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 PC Woods conduct a role call following the Pledge of Allegiance.

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

Financials:
FD Pestel updates the VMC by answering a question from the August meeting in regards to the tax levy showing in the VMC budget report. He shares that the tax levy received should be shown in the October budget report. Commissioner Andersen made a motion to approve the bills; seconded by Commissioner Powers. The motion carried with no objections.

Facilities Director Report:
As the recent threat of flooding has crested just under 16 feet. FD Pestel reports on the preventive measures the VMC staff had put in place. Normally the underground parking begins taking on water at 15 feet yet it remained dry at 15 ½ feet. The VMB’s flood door was shut and sealed to the underground parking ramp this past Friday, September 7, 2018, though it is already reopened. Items were moved from the underground storage to the Armory floor along with other items from the East and West storage of the Armory.

There was an area area that has depressed through the years and did have a minimal water come over the base to make two puddles that was cleaned up by a floor machine. Commissioner Powers asked what attributed to no flooding from the underground ramp this time. FD Pestel believes the City of Cedar Rapids
work to fill some lower areas in the underground ramp and placing valves on storm sewers since the 2016 flood assisted heavily to the success.

After a discussion with Human Resources, FD Pestel set a goal to complete all VMC employee reviews by the end of the year. At this time, all but one employee review is complete. After reviews with the staff, it is now known that three of the five facility crewmembers plan to retire in one to five years. FD Pestel is working with them and the City of Cedar Rapids and may possibly have IPPERS meet with them also.

Upcoming building projects at the VMB with Solum Lang and Ament are forthcoming. However, the project with Solum Lang was placed on hold while Ament prepares the ADA scope and plans for work. It is taking a bit longer time for the information to be prepared as final details and a thorough review from John Neff, ADA specialist with the City of Cedar Rapids with FD Pestel also making updates to help avoid change orders during the projects. Once Ament’s design and scope is complete, Solum Lang will finalize their design and scope to avoid duplicate work.

FD Pestel is also working on the VMC’s proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2020 which is due October 19, 2018. It is the hope that by that time, it will predict where the budget falls for the remainder of FY19. If there are funds available, any remaining are suggested to purchase museum specific computer software, as we currently are quite behind the modern world, using Microsoft Access for all collections data. AD Van Dorston and FD Pestel have been in communication with a software provider. The approximate onetime cost would be $5,000.00 with an annual fee for updates and technical support. AD Van Dorston has used the same software at past places of employment and shares of the great platform it offers for all users—registrars, collections manager and the public. FD Pestel shares that the Kansas City WWI Museum uses the same software and anyone can view all items in collections by visiting their website. All Commissioners voiced support in the possible future purchase.

Commissioner Arens inquires if the intern is still with the VMC, which AD Van Dorston answers that he is until October and we will hire another intern after his duration is completed. Commissioner Andersen asks if the retiring facility staff will be leaving with significant trade knowledge and if we would benefit from hiring new staff sooner so they could be trained properly. FD Pestel does not believe so, as the timing in between the three to retire should allow appropriate training for new staff. The VMC HVAC employee is already working on data entry and inventorying to allow anyone to locate the various HVAC equipment within the VMB.

Museum Report:
AD Van Dorston is happy to share that her museum work is going well. She enjoys that she has been able to return to her role as the Assistant Director. Her focus has been on cataloguing the collections with years of backlog. As far as the exhibitions, her goal is to have the Vietnam exhibit outgoing in late November. The first week of December is scheduled for two main donors of the Vietnam exhibit to gather their loaned collection pieces. The next exhibit to be in place is the Korean War exhibit, which she plans to have in place by January or February of 2019.

AD Van Dorston also shares her work of upcoming Veterans Outreach events here at the VMB. Fliers are then passed to those present for the upcoming Music and Creative workshop for Veterans on November 3. She also shares promotional fliers for displaying word of the upcoming annual MVC Veterans Day program, which will be held on November 11, 2018 at 10:00 am. She does remind all that while Veterans Day proper is November 11, 2018, the building will be closed on Monday, November 12, 2018 as is the City of Cedar Rapids day to observe the holiday. However, for those community members who want to pay tribute at the VMB, the galleries and lobby will be open 8:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.
Communications from the Metro Veterans Council:
Commissioner Powers speaks on behalf of the MVC and shares as mentioned, the MVC Veterans Day program is having the final details all set for the program. Another topic discussed at the MVC meeting was a mention of the Linn County Freedom Rock (LCFR). The LCFR official home will be at the Linn County Fairgrounds. Commissioner Delfs reminds to share with those who may have a concern in regards to the Freedom Rock not placed in Cedar Rapids, that the VMC only oversees two very small properties within the entire City of Cedar Rapids. We are not able to speak for other locations but are happy it has found a home in Linn County. AD Van Dorston shares that many are excited for the placement of the LCFR at the Linn County Fairgrounds, especially as it is currently scheduled for painting during the fair of 2020. It is being embraced as a “county wide” endeavor. A rock has been donated and there is a local company involved to move and place the LCFR pro-bono.

Commissioner Andersen inquires about the 2018 Stand Down, which Commissioner Powers shares of its success with a great turn out. Commissioner Delfs also addressed the discussion of marketing with Metro Veterans Council at a recent monthly meeting in regards to recruiting more members. As the long-term members are aging, the roles with responsibilities are more difficult to fill. She encourages Veterans from more recent and current conflicts to get involved with local military based groups and efforts.

Public Comment:
Claire Neubauer, an employee of HACAP, working for a grant called Supportive Services for Veteran Families, introduces herself. They help provide financial support and case management for Veterans who are experiencing homelessness. These Veterans are those that truly have no home or are sleeping somewhere that is not suitable for sleeping. She simply wanted to attend tonight’s meeting to introduce herself and thank the VMC for allowing their organization to hold office space within the Veterans Memorial Building. It is an honor and blessing to them. She currently works with Veterans for 3-5 months providing financial assistance for safe and permanent housing as well as providing donated home goods. She works with Mark Brown who does the initial intake process. Some Veterans are experiencing first time homelessness while others have experienced chronic homelessness.

Their office is located on the Mezzanine level of the VMB. They are always looking for donations of cell phones and household goods (tables, recliners, small to medium TVs, kitchen supplies). They also will take any volunteers to assist with a truck, physical labor to move the donated items or even information to resources. She is newer to the Linn County area and is a Veteran that served in the late 90s herself. She finds her role empowering to assist fellow Veteran and believes she is able to relate with many fellow Veterans. Commissioner Andersen asks how many clients does Ms. Neubauer work with day to day, which she replies with anywhere from 20-30 at a time. They did place a goal to work with at least 200 Veterans this year, to match their 2017 assistance and they have already exceeded that goal for 2018.

Mr. Olson shares updates from the recent flood protection plans from the City of Cedar Rapids City Council. At a proposed twenty two-cent property tax levy increase per year, which will be voted on by the City Council each year, Cedar Rapids is still quite low compared to other cities’ property tax rates. If we have substantial growth in Cedar Rapids, the increase each year may go down or not increase at all. The City is also pushing for change in the bonding rules to bond out at 30 years versus 20-25 years. That could decrease to a fourteen-cent property tax levy increase per year.

The federal money has a requirement to face the east side within five years, which was mandated by the Core of Engineers. The west side flood protection is planned be paid for by the money from Iowa State. The biggest issues they foresee is the shortage of contractors, though the Economic Alliance is working with contractors on finding more subcontractors. Most of the work will be beautifying existing trail systems and creating more parks to enjoy within Cedar Rapids while providing permanent flood protection.
Commissioner Andersen, employed at Alliant Energy, is working on updating an energy assessment for the VMB from May of 2015. Updated by FD Pestel, some of those recommendations recently has been put in place with more updates to be placed soon. Commissioner Andersen will have the appropriate contact reach out to FD Pestel.

Commissioner Arens made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:23 p.m.; seconded by Commissioner Powers. The motion carried with no objections.

Respectfully submitted,

Nikkee Woods, Program Coordinator

CHAIR

Date

VICE CHAIR

Date