

VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Thursday, October 18, 2007, 3:00 p.m.
Hawaii County Council Room (Hilo) and Kona Mayor's Office (Via
Videoconferencing)

Present

Members

Penny Fox
Richard Highley
Edward Lee
George Mukai
Delbert Nishimoto
George Yamamoto
John Young

Kona Mayor's Office (Via Videoconferencing)

Members

Antonio Gaspar
Minoru Hanato
Robert Welter

Guests (Kona)

Boss Hanato

Ex-Officio (Hilo)

Patricia Engelhard, Director, P&R

Also Present (Hilo)

Nathalie Santos, Secretary
Herb Lum - State Veterans Advisory Board - West Hawaii Representative

Absent

Don Bennett
Roy Hinokawa
Wendall Kekumu
Gilbert Sampaia
Norman Stahl
Richard Stevens

Call to Order

Chairman Highly called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm - (10) members present.

STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No Statements from the public.

PREVIOUS MEETINGS MINUTES – September 20, 2007

- The minutes of the September 20, 2007 meeting were approved as submitted.

REPORT ON CEMETERIES – STATE VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

Hawaii Island - East Hawaii Representative Mr. Herring Kalua - Absent

Hawaii Island - West Hawaii Representative Mr. Herb Lum - Attended in Hilo

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii

Mr. Lum reported on Phase IIB of the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Expansion Project. Contractor began excavating work on Tuesday, October 16th.

Total contract price - \$476,064.22. (Base price \$448,302; Base bid Plus \$27,762.22 for sod in lieu of stolons)

Contract performance period. Present estimated completion date - January 28, 2008

Lama trees on Phase IIB site:

During Pre-construction Meeting at cemetery on Monday, October 8th, disclosure of Lama trees on-site and desirability of saving the trees was made to the contractor Bolton Associates, the DAGS Representative, P&R Representative, and others present. Bolton seemed amenable; DAGS will take under advisement.

Chairman Highley said that someone from Kona should notify Dr. Richard Stevens about the possibility of the removal of that tree because he wanted to save that tree.

During cemetery site visit on Wednesday, October 17th, Mr. Lum noted that the trees were not cordoned off. He called John Grogan, advised Richard Stevens and e-mailed Major Mark Moses requesting that the trees be spared.

Chairman Highley said the tree is in the area of proposed excavation. The excavation will bring the burial ground to the same height as the existing side.

Mr. Lum shared a photo of the tree and explained where work is currently taking place. He was told that it would take a couple spaces of burial ground to preserve the tree.

Mr. Lum said that Bolton is aware of that tree and what we want to do with it, but we understand they can't do anything until it comes from DAGS. We've notified Major Moses to coordinate to extent necessary because we can't tell Bolton what to do especially if its oil, it has to be in writing. That was understood during the Pre-Construction Meeting. They are aware that time is pressing.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii

Reforestation Project

Mr. Gaspar reported on September 29th, Saturday, planting project. 134 Volunteers helped to weed, clean under keawe trees and plant 300 young trees below slope on west side of the pole. (Volunteers came from BISAC (34 from BISAC), American Legion, Vietnam War Veterans, DAV, Korean War Veterans, and other community groups) Work project gathering began at 8:15 am at the flagpole. Opening prayer and

instructions given by Dr. Stevens at 9 am. Hualalai Landscapers planted some trees on the roadside to replace some that did not survive. Waterline was installed for new trees.

Water Allotment

Director Engelhard reported that she wrote to Major Mitsuyoshi and to Kukio Resorts Community Association relating to water commitment (copies of correspondence sent to all Committee Members with October's Agenda); she has not yet received a response. She will let water situation ride until they discover that they need water and say they will cut our supply. She made commitment to Major Mitsuyoshi if we have to cut back water usage in order to get facilities that the veterans want, the watering of trees will be the first to cut back. We need approximately 20,000 gallons of water a day in order to include watering of trees. An estimated 10,000 gallons per day will be needed to maintain both sides of the cemetery, restrooms and maintenance area. We have a commitment for 3,600 non-potable and 4,200 potable gallons per day, which does not total the required 10,000 gallons. Not having additional water may hang up future development. She said at the last meeting Chairman Highley spoke about obtaining a grant through the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery Expansion and Development Association to dig a well. The wells in the area cost approximately 5 or 6 million dollars. Whether or not its potable water just depends on what you hit when you drill.

Chairman Highley commented that 3,600 gallons is not potable water. It comes from Kukio via a waterline they installed. He asked if the balance of 4,200 gallons is potable water and Director Engelhard responded that its suppose to be potable, however, we haven't gotten that yet since we have to install the line. Chairman Highley asked if the state or the county is responsible for line installation. He feels it's the State's responsibility since the County is only responsible to maintain the cemeteries.

Chairman Highley said a meter was installed and a total of 10,343 gallons per day was used the day it was calculated. 5,840 Gallons for sprinkler irrigation and 4,503 gallons for reforestation project to supplement all the plants (there are some trees, but mostly plants such as ground cover and flowering bushes that are indigenous plants). He feels there is some confusion about additional water needed to supplement reforestation project. It's not to supplement 2,000 trees because there are 3,000 plants, which has been planted over a period of 2 years. 2,000 additional plants will be planted over a period of another 2 years so it isn't like 10,000 gallons per day will be used tomorrow, its only 4,000 gallons per day. It's a dryland forest, which should grow on its own, so usage should stay around 4,000 gallons per day since the older plants would be weaned off watering. Chairman Highley would like Dr. Stevens to attend a meeting in order to explain the water usage for reforestation project.

Chairman Highley said potable water should be used for restroom facility instead of irrigation purposes and feels that 4,000 gallons per day should be enough to supply restrooms and other needs the cemetery has. As far as watering the lawn, which currently takes over 4,000 gallons per day, when the expansion is complete may require a total of

10,000 gallons per day of non-potable water. He expressed his disappointment that Kukio didn't respond to letter.

Chairman Highley read a report from Mr. Jim Brown who contacted Kukio to ask how much water the cemetery was using to confirm meter calculations. Mr. Brown was told that Kukio does not monitor cemetery water usage. There is no written report to confirm the usage figure of 17,000 gallons per day. There was a fire started by people smoking and burned the irrigation line. At that time a lot of water leaked which could have been the reason for 17,000 gallons on that day.

Chairman Highley said he's hoping the VA will realize how important constructing restrooms at the cemetery are. There's talk about construction of chemical toilets, everyone at the cemetery smiles when they hear that since the cemetery already has a chemical toilet and we don't need another.

Mr. Young said he doesn't know if he believes it or not, but was told that an Arizona Company went to the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery to conduct a study on natural landscape that wouldn't require much watering. He asked if it was true because their cemeteries use that type of system.

Mr. Lum stated that the Arizona idea was a different kind of burial ground, not with grass.

Chairman Highley shared they explored the possibility of getting a well, Dr. Stevens reported at the last Association meeting that there is a company willing to tap a well at a cost of approximately \$70,000. Mr. Lum said they would be meeting with this individual next week Tuesday. Chairman Highley said they have to find out what the legality of the Association is relating to tapping a well and what permits will be required.

Mr. Lum stated that the company should have information about permits and doesn't feel the meeting will be to accomplish too much other than learning a little more about process. He feels that price doesn't sound logical since there is such a water shortage and cost of water is high, at that price there would be a lot more wells drilled up and down the coast if it was only \$80,000. Doesn't think it's an easy task, but hoping to find out more about it before matter is discussed further.

Director Engelhard asked if it could be that it only costs \$70,000 or \$80,000 to dig the hole, but a pump would have to be installed in the bottom. Chairman Highley asked the same question and was told price includes a solar pump.

They will explore possibility further of drilling a well at the cemetery.

Mr. Lum asked about the 4,200 gallons of potable water, which has been talked about for many years which is something that DLNR said was available, but would not pay for the infrastructure? He asked if we have the means for infrastructure?

Chairman Highley said his understanding according to the letter sent by Director Engelhard, is that 3,600 gallons per day of non-potable water comes to the cemetery through the line that Kukio supplied. Kukio also promised to supply 4,200 gallons per day of potable water, but the county or the state or somebody has to provide the transportation to get that water.

Mr. Lum shared that it sounds like the DLNR proposal years ago that they were able to provide 4,200 gallons per day, but the County has to pay for infrastructure. Hearing that the 4,200 gallons comes from Kukio is news to him; maybe it's a different thing.

Chairman Highley brought up the water issue so all parties involved are aware of the situation in order to reach a solution that makes everyone happy including Reforestation Group, OVS, Cemetery Grants Services, Veterans and the County.

Mr. Lum said the big issue is a permanent supply of water, not necessarily for the turf, reforestation, or restrooms because all water could be cut off at anytime since we have no control over it. It's in Kukio's control.

Chairman Highley said Kukio has committed water and asked why have they committed water, how long is commitment for, is it in writing, and if Kukio sells the golf course to another company or corporation, does that corporation buy into the commitment?

Director Engelhard said the commitment to supply water would continue even if it were sold.

Mr. Lum said there must be some sort of agreement in writing that he is not aware of. The issue does not exist if there is water in perpetuity.

Director Engelhard said we've talked about this subject enough.

Maintenance Funds from Legislature

Chairman Highley said there was a question about legislative funds directed for maintenance assistance to the County being used by OVS to purchase graveliners for cemeteries.

Director Engelhard said as she explained at the last meeting, the funds that were suppose to come to County P&R for maintenance would have come through the Office of Veterans Services. She contacted Major Moses and he said he spent the money on graveliners for all of the cemeteries on all of the islands. At the next session we will again ask the legislature to provide additional funding for maintenance of the Big Island Cemeteries. This year's budget is in the vicinity of \$156,000 and we receive \$22,500 from the State.

Director Engelhard said we have not yet received the graveliners, but were told they have been purchased.

Rule 7 - Review of Possible Amendments

Opening and Closing of Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii

Chairman Highley read the September 20th Minutes - Page 6 - Paragraph 4 - "Director Engelhard said this issue only recently came up, it hasn't been provided, and in the past it's been acceptable"

Chairman Highley said it doesn't mean that its acceptable now and believes that others in the veterans community feel the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery should follow the procedure of opening and closing at the proper hour as indicated in Rule 7. He continued to read Director Engelhard's statement from September 20th Minutes: "The amount of money to open and close the gate, if it's the committee's will, then I will put it in the budget which we will start to work on in October.

Chairman Highley stepped down from serving as Chair and turned meeting over to Vice Chairperson Fox so that he could make a motion.

Motion

Richard Highley made a motion that it is the will of this committee that Director Engelhard put into the budget next year, money that will provide for the opening and closing of the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery at the times designated in Rule 7, which would include raising and lowering the flag if there is no light on the flag.

Committee voted unanimously - motion carried.

Vice Chairperson Fox turned meeting back over to Richard Highley to continue conducting as Chairman.

Burial Space at Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii

Chairman Highley asked Director Engelhard if she spoke to staff regarding burial space and giving permission to remove the fence to keep backhoe off of existing graves.

Director Engelhard said her understanding is that there are (8) more graves left. Last month there were (1) casket and (1) urn burial, which has been pretty typical. It sounds like there will be enough graves left until the next increment is completed.

Chairman Highley asked Boss Hanato if the fence was removed for expansion and he responded that it was removed and they erected a temporary fence. Chairman Highley asked if the temporary fence was to keep out the goats and Mr. Lum said its only to cordon off the construction area.

Director Engelhard said no one asked permission to remove fence.

Chairman Highley said it sounds like removal of the fence for additional burials is not yet a problem. If the fence has to come down, they'll just take it down.

Mr. Lum said when the proposal was submitted it was a contingency - Plan B, which hopefully will never have to be used.

Columbariums - Veterans Cemetery I and II

Director Engelhard said we're not going to use the existing columbariums, if we go into columbariums at all, we will instead do something similar to the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery.

Chairman Highley said the temporary ones being used in Kona are beautiful and doesn't see them ever being removed. They will fit in nicely at the Hilo Veterans Cemeteries. The cost of those columbariums was around \$25,000 at the time. He said if that's the decision, how do we get them and when can it be done?

Director Engelhard said there isn't an answer and she can put it in the budget, but there is no guarantee.

Chairman Highley feels its not a maintenance issue and should be handled by the State Office of Veterans Services and since Mr. Kalua is not present, asked Mr. Lum to find out.

Director Engelhard suggested that veterans go back to their groups and find out if they really want to have columbariums or if they are satisfied with burials at urn sections of each cemetery.

Chairman Highley requested East Hawaii Committee Members to find out if veterans want columbariums during their next organization's meeting.

Mr. Nishimoto shared that a major concern about having columbariums at the Hilo cemeteries is that both are not fenced like the West Hawaii Cemetery. We've had problems with vandalism, skateboarders and what happens if the ashes/urns come tumbling out, the structure also does not hold up well during Hilo's very wet weather. Mr. Nishimoto said members need to seriously decide if an upright is needed or if there is enough space underground to have an urn burial section. He suggests continuing with burial section and using the columbarium structure "as is" for installing plaques only as a memorial to veterans whose ashes have been scattered or left at home. That would provide the family something tangible to look at. He suggests members discuss it at their organization's level and ask if its an eyesore that needs to be removed or can it be used for a Memorial?

NEW BUSINESS

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman Highley read the following invitations sent to committee members:

State Veterans Home Grand Opening

Grand Opening of the Yukio Okutsu Veterans Home, on Monday, November 12th at 12 noon; Location: 1180 Waiianuenue Avenue, Hilo (near hospital); Speakers will be Honorable Governor Linda Lingle, Admiral Timothy J. Keating, Commander of the U.S. Pacific Command and Honorable Mayor Harry Kim. There will be refreshments and entertainment. RSVP by November 1st at 974-4738

USS Missouri Memorial Association, Inc.

Veterans Ceremony on November 11th from 4:45pm to 5:45pm at the Battleship Missouri Memorial. The theme "As We Remember the Sacrifices of our Veterans". The keynote speaker will be General John F. Goodman, Commander of the US Marine Corp Forces of the Pacific; Contact Ph# 808-423-2263 (Press F immediately following the greeting).

Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin

Invitation extended to all veterans, wives, widows, widowers to Annual Veterans Appreciation Service which thanks all veterans for their service to our community and the world; Sunday, November 4th, 9 am at 398 Kilauea Avenue; Refreshments to be served in the hall following the service. Vietnam Veteran Steve Yamane will be the keynote speaker. Requesting for a reply by October 22nd; Ph# 961-6677

Veterans Day Ceremony - Veterans Cemetery III - West Hawaii

Chairman Highley announced there will be a ceremony on Veterans Day at the West Hawaii Cemetery.

Veterans Day Parade

Mr. John Young said the Veterans Day Parade in Hilo will be held on Saturday, November 10th. Parade will begin at 10:00 am. Mr. Nishimoto added there will be a band from Oahu and someone is trying to get the County Mass Transit Agency to provide transportation from West Hawaii so West Hawaii Veterans can be a part of the parade.

Elections

Chairman Highley said November would be the last meeting he serves as Chairman. He requested that Elections be placed on November's Agenda.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

No Report.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 4:05 pm.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on November 15th.

Respectfully submitted,

Nathalie Santos, Secretary