VETERANS MEMORIAL COMMISSION (VMC)
MEETING MINUTES
June 13, 2019 5:30 p.m.
Veterans Conference Room-4th Floor
Veteran's Memorial Building
50 2nd Avenue Bridge
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401

Commissioners Present: Darrell Andersen - Chairperson
Sherri Schuchmann – Vice Chairperson
Constance Arens
Kristin Delfs
Greg DeWolf
Mike McElmeel

Commissioners Absent: John Powers

Staff Present: Paul Pestel, Facilities Director (FD)
Teri Van Dorston, Assistant Director (AD)
Claire LeMay, Program Coordinator (PC)
Councilperson Scott Olson, City Council Representative

Guests: Mike Chismar

The regular meeting of the Veterans Memorial Commission was called to order by Commissioner Andersen, Chair, at 5:30 p.m. Commissioner Andersen asked PC LeMay conduct a role call following the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:

Commissioner Schuchmann made a motion to approve the minutes of the May meeting; seconded by Commissioner Delfs. The motion carried with no objections.

Financials (Budget report/Bills):

Commissioner Arens made a motion to approve the financials; seconded by Commissioner Delfs. The motion carried with no objections.

Facilities Director Report:

Facility Director Paul Pestel begins his presentation with the finalized bylaws, and notes the Chair and Vice Chair can sign them at the end of the meeting to make them official. FD Pestel informs the Commission that staff is going over the lease with the Arc of East Central Iowa. This organization leases the first and second floors of the North Tower. The VMC is increasing their rent by $50 per month, next year there will be another $50 per month increase. The current charges come to approximately $0.88 per square foot. The only changes in the current lease will be the Arc will not have access to the building during City Holidays. This enables the VMC staff to have City holidays off.
FD Pestel updates the Commission regarding the recent exiting of the Linn County Veterans Charity Fund from the building. FD Pestel sent a letter to Chief Ron Williams, Larry VanLandcker, and Gary Schumaker last month regarding the lack of a signed Memorandum of Understanding on file and to discontinue the unmanned food storage in the basement. In response to the letter the Linn County Veterans Charity Fund decided to remove the food and vacate the office that they held. FD Pestel attempted to attain a signed MOU from the organization, and they declined to provide the documentation.

FD Pestel reports he has recently met with Casey Drew, the Finance Director with the City of Cedar Rapids, to create a resolution to resolve an outstanding debt the VMC has with the City. The outstanding debt is approximately $4.1 Million from 2008 flood repairs. In fiscal year 2022, the VMC will make its last $100,000 payment to the Kernels for ball park maintenance. In FY2023 FD Pestel proposes $100,000 payments start going to the City of Cedar Rapids to address the outstanding debt. The proposed resolution will be a duration of 10 years and reduce the debt to $3.1 Million. At that time another resolution can be proposed. Commissioner McElmeel inquired why the payments to the Kernels would be ending. FD Pestel explains the 20 year agreement of funds transfer from the VMC to the Kernels was intended to fund improvements to the ball park itself. The City and the Kernels also contributed to the fund to bring the ball park up to its current condition. FD Pestel informs the Commission he will work on the resolution with the City and send it out for review by the Commission in the next month.

Chairperson Andersen inquires of Councilperson Olson if the lease with the Arc has appropriate pricing for the lease agreement. Councilperson responds that at $0.88 per square foot is a very good rate, considering the market rate in downtown for older buildings are $1.00 per square foot.

FD Pestel offers to order name tags and Commission business cards for the Commissioners and the new Commissioner. The Commissioners all agree that they would like business cards.

Commissioner Arens inquires about the current maintenance staff and if any would be retiring in the near future. FD Pestel responds that one maintenance staff member, Dennis, would be retiring in October. At this time, FD Pestel is considering not replacing this position and changing to a janitorial team used by other buildings by the City. Commissioner Arens commends Tony Hlas on his extraordinary efforts during the Memorial Day Ceremony. She was particularly impressed with is handling of the audio equipment. FD Pestel comments he is glad she had brought up the sound system, and he noticed the poor quality of the sound during the event. He uncovered that the emcee of the event had changed some of the settings, and this created the distorted sound. Going forward, starting at Veterans Day, staff will adjust the set up to avoid distortion and also make options available to continue the emcee's audio broadcast the local radio station.

Assistant Director Museum Report:

AD Van Dorston begins her report with an update on the current intern’s progress with cataloging collection items. At the end of May, the VMC received a donation of a Veterans foot locker from the Korean War era. It contained over 240 items and is completely cataloged.

AD Van Dorston reports the next exhibit, Korean War Divided, is coming together. The soft open is expected for June 25th, 2019, and she presents a promotional informational card for the exhibit. Chairperson Andersen inquires about a formal opening for the exhibit. AD Van Dorston responds she would like to have a panel discussion to honor the exhibit with former Congressman Jim Leach and John Lee, who is the Korea War Iowa Association leader to discuss how Korea was then, and how it is now. She is hoping to have that scheduled sometime in July.
**Program Coordinator Events Report:**

PC LeMay began her presentation with commending the efforts of all involved with the Memorial Day ceremony. She reports wedding season is in full swing, and she has been meeting with brides and parents in preparation for the events.

PC LeMay reports on April 29th she met with Tim Getty and Jill Sindt from the Heritage Agency on Aging. They are currently looking for another location for the Encore Café. Encore Café is a congregate meal program which promotes social interaction amongst the aging population. They suggest a donation of five dollars for anyone over the age of 60 and eight dollars for anyone else who would like to participate. She reports it was a preliminary meeting to determine if the VMB restaurant space would be a good fit for the program. They currently have started a new site at St. Marks, and the sites in Marion have been very successful which has led them to look for sites in Cedar Rapids. Chairperson Anderson comments that Councilperson Vanorny has reached out to him to explore an option of partnering with Matthew 25 and creating something like the Groundswell program for veterans in the building. He would like to meet with the people at Matthew 25 for an exploratory meeting to see what potential there is to create a similar program in the VMB. Commissioner Schuchmann inquires about the pricing. PC LeMay reports it’s a goodwill donation of five dollars for persons over the age of 60, and it’s a self-sustaining program. Councilperson Olson comments the program is a community service that has been very successful in the Marion area.

PC LeMay shares some upcoming events in the building. There is an outreach event conducted by the VA and Midwest Military Outreach on June 28th. Another large event in the next month is the annual Fourth of July pancake breakfast the morning of July 4th.

PC LeMay informs the commission regarding a public auction that will be held in September to prepare for the remodel on floors three and six. There is a surplus of office furniture on these two floors that must be removed in order for the remodel to begin.

**Ad Hoc Committee Discussion**

Chairperson Andersen turns the discussion over to the committee in regards to the request for a rate reduction from the Boy Scouts of America for the Arrow of Light event. Commissioner Schuchmann inquires how others think about only charging the costs of the staff and utilities. Commissioner DeWolf comments he thought it was nice to have some objective data to compare organizations, and there is some room for subjectivity for different organizations and where they would fit in for a discount. Commissioner Delfs states it is a good starting point to go forward with. Councilperson Olson adds that a minimal charge is a good idea, because free is not always a good thing. Chairperson Andersen inquires if there is further review needed for the nonprofit proposal and what is the decision regarding the Boy Scouts. FD Pestel recommends a decision for the Boy Scouts for their planning purposes. Discussion resumes regarding the charges to operate on a Saturday, and it is decided $100 per hour will cover all costs to the VMB. Chairperson Andersen asks for a motion to approve a charge of $1,400.00 for a Saturday rental for the Boy Scouts. Commissioner Delfs made a motion to approve a charge of $1,400 for a Saturday rental of 14 hours, Commissioner DeWolf seconded the motion. The motion carries unanimously.
Chairperson Andersen comments that going forward the model of charging only costs of staff time and building utilities for rate reduction requests from non-profits, and he asks if the commission is comfortable with that method. FD Pestel states he would like to think about it because he doesn't know if the Commission needs to vote on policies, because every change in policy does not have to go through the Commission. Chairperson Andersen agrees that any flexibility that can be maintained in that regard is good. FD Pestel states in two years when hourly rates change administrative staff will notify the Commission. Chairperson Anderson inquires if the $100 per hour cost is appropriate to quote in initial discussions with organizations. FD Pestel states he would prefer that non-profits who are requesting a rate reduction come and present to the Commission and have the decision made by the Commissioners. He continues it is their building, and they should have the say what happens in the building, and if they want to argue for one group over another they have the right to do that. He wants to avoid decisions being made by City staff. Commissioner McElmeel inquires if there is intent for any future non-profits to fill out a questionnaire that seeks general information before the presentation, or do they answer the questions at the Commission meeting. FD Pestel responds we could formulate consistent questions for the requestor, and Chairperson Andersen adds that this would help structure the information of what is the commission seeks to limit the time of the presentations.

FD Pestel presents the idea of holding the next Commission meeting at Veterans Memorial Stadium because AD Van Dorston’s son will be throwing out the first pitch of the game during the July 11th meeting. Doug Nelson has offered the use of the Kernels board room for the next meeting. Chairperson requests a motion, Commissioner Delfs makes a motion to hold the meeting at Veterans Memorial Stadium, Commissioner DeWolf seconds, and the motion is carried unanimously.

Public Comment:

Mike Chismar informs the Commission the American Legion State Championship will be held in Cedar Rapids this year in July. He encourages the Commissioners to support this event.

AD Van Dorston gives the Commission a Freedom Rock update. She created an informational brochure for the Linn County Freedom Rock Foundation (LCFRF) and helped them with the logo. LCFRF will be moving the rock to the fairgrounds this year. She encourages the Commissioners to visit the Rock.

Chairperson Andersen thanks the organizers of the Freedom Festival for the buttons they provide each year for the Veterans of Cedar Rapids. It is very much appreciated.

Commissioner Delfs volunteers an update on the Metro Veterans Council (MVC) meeting that was held the previous evening. She reports that the All Veterans Park (AVP) Policy Ad Hoc committee has revised and made recommendations to the document, which includes who holds what responsibility, and what responsibility the MVC will have with the AVP. Commissioner Delfs continues that she thought the enthusiasm for the policy was not found with MVC members present. It will be the Commission policy to adopt next month. Commissioner Delfs reports she will go to the next MVC meeting to see if they want to be a partner with the Commission. Commissioner Delfs states that the Commission does want them to be a part of the Memorial Day festivities. Chairperson Andersen comments the AVP is the ultimate responsibility of the Commission, the MVC can be a partner as needed when the collaboration works out. He states the policy is intended to define the responsibility lies with Commission.

Commissioner Delfs comments that the Hope Mural looks amazing and it comes down on June 24th, 2019.
Councilperson Olson requests to comment on the rental policies. He shares his experience on the Hawkeye Downs board. He emphasizes its very important to have a policy. He comments on the pressure it puts on board members when there is not policy in writing. He expresses his appreciation and how it will assist to take pressure off everyone and everyone is treated the same.

Commission Delfs made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:32 pm.; seconded by Commissioner McElmeel. The motion carries unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire LeMay, Program Coordinator

Chairperson

Date 7/11/19

Vice Chairperson

Date 7/11/19