The regular meeting of the Veterans Memorial Commission was called to order by Commissioner Delfs, Chair, at 5:30 p.m. Commissioner Delfs asked that Assistant Director Van Dorston conduct a role call following the Pledge of Allegiance in Program Coordinator Woods’ absence. Guests introduced themselves following the commissioner’s role call.

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

Financials:
Commissioner Grant made a motion to approve the bills; seconded by Commissioner Arens. The motion carried with no objections.

Museum Report-Assistant Director:
AD Van Dorston prepared a written statement to report on three items:
1. Professional Development
2. Collections
3. Gallery displays
The statement may be read in its entirety which accompanies these minutes in full. AD Van Dorston will work on a plan to help guide in a strategic plan. Commissioner Arens and Delfs question if the VMC has ever had a mission statement. Commissioner Grant heeds caution as the VMC mission is mandated by state code and we should conform to said code. The current stance of the VMC was discussed as related to Iowa code. Commissioner Ziese discusses ED Jager’s personal context Jager had with the Iowa State Historical Society in reference to a 2013 denied loan request of ISHS civil war artifacts. AD Van Dorston offers further explanation as to why the VMC was denied the loan; being we are an un-accredited
museum. Commissioner Grant encourages AD Van Dorston to work on the steps to become an accredited museum.

Commissioner Delfs asked if we still have an intern employed assisting with collections. AD Van Dorston confirms that we do, but has transitioned her to working on marketing for the VMC as she sees it being a more suitable fit of use to the intern’s strengths as an employee. Commissioner Grant suggests reaching out to Maria Johnson, City of Cedar Rapids Marketing Director. AD Van Dorston reports that she will share the marketing plan the team is working on once available.

**Communications from the Metro Veterans Council:**
Commissioner Powers wanted to be clear that he represents the Metro Veterans Council. Commissioner Delfs began refreshing those in attendance of the VMC’s requests in regards to the damaged brick pillar that has been a topic of discussion many times within the VMC. Commissioner Powers interjects to report that they did the work already in place of the requests from the July VMC meeting. Commissioner Powers then presents a bill to the VMC to pay for the repairs made. The bill covers the material and labor, though Mr. Feireisen has already provided payment personally to the contractors that performed the work for labor and material, therefore requesting reimbursement. Also included in the billing to the VMC is costs for “Veteran of the Year” plaques for two Veterans to be selected as proposed at the MVC’s August of 2017 meeting. ED Jager is not certain if the VMC will be able to pay the invoice presented as he shares the purchasing protocol of the City of Cedar Rapids procedures to invoices and purchases.

Commissioner Delfs reminds Commissioner Powers that the past meeting was requesting a plan of action, not for the work to be completed. That by not following the requested plan, it may cause a delay; adjusted payment or non-payment from the VMC as Commissioner Powers requests due to said purchasing protocols a department within the City of Cedar Rapids has. Commissioner Grant stated he is willing to speak with Pete Welch who may have the capability to provide payment and will do so if needed. Commissioner Powers shares that he feels he was chastised the previous month and was not under the impression that he needed any approval, rather that he needed to get the work done.

Commissioner Powers shares another issue brought by the MVC council. The Freedom Rock that has had many recent discussions at recent VMC meetings. While he knows the project is about 2 years out, Commissioner Powers would like more information on the project as it is now. Commissioner Delfs agrees, and defers the topic to the September meeting of the VMC in order for her to gather more facts from ED Jager and John Mikelson, Midwest Military Outreach representative. Commissioner Powers states he would prefer the Freedom Rock to be in another location, perhaps close to Cedar Rapids Police Station for security reasons.

Commissioner Powers reports that the local Veterans Affairs office will be putting on an event for Veterans, in conjunction with the Veterans Stand Down with a giveaway of many free items, on a first come first serve basis. The event will occur on August 11, 2017 in the Armory of the Veterans Memorial Building from 8:30 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Commissioner Powers also reports on concern for the fading of the etching of Veterans’ names on the Desert Storm monument placed at the AVM Park. He shares that many donations have already been attained from several individuals and organizations. Also reported is that the local AMVets acquired a bid of $1,200 to repair the Desert Storm monument. ED Jager brings the discussion back to clarification on the invoice presented to the VMC for the repair to the brick pillar previously mentioned. Commissioner Powers and guest, Bob Feieresen answers ED Jager’s clarification request that Kings Materials has been
paid already with sales tax included. Commissioner Grant brings the discussion back to the Desert Storm monument topic and states that moving forward to consider that we are working in a governmental setting and need to proceed as such. Commissioner Delfs suggests that having pricing and amounts already received prior to Commissioner Grant speaking with Mr. Welch to request compensation in regards to monuments and repairs within.

Chair Comments:
   A. Budget
   Commissioner Delfs states that with the appropriate city departments and VMC team, she will help prepare a proposed fiscal year budget. Once it is sound, she will present it to the rest of the Commission. This has come about due to a personal look at the current budget; it appears the VMC does not have a solid FY budget. Commissioner Powers asks if that is something ED Jager does. ED Jager responds that he has done so for the last nine years and has presented to the VMC for approval.

   B. Commission Meeting Schedule
   Moving forward Commissioner Delfs suggests for 2018 to have a regular meeting schedule each month while planning for no meetings in the months of July and January. She is open to suggestions, while Commissioner Grant reminds the VMC that January is when we have the election of officers which is a requirement. Commissioner Arens suggests the month of December in place of January; Commissioner Grant requests that the topic be tabled until the next meeting in order for staff to recommend months as best candidates.

   C. Personnel
   Commissioner Delfs reminds those present of her personnel evaluation request for all paid VMC staff (intern excluded). Commissioner Ziese responds: does other City of Cedar Rapids employees have a right to approach the VMC. Commissioner Grant doesn’t believe he nor other Commissioners work along VMC staff and is wary of too much VMC involvement in the operation of the department, versus the policy side. If the evaluations had been done, the VMC has the authority to initiate them, Commissioner Delfs retorts: Commissioner Grant responds that he and all Commissioners should review ED Jager, while a further discussion could be had on office employees, PC Woods and AD Van Dorston; though he states he’s quite weary of any involvement of evaluations of the maintenance staff. Commissioner Grant continues that he doesn’t feel that it is appropriate at this time to evaluate any other than ED Jager. Commissioner Powers reminds the VMC that he and past Commissioner Sarah Else developed ED Jager’s job description and that he would recluse himself from the evaluations. Commissioner Grant suggests revisiting the hierarchy of evaluations. Commissioner Delfs agrees and encourages that a starting point is drawn, as evaluations have not been completed to date. With more discussion, it is made clear that the Commissioners are not being requested to evaluate employees, rather to review the self-evaluation’s that staff has provided. The only formal evaluation for the VMC to complete would be for ED Jager. Commissioner Guckenberger adds that going through the comparisons, that she is seeing this as benefit to become more educated and that it brings on an understanding of the staff. It will also help see how everything fits together and she is looking forward to the process and bringing any suggestions she can for improvement.

Public Comment:
Commissioner Powers brings an additional topic he missed in sharing for the MVC, that the annual election of officers occurred during their August 2017 meeting; the three officers remain the same. Cheryl King as Secretary, John Powers as Chair, and Vice Chair Howard Purdy.
Member, John Schick, of a local group, 40/8, requests use of office space within the VMB. Bob Feieresen recalls prior to the 2008 Flood that local Veterans organizations were able to utilize a community space on the Mezzanine level during meeting times if they did not have a post home. He doesn’t know the details, but he isn’t sure if this was an option moving forward post 2008 Flood. Commissioner Delfs asks for him to describe the items he’d like to store within the VMB. They share the items would be equipment and filing cabinets. John Schick shares that many Veterans groups have been interested in returning to the VMB. ED Jager comments that other organizations are or were here. Commissioner Grants shares that these groups are here as they requested use of space and he didn’t believe that the 40/8 had. John Schick doesn’t need a large space but would appreciate any area for use. Commissioner Grant encourages him to work with ED Jager, which ED Jager states he will make something work for their organization.

Commissioner Powers continues with discussion of the request for the MVC to fix flag placement [re: Memorial Day cemetery flag program] and retorts that his group finds that this is an issue that should be deferred directly to the cemetery or funeral homes. AD Van Dorston requests that Commissioner Powers clarifies what he is stating. Commissioner Powers said every comment and concern should be directed to the respective funeral/cemetery home. Commissioner Powers suggesting telling citizens to ‘ole’. ED Jager intervenes and shares that approximately 25,000 small flags that are kept on hand in the VMB, then passed on to several organizations that oversee specific cemeteries within the City of Cedar Rapids. During the year, PC Woods reads the obituary section of the Cedar Rapids Gazette and then to the best of her ability tracks internment of any Veteran or active service member accordingly. She then passes on the names added from the previous year master directory to each organization responsible for placing the flags that the VMC holds at each respectively tracked cemetery. The issue is, following Memorial Day, typically many calls come in from frustrated citizens at lack of the flag placement for their loved one who served our country. ED Jager comments that PC Woods has been working on a plan to improve flag placement at each cemetery, one cemetery at a time. Her time recently had focused on the Czech National Cemetery. Commissioner Delfs piggy-backs off ED Jager, that during the transition of the previous Administrative Assistant of the VMC, she also fielded calls of citizens being frustrated. AD Van Dorston states that ‘ole’ won’t work for this process. ED Jager concludes that the VMC will handle it moving forward.

Guest John Schick asks where the Red Bull insignia is located, AD Van Dorston replies that it is housed within collections at the VMB.

Commissioner Grant made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:42 p.m.; seconded by Commissioner Powers. The motion carried with no objections.

Respectfully submitted,

Nikke Woods, Program Coordinator

CHAIRPERSON ____________________________________________ Date

VICE CHAIRPERSON ____________________________________________ Date
Assistant Director – Museum Report

Respectfully submitted for the August 10, 2017 Veterans Memorial Commission Meeting.

**Professional development:** Again, thank you for supporting my position with a professional development opportunity: The Association of Midwest Museums Conference was held in Des Moines last month.

Without going in to a lot of detail, the two most important things I came away from the AMM conference with was first a sense of pride in the exhibitions we’ve curated here; they are quite up to standard. Second was the stark difference between the VMB and similar institutions that hold museum collection items. That difference being the plans and policies in place that reinforce my colleague’s actions and the way forward for their institutions. Except for a relatively weak Collections Management Policy, the Veterans Memorial Building lacks these important statements, vision, plans, and guides.

**Collections:** I am still very slowly cataloging the pre-flood 2008 collection and also taking in new acquisitions weekly.

**Gallery displays:** All gallery/displays are open, with hopes to offer a fresh Veteran-Art experience to open just before Veterans Day 2017 in the basement gallery hallway.