VETERANS MEMORIAL COMMISSION (VMC)
MEETING MINUTES
May 9, 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
John Powers

Staff Present: Paul Pestel, Facilities Director (FD)
Teri Van Dorston, Assistant Director (AD)
Claire LeMay, Program Coordinator (PC)

Guests: Mike Chismar
Stephen Mayne - Boy Scouts of America, Hawkeye Area Council
Jason Everett
Brendan Paul
Bill Lahman

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 Arens made a motion to approve the minutes of the April meeting; seconded by Commissioner Powers. The motion carried with no objections.

Financials (Budget report/Bills):

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

Facilities Director Report:

Facilities Director Pestel begins his presentation by covering the changes to the bylaws presented at the previous commission meeting. Additional edits to the bylaws includes language for reserve members and all military forces, to ensure coverage of all who have served. Also added is the names of the current chairperson and vice chairperson. If no additional edits are submitted, the bylaws can be signed at the June commission meeting. Chairperson Andersen requests a motion to approve bylaws, a motion by Commissioner Delfs to adopt the bylaws is seconded by Commissioner Powers.

FD Pestel reports he is working on VMC policies where there are differentiations from policies of the City of Cedar Rapids. The policy manual will cover differences that are unique to this department. He notes
topics such as events, renter, caterers and different things we do with employees that are not allowed with large departments. Chairperson Andersen inquires if we are in alignment with most things, and what conflict the director is seeing. FD Pestel responds there is not a lot of conflict with existing policy, and the addition is with more specific details to cover this department. The difference being a commission governed department requires more specific policy.

FD Pestel reports he is moving forward securing two different contracts. The first contract is a “quick contract” with Hall and Hall Engineers for a high level design of the brick issues at All Veterans Memorial Park (AVM). He reports that contract must begin July 1st 2019 because it is in the budget for the next fiscal year. The second contract is with Solum Lang for a Professional Service Agreement for the fire protection and remodel of floors three, six, and seven. Chairperson inquires about the high level design contract with Hall and Hall Engineers. FD Pestel responds there has been a fund sitting in waiting of about $4,000.00 earmarked for the AVM. This fund can support the structure of the brick program. This contract is to have the engineers review problems at the park and submit other options and solutions.

FD Pestel reports the VMC’s insurance with Stamy ends June 30, 2019. FD Pestel has been inquiring to become insured under the City insurance starting July 1, 2019. He has been meeting with the City’s Risk Manager to establish coverage under City insurance policies, and John Gruca regarding not renewing the existing insurance policy. FD Pestel discovered we have been double charged for some insurance premiums in the past because coverage under the City is unavoidable, and the department has also been covered under Stamy. The City’s insurance policies are with True North, which is local. FD Pestel notes that the premiums are similar, however the out of pocket expenses will be less because these deductibles are shared across City departments. FD Pestel notes that the Risk Manager has been excellent to work with and has recommended Gap Insurance to cover specific events.

**Assistant Director Museum Report:**

AD Van Dorston begins her report with the announcement of the start of the Collections Intern, Olivia von Gries. She has extensive experience with collections and will help catalog new collection items. Olivia is a paid intern, and FD Pestel adds the intern budget is fully funded through the employee budget.

AD Van Dorston reports she is steadily making progress on the Korean War exhibit. She is working with graphic designer Julius Cavira, who is a veteran and worked on the Vietnam exhibit. She has begun to send some of his files to Cedar Graphics. Commissioner Delfs inquires if that was the vendor used for the Vietnam exhibit, and AD Van Dorston replies no, we used Rapids Reproduction for the Vietnam exhibit. Chairperson Andersen inquires about an open date for the gallery and the possibility of having Congressman Leach for the opening. AD Van Dorston responds it is somewhat coming together, however the former Congressman is unavailable for June 25th 2019, which is the current opening date.

AD Van Dorston provides a brief recap on the All Veterans Memorial Park Policy. She reports an ad hoc committee was formed of Chairperson Andersen and Commissioner Delfs. They need to reconvene and will report on the progress at the next meeting.

**Program Coordinator Events Report:**

Program Coordinator Claire LeMay begins her report with a recap of prom season. Veterans Memorial Building hosted College Community School District prom, which was attended by approximately 500 students and Lisbon Community School prom. PC LeMay reports on a recent political event held in the Armory, which was less than a week between the initial contact and the event.
PC LeMay included information in the Commission packet regarding the Memorial Day events. She reports that the Metro Veterans Council approved the program during their May meeting.

PC LeMay reports that we are coming into wedding season and there are several wedding receptions booked back to back throughout the summer.

PC LeMay concludes her report and asks for any questions. Commissioner Arens asked about safety issues in the building during events, specifically during weddings. PC LeMay describes the information she communicates with the renters and with VMB staff, and how the staff does a wonderful job keeping unused areas locked during weekend events.

Chairperson Andersen inquires about electronic key locks and asks for an update from FD Pestel. FD Pestel replies he is hoping to purchase the Lenel system in June 2019 with any surplus funds left in the budget at the end of the fiscal year.

Chairperson Andersen compliments the VMB staff on the handling of the recent pop up political event, and comments it is a great opportunity for the citizens of Cedar Rapids to become informed and the staff does a great job of supporting that.

Commissioner Powers comments regarding the difficulty of parking at VMB. He inquires if there is a possibility of a partnership with the parking garage for certain occasions. PC LeMay defers to FD Pestel, and he responds the underground parking is available for rent from Park Cedar Rapids for about $2 per space, and for $240.00 events can rent out the entire parking garage. Commissioner Powers comments that groups like the New Horizons Band can use the garage during events at the building. PC LeMay comments she openly communicates the parking situation with people who are interested in renting any space in the VMB.

Presentations to Commission:

Stephen Mayne, the Red Cedar District Executive from the Hawkeye Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, presents a proposal to the Commission for a reduced rate on an event: called the “Arrow of Light”. This event is designed for the cub scouts who are moving into the next scouting program, Scouts BSA. They have outgrown venues they have used in previous years, and need a larger venue. They are proposing the use of the Coliseum to match this year’s theme and to accommodate the amount of people. They attempt to keep the costs at a minimum for the families.

Separately, Mr. Mayne describes a new unit called the Sea Scouts they are attempting to launch, and they are currently looking for a chartering unit and a home location. Mr. Mayne would like to have the VMB as the meeting location for the new Sea Scout unit. He inquired of the Commission if they would like to be the home of the new Sea Scout unit.

PC LeMay provided a basic estimate of costs for an event of this magnitude. With the extra set up that is anticipated with a large production, PC LeMay estimated a Friday and Saturday rental time which resulted in a base line estimate of $4,500.00. This does not include any additional rental space needed for actors or performers of the show.
Chairperson Andersen opens up discussion to the Commission. He states basic costs for operation would be $95-$100 per hour to break even. FD Pestel states that hours on Friday wouldn’t cost the facility any additional funds. Saturday requires extra staffing, and the facility would incur extra cost on this day. FD Pestel provides a quick estimate of 14 hours on Saturday would cost approximately $1,260.00. Commissioner DeWolf inquires about the precedent that is being set by this decision. Chairperson Andersen states we do not have a nonprofit rate or policy in effect, but the past decisions by past Commissions support a rate of at cost for nonprofits. Commission DeWolf comments if the Commission is prepared to extend this rate to all nonprofits. Commission Delfs states we should set a policy internally and ensure we do not exceed our capacity. FD Pestel reports the current capacity of the Coliseum is 878 occupants, and is negotiable with the fire chief depending on the layout. This number included partial use of the lower balconies. Commissioner Delfs comments this is a prime opportunity to set the policy going forward, and that events of this magnitude have not been held in the building for the past 40-50 years. Chairperson Andersen comments it is important to define how we work with nonprofits and create guidelines for expectations. Commissioner Delfs suggests creating a small committee to discuss the situation, and come back the next commission meeting with a resolution for Mr. Mayne and the Scouts. Commissioner DeWolf asks Mr. Mayne what his timeline is for an answer, and Mr. Mayne reports by the end of the summer. The discussion is tabled while a committee and the nonprofit guidelines are developed. Commissioner Delfs volunteers to participate on the committee.

Jason Everett, a 14 year combat veteran who is currently serving with the National Guard, presents on the opportunity to showcase a Hope Mural externally on the building during the anniversary of the 2008 Flood. The Hope Mural is a 16 foot by 8 foot mural, which is four different panels by four different artists. This international project brings different cultures together with the focus of hope and peace around the world. Commissioner Schuchmann inquires what the mural is made of and where it will be located. The mural is on canvas, and would be displayed on the cenotaph facing Interstate 380. Commissioner Delfs inquires if the mural could be displayed longer, and Mr. Everett responds yes. Chairperson Andersen comments he believes it will be a great fit for the building. Commissioner DeWolfs comments on the possible political implications of the mural and the artists that are used. Chairperson comments the message of hope is universal. Commissioner Arens inquires if we need to clear the placement with the City, and FD Pestel comments he will check with officials to ensure its placement is appropriate. Chairperson Andersen requests a motion to approve the placement of the Hope Mural, Commissioner Delfs moves for the placement, and it is seconded by Commissioner Arens. The Commission unanimously passed the motion for the placement of the Hope Mural.

Public Comment:

Bill Lahman shared with the Commission that the Purple Heart committee purchased bricks for all the Cedar Rapids Vietnam Veterans who was awarded a Purple Heart. They purchased a total of 31 bricks this cycle. The Commission thanks Mr. Lahman for his work and remembrance of these veterans.

Chairperson Andersen requests commissioners attempt to attend the Memorial Day Ceremony. He states he would like to see all commissioners in attendance.

Commission Delfs made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:42 pm.; seconded by Commissioner Powers. The motion carried with no objections.
Respectfully submitted,

Claire LeMay, Program Coordinator

CHAIRPERSON ___________________________ Date ____________________

VICE CHAIRPERSON ______________________ Date 6/13/19