VETERANS MEMORIAL COMMISSION (VMC)
MEETING MINUTES
July 11, 2019 5:30 p.m.
Conference Room
Veteran's Memorial Stadium
950 Rockford Rd SW
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

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

Commissioners Absent: Greg DeWolf

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

Staff Absent: Teri Van Dorstom, Assistant Director (AD)

Guests: Doug Nelson – Kernels CEO
Raymond Siddell – Families Helping Families
Melissa Carlson – Families Helping Families
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 to conduct a role call following the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:
Commissioner Delfs made a motion to approve the minutes of the June meeting; seconded by Commissioner Arens. The motion carried with no objections.

Financials (Budget report/Bills):
Commissioner Delfs poses several questions to FD Pestel regarding the budget and bills. First she inquires about the amount spent on overtime, and if that is normal. FD Pestel responds it is normal due to the need to staff weekend events, and shares that less was spent fiscal year 2019 than was projected. Commissioner Delfs then inquires what would happen with that surplus funds, and FD Pestel responds the surplus goes back into the VMC general ledger for fiscal year 2020. Next Commissioner Delfs asks about upcoming staff retirements and what staffing will be utilized, specifically summer help or replacement of that position. FD Pestel is investigating the possibility of a janitorial work through the City FMS contracts to help clean the building. Commissioner Delfs then inquires about the aging HVAC systems and requests an update. FD Pestel comments that the biggest issue is the building automated system. Commissioner Andersen inquires if it’s an equipment issue or software issue. FD Pestel explains it is a
computer program issue. The current system called Niagra was not intended to handle all of the components it is, therefore the system is having serious problems communicating with the HVAC equipment. Commissioner Andersen recommends contacting Emily at Alliant Energy to conduct a study to evaluate the building automated system.

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

Presentations:

Doug Nelson present first on behalf of the Cedar Rapids Ball Club. He reported he receives multiple compliments on the condition of the stadium. He shared the results of a recent audit in conjunction with a Major League Baseball independent contractor. The audit passed, with one caution regarding the aging field lighting. There are three items that will be addressed this year under the capital repairs fund. First is the batter’s eye screen, which allows the batter to pick up the ball from the pitcher as soon as possible. In April, it was damaged by sustained winds and needs to be replaced. Second is replacing a small utility tractor that is used on the field for a variety of tasks. The last item on the list is HVAC units for the suites that need to be replaced. Currently the units are residential units which will be replaced by commercial units. Mr. Nelson mentions there are other upcoming projects. The surplus fund balance that has built up will fund these projects. The field lighting (which was a caution in the audit), outfield turf updates, and a new video board are on the list for the next two years. Mr. Nelson shares that the MLB is considering updating requirements for protective netting, and the stadium will need to update the protective netting as soon as the MLB implements the requirements. Commissioner Delfs questions the time placement of protective netting, and if it has been two years since it was installed. Mr. Nelson confirms the netting is two years old, and that it was connected to the outfield wall, which should make further extension requirements by the MLB cost effective.

Councilperson Olson reminds the group that the capital plan is ending and inquires if Mr. Nelson is concerned about that and what concerns the Kernels may have. Mr. Nelson suggests that Solum Lang Architects revisit the capital repair study to outline the needs for the park over the next 10 years. He continues the Kernels need the help to financially carry out the updates and repairs, and mentions the provision in the lease for a continued capital improvement fund.

Commissioner Delfs asks about an all access pass the commissioners received at the beginning of the season. Mr. Nelson responds the pass gives commissioner’s access to the ball park at any time, but there is no seat assigned to the pass. Commissioners should take the pass to the suite entrance to gain access to ball games.

The Commission provided a payment to the Cedar Rapids Ball Club in an amount of $51,321.50.

The second presentation from Families Helping Families (FHF). FHF is presenting to the VMC to ask for a rate reduction for a fundraising event in May 2020 called “Taste of the Corridor.” Melissa Carlson the executive director and Raymond Siddell the president of the board of directors begin by sharing how FHF assists children who are experiencing the foster care system. FHF’s mission is to meet the needs of youth who have been abused or neglected to allow them to have the same chance as their peers to be healthy and productive citizens. Some of their programs include a clothing closet at their facility on Center Point Road, “Spread Your Wings” program, a shoe voucher program for brand new shoes, “Soaring Towards Success” academic scholarships. FHF also holds two major activities: “Back to School Rally” where students receive school supplies, and “Winter Wonderland” event which includes activities such as cookie decorating, a visit from Santa, and gift opportunities. “Taste of the Corridor” event had about 170 in attendance last year. In 2020 they anticipate a larger turnout for the second annual event. FHF would like
to request a reduced rental rate for the coliseum on Saturday May 16th 2020. Commissioner Delfs asks if an event like this would cause any problems with our food vendor. FD Pestel responds similar events have been held in the coliseum with no conflict. Commissioner Schuchmann inquires if the liquor license would be affected, and Ms. Carlson shares during the first Taste of the Corridor, the vendors were very knowledgeable about licensing requirements and have the type of license to allow serving samples at different locations. Commissioner Schuchman further inquired about the need for inspections from the health department. Ms. Carlson responds that she had checked with the Linn County Health Department for the first event, and since the food is not prepared on site there is no need for an inspection. Commissioner Schuchmann asks if they accept donations or if there is a charge to enter. Ms. Carlson replies that it is $20 in advance or $25 at the door, and guests can also bid and purchase silent auction fundraising items.

Councilperson Olson inquires about the nonprofit policy. Chairperson Andersen replies the commission is committed to being good stewards of the building and fair with nonprofits. The charter guides the commission to serve veterans and to serve the community of Cedar Rapids. He recommends that when FHF knows how much time they will need they should contact the program coordinator. He refers to FD Pestel for an amount to charge per hour. FD Pestel responds that it takes about $100 per hour to cover overall expenses. Chairperson Andersen asks what timeline FHF would book for this event. Mr. Siddell responds that they would probably be looking at 5 hours’ time. AD Pestel suggests to compensate time on Friday to set up.

Facilities Director Report:

FD Pestel reports the insurance policy has been switched over from Stamy Agency Inc. to the City of Cedar Rapids insurance carriers. He estimates the savings to be approximately $20,000.00 in year one according to the first six months premiums. Councilperson Olson comments that teaming up with the City can be beneficial for the VMB. Commissioner Delfs shares that the contract with Stamy Insurance was in place due to the recommendations of prior leadership, and she thanks FD Pestel for moving in a better direction. FD Pestel comments the savings will probably be closer to $30,000.00 annually. FD Pestel further discusses the different types of insurance he would like to implement, and Chairperson Andersen inquires about a potential risk audit. FD Pestel responds these are things he is looking to implement in the future.

Assistant Director Museum Report:

AD Van Dorston was absent from the meeting and provided a written summary for the Commission. FD Pestel commented on the opening of the Korean Exhibit, and how well received it was during the Fourth of July Freedom Festival Pancake Breakfast event.

Program Coordinator Events Report:

PC LeMay reports on the Fourth of July Freedom Festival Pancake Breakfast. The staff is reviewing what activities can be provided to the children and families that attend. She is spending a lot of time with brides and families as there are several wedding scheduled in July and August.

Public Comment:

FD Pestel shares that he had discussions with the Cedar Rapids Police Department (CRPD) regarding CRPD holding training opportunities in the building.

Mr. Chismar shares with the commission an event that will be held by the VA and Disabled Veterans of America. The annual TEE Tournament at Riverside Casino will be held in September. He will be presenting
his program called Military Adaptive Sports Initiative at the TEE Tournament. However, he shares they will need some volunteers, and asks that the word is spread to those who might be interested.

Commissioner Schuchmann shares the Veterans for Peace organization will be having a picnic at Jones Park on the following Saturday from 11-4. Commissioner Arens shares that honor flight is holding an event this Saturday. Commissioner Delfs shares there is a boxing event in the VMB this Saturday.

Commissioner Delfs shares a report regarding the presentation of the All Veterans Park Policy with the Metro Veterans Council. Due to the direction of the discussion, it was tabled until leadership could have a separate meeting to answer some of the questions that arose.

Commissioner Powers comments that he would like to have the amount of the payment to the Ball Club in the minutes. Chairperson Andersen agrees.

Commissioner Delfs motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:42 pm. Commissioner Powers seconds the motion. The motion is carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Claire LeMay, Program Coordinator

Chairperson

Date 10/5/19

Vice Chairperson

Date 9/12/19