

VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, July 26, 2007, 3:00 p.m.
Hawaii County Council Room (Hilo) and Kona Mayor's Office (Via
Videoconferencing)

Present

Members

Don Bennett
Richard Highley
Roy Hinokawa
Edward Lee
George Mukai
Gilbert Sampaia

Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)

Members

Antonio Gaspar
Minoru Hanato
Robert Welter

Guests (Kona)

Boss Hanato
Herb Lum

Ex-Officio (Hilo)

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

Also Present (Hilo)

Nathalie Santos, Secretary
Renee Schoen
Delbert Nishimoto

Absent

Denny Austen
Penny Fox
Wendall Kekumu
Patrick Pavao
Richard Stevens
George Yamamoto

Call to Order

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

STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No Statements from the public.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS MINUTES – June 21, 2007

- The minutes of the June 21, 2007 meeting were approved with the following corrections:
 - 1) Page 5 - First line should read (Certificate of Appreciation) instead of Certificate of Insurance.
 - 2) Page 4 - Last paragraph. Newspaper article written by should be (Kim Eaton) instead of Ken Eaton.

REPORT ON CEMETERIES – STATE VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Hawaii Island Representative Mr. Herring Kalua

Mr. Kalua did not attend the meeting, but he submitted a written report. Chairman Highley read the report - (See Attached).

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Veterans Cemetery I and II - Columbariums

Deputy Director Pam Mizuno said after reading the June 21st minutes, she checked on the status of the columbarium at Veterans Cemetery II since members were asked to look at it and report back at this meeting.

Mr. Mukai went to look at columbarium at Veterans Cemetery I and nothing was done. He went to Veterans Cemetery II - and saw a brown frame around that columbarium, but the biggest problem is at Cemetery I because the opening was exposing (4) niches. The size of the opening in the columbarium at Cemetery II is not the same.

Deputy Director Mizuno reported that Parks Maintenance staff would work on the columbarium at Veterans Cemetery II first. Staff is unable to make a cover for each niche because they would need to make a 15" square and for that small size it would be difficult to make everything plum going across. They will install a cover for (4) and after they put a stainless steel cover on, they will install a cover on each niche.

Chairman Highley said that although we were advised at the last meeting to look at the columbarium at Veterans Cemetery II to see if its acceptable, we cannot judge yet because its not finished.

Deputy Director Mizuno said there must have been some miscommunication.

Mr. Mukai said there isn't a clear picture of what it will look like yet. Only the frame is there.

Chairman Highley asked if there was a date as to when it would be ready to look at.

Deputy Director Mizuno said there is no date yet. She just asked staff how they were planning to cover each niche as opposed to the (4).

Chairman Highley said subject will remain under unfinished business until it is ready to be looked at.

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii
Reforestation Project

Mr. Minoru Hanato reported that staff of Kukio Resort have been monitoring water usage and checking the irrigation. They were there this morning. The next planting has not yet been scheduled.

Chairman Highley said Dr. Stevens schedules planting projects. He reported that the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Expansion and Development Association was thinking about installing a meter to monitor the amount of water that comes from Kukio daily. It is important to find out water usage to carry out the Master Plan of eventually constructing a restroom there. Meter would tell us how much water is being used compared to how much was committed. He heard that Kukio would be doubling amount of water compared to what was committed, but it may not be in writing.

Mr. Minoru Hanato said Kukio has been monitoring the timers and said we're not using as much water compared to original usage and that's because the line burnt or blew up while we were using up to 15,000 gallons per day.

Mr. Lum asked if there is any provision for water for the expanded gravesites. He said the bid includes sodding, but doesn't state anything about irrigation. Is P&R going to install the irrigation system?

Chairman Highley said Director Engelhard is not here to answer that question and he doesn't know what the bid includes. He knows there was something about sodding and thinks something was set up regarding irrigation, but is unsure. Mr. Highley asked Mr. Ribbentrop if we could get a copy of the contract.

Mr. Ribbentrop replied that contact has to first be finalized.

Deputy Director Mizuno said they may need to look at the Bid Specifications instead of the contract.

Chairman Highley said we may be able to get a copy of the CD bidders received. West Hawaii Veterans were told by former OVS Director Cruickshank that any questions regarding the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery should be referred to his office so it now gets referred to Director Moses.

Mr. Ribbentrop said that the bid specifications should also be available online.

Chairman Highley said the question is: Does the contract include irrigation and if not will the County install irrigation? The irrigation has to go in at the same time as the sod. He said the West Hawaii questions could be easily answered if there was a representative from the west side on the Governor's State Veterans Advisory Committee.

Mr. Ribbentrop recommended someone contact Andy Smith who is the governor's liaison in West Hawaii.

Graveliners

Chairman Highley said federal funds will supply 30 graveliners and after that the County was going to be responsible for it and Director Engelhard said she would find out about that. Since she's not here we don't have an answer on whether or not the County would supply the graveliners or if the families would be responsible.

Mr. Ribbentrop asked if the graveliners are optional.

Chairman Highley said the reason for the graveliners is to keep the ground from collapsing especially with double burials planned at the new gravesites.

Mr. Ribbentrop recommended that committee review Rule 7 to see if graveliners are required. If it's not in the rules, it doesn't make a difference if the state, county or families purchases it because it's an optional item.

Deputy Director Mizuno said according to the June 21st Meeting Minutes Director Engelhard said once the graveliners provided by the state are gone, the families would be responsible to purchase.

Chairman Highley said that if the families don't want to buy the graveliners there would be no graveliners.

Mr. Mukai said he thought that graveliners in West Hawaii were a necessity. What are we talking about if it's required, he asked if Rule 7 makes it optional.

Chairman Highley said from the information he received, Design Partners hired an engineer to examine the existing soil at the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery. The report states that the soil there is suitable for burial which means a graveliner is not required. If we begin to bury there without graveliners and the soil collapses, he would assume that the study was faulty. It is a safety issue if graves collapse and someone gets hurt, it becomes the County's problem.

Mr. Mukai said he doesn't know what Rule 7 states, but if Rule 7 doesn't specify graveliners, shouldn't the committee change Rule 7.

Following a long discussion, Chairman Highley requested that discussion relating to graveliners be continued at the next meeting. He shared that he hopes this committee has some influence as to what is done at the cemeteries on the Big Island.

Mr. Minoru Hanato said he spoke to a man at the cemetery this morning who said he will be attending a meeting with DAGS on Oahu regarding the cemetery. Mr. Hanato explained how important it is to have concrete graveliners versus the plastic type.

Deputy Director said she reviewed P&R Administrative Rule 7 and there is no requirement regarding graveliners and because there is no requirement its up to the families at this point.

Chairman Highley asked if P&R makes those rules?

Deputy Director Mizuno explained rule change process. She said committee can make suggestions to change the Administrative rule. She recommended members review the entire rule so proposed changes be made at the same time. Changes would require a public hearing.

Mr. Mukai said something needs to be done to avoid problems at burials.

Deputy Director Mizuno said committee can submit proposed amendments to P&R, P&R would publish proposed amendments in the newspaper and hold the public hearing.

Review Rule 7 - Proposed Changes to be discussed at August Meeting

Chairman Highley requested members review Rule 7 before the next meeting. Members can discuss proposed changes, vote on whether or not committee members want to amend rules and then submit to P&R for consideration.

Mr. Minoru Hanato said that Kaneohe got graveliners.

There were questions as to what Rule 7 is - Deputy Director Mizuno said that Rule 7 is the Administrative Rule for the Department of Parks and Recreation as it applies to Veterans Cemeteries.

Chairman Highley said that members can request copies of Rule 7 by calling secretary Nathalie Santos at P&R. Deputy Director Mizuno also stated that copies of Rule 7 can be obtained by going to the County's website.

Veterans Cemeteries - Directory of Gravesites Locating Graves

Deputy Director Mizuno said there's been discussion about putting the directory on the County website - names of deceased and family members. Deputy Corporation Counsel Renee Schoen stated that there shouldn't be a problem with putting the names of deceased on website, but family members should be left off.

Mr. Minoru Hanato said names of the deceased is all that should be posted either on the website or bulletin board at the cemetery. Family member's names are confidential.

Deputy Director explained that although it could be done, we still have to check with Data Systems to see how we could set it up and someone would need to be assigned to maintain and update lists.

NEW BUSINESS

Veterans Cemetery II

Mr. Mukai expressed his concern that the gravemarkers at Veterans Cemetery II look very messy - it looks like the workers just dropped it on the grave. It's not in line or in place, its tilted, its not evenly set, its just dumped there. When do employees set it into the ground?

Deputy Director Mizuno will check on procedure and ask Director Engelhard to report at the next meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

US Senate Hearings

Mr. Keith Ribbentrop of OVS announced that Senator Akaka is bringing Senate Hearings relating to healthcare back to Hawaii. On August 28th the hearings will be held at 10 am in the Aupuni Conference Room in Hilo and on August 27th at 1 pm at the Keauhou Sheraton Hotel. Written testimony can be submitted to Senator Akaka's Washington DC office or if you would like to give oral testimony you can contact Kim Sasaki at his Hilo office.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

No Report.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 4:05 pm.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on August 16th.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathalie Santos, Secretary