month the sod would grow together and become a lawn which would not be so easily damaged. P&R Maintenance staff would need to use a sod cutter and a smaller version of the dumper to haul soil. Les Chess suggested a Toro Workman (a utility cart with a dumper on it) for hauling soil, which is what is being used at the Arlington Cemetery as seen on a TV special the night before Veterans Day. Les said that the cart has special wheels that won't hurt the turf and is also checking if any golf courses have a used one available. Mr. Highley asked if the County would be able to purchase a cart if there was one available at a good price and Director Engelhard responded depending on the price it may be possible.

### **Items Left at the Cemeteries by Families and Vases**

Mr. Highley requested posting rules at the cemeteries so that families can understand what is or is not allowed. He also recommended that vases be installed in the ground instead of families bringing their own, approximately 140 would be needed in West Hawai'i.

Director Engelhard will have rules posted and said that vases are provided by families and not the county.

Mr. Highley will recommend to families through the newspapers and other means to install those underground vases in order to simplify maintenance.

### **Mower for Cemetery**

Mr. Highley said that a rotary mower with a bag is needed for the cemetery so that grass doesn't go onto gravel and seeds don't spread. Right now maintenance staff has a push mower and he recommended that the county budget for a riding mower with a bag.

Les Chess said that he contacted Dick Haley of John Deere Pacific Turf who is looking for a used one with a bag attachment.

### **Plywood Boxes**

Mr. Highley shared that plywood boxes leaves a void in the plot and eventually the grave caves in. Following a discussion, Director Engelhard said she will send a letter to mortuaries and inform staff that effective immediately, plywood boxes will no longer be allowed because of safety concerns. This change in procedure will pertain to all county cemeteries. (See attached copy of letter dated 11/26/04)

### **APPRECIATION – Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawai'i – Volunteer Project**

Director Engelhard again shared her appreciation of the project, would like to attend the next Golf Course Superintendent's Association meeting to present Certificates of Appreciation to volunteers.

Mr. Highley commended everyone involved in the project including the support received from committee members and Mr. Nishimoto.

### **VETERANS DAY PARADE**

Dale Wilson reported that he is still waiting for an answer on umbrella insurance from the Military Order of the Purple Heart and again requested members to check with their parent organizations if they have Umbrella (Liability) Insurance to cover members of their organization who are participating in a parade.

Director Engelhard said that P&R has included police coverage in its budget. Fire personnel couldn't give an amount, but will assign on-duty fire EMT's at various sites throughout the parade.

### **VETERANS CEMETERY I – EXPANSION OF FLAGPOLE AREA**

Mr. Mukai reported that the previously approved project will soon be done by members of the Lehua Jaycees.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **REFORESTATION PROJECT – VETERANS CEMETERY III – WEST HAWAII**

##### **Dr. Richard Stevens – University of Hawai'i**

Dr. Stevens shared that he is a veteran and along with his UH students have formed a kind of army for reforestation. They have been planting trees mostly in state forests and tree sanctuaries all around the island. The focus is now on the veterans cemetery and proposing to join forces with veterans to form a Kipuka “Island of Life” or rebirth (planting what was previously there) in the center of the cemetery. The idea would be to heal the land and honor the veteran. The focus would be a Hawai'i Dryland Forest which is the most endangered ecosystem in the state. The project could be a model for other dryland reforestation projects. The area of approximately 62 acres would first have to be fenced to keep goats out at an approximate cost of \$36,000. Dr. Stevens said he is also a part of The Puna Soil and Water Conservation District organization, and was informed that part of the fencing can be cost shared with the Natural Resources Conservation Service which is part of the USDA (Department of Agriculture).

Guiding Philosophy “Nana I Ke Kumu” or “Look to the Source” and the source is the land itself. The whole idea is the rebirth of what use to be there.

Dr. Stevens also said there is a local 501C-3 corporation called “The Tree Center” (TREE = Tropical Reforestation and Ecosystems Education) which can accept donations if necessary and provide manpower.

Mr. Highley wanted to know what part everyone would play in the project beginning with the fence. Dr. Stevens said that at least \$9,000 would first need to be raised if The Natural Resources Conservation Service will fund 75% of cost. He has set a meeting with neighbors such as Kukio to look at the possibility of receiving donations or if they have suggestions, looking at other funding sources through government grants, etc.

Mr. Wilson recommended to the Chairman that in the interest of time a member of the committee serve as a liaison between Dr. Stevens project and the committee. Mr. Highley was appointed as the liaison and will work with Mr. Callahan and Dr. Stevens.

Guest Jim Browne (Retired Licensed Contractor from California) said he had been involved with several mitigated reforestation projects and served as project manager and superintendent for a very large landscaping company. Also hired as a landscape irrigation consultant and a Biologist for a mitigated reforestation project on an Airforce Base. He stated that what Dr. Stevens is proposing is very doable and could be a very beautiful project.

### **EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS**

No Reports.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **TRIBUTE – Mr. Bob Pettit**

There was a Moment of Silence to pay tribute to former Veterans Advisory Committee Member Mr. Bob Pettit.

#### **REVIEW OF 2004 – Mr. Delbert Nishimoto**

Announced that there were (2) strong community support projects in 2004. The first is support of the State Veterans Home being constructed at the Hilo Medical Center and the second was the outstanding community landscaping project at Veterans Cemetery III – West Hawai'i which has gained national recognition as one great community supported project.

Scott Gebhardtsbauer provided information to Mr. Bill Jayne who is the head of cemeteries and memorials in Washington D.C. who then shared this outstanding community project throughout the nation. Mr. Nishimoto again expressed appreciation to all volunteers and stated that Hawai'i County should be very proud of the two veteran garnered community supported projects.

Director Engelhard expressed her appreciation for the volunteer landscape project, described how well the cemetery looks and complimented the beautiful Veterans Day Ceremony coordinated by veterans.

Chairman Kaiwi again expressed appreciation to Mr. Les Chess and all community volunteers for the outstanding job on the landscaping project.

### **SCHEDULE FOR 2005**

Distributed to members at meeting. The July 28<sup>th</sup> meeting is the only time it will not be held on the third Thursday of the month.

### **SUNSHINE LAW TRAINING**

Director Engelhard and Chairman Kaiwi encouraged members to attend the December 1<sup>st</sup> training session – information was previously sent to all members.

**MEMBERSHIP – Hawai‘i County Veterans Advisory Committee**

Director Engelhard reviewed vacancies.

NG Retirees - Vacancy

Mr. Segawa’s membership expired in 2003, but has continued to serve as a representative of the NG Retirees until a replacement is confirmed. That appointment is currently in the County’s court. Mr. Ishii has been recommended by organization and an application has been submitted.

HIVM, Inc.

Vacancy (Charles Mayes moved) Mr. Sherrard has to return a signed application and the HIVM president also has to submit a letter with their recommendation.

Military Order of the Purple Heart

Mr. Wilson’s term will end at the end of 2004 and he will recommend that MOPH select someone from West Hawai‘i.

**NEXT MEETING**

There will be no meeting in December, the next meeting will be held on January 20, 2005 at 3:00 p.m. in the Hawai‘i County Councilroom and video-conferencing at the Kona Mayor’s Office.

**ELECTIONS**

Chairman Kaiwi requested that Elections for Chairperson and Vice Chairperson be put on January’s agenda.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Nathalie Santos*

Secretary