

## MINUTES OF THE US MILITARY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dunedin Community Center

Wednesday, March 6, 2024 / 10:00 am

Members Present: Rob Cozen (Chair), Larri Gerson (Vice Chair), Eric Keaton, Kevin Sinnett, James Spangler, Frank Vanore, William Short  
Members Absent: Paul Thompson, Lacy Zabel Hollings  
Presenters: Theresa Smalling & Alex Simpkins (City of Dunedin HR Department)  
City Staff Present: Vince Gizzi, Parks & Recreation Director; Lanie Sheets, Administration Superintendent  
Other Attendees: Vice Mayor Moe Freaney, Commissioner Jeff Gow

**CALL TO ORDER: Chair Rob Cozen called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.  
Committee and Guests recited the Pledge of Allegiance**

### 1. ADMINISTRATIVE

- a. Rob Cozen requested the addition of Robert Groover and Jerry Shaffer, of The Veterans Alliance of Clearwater, be added to the New Business agenda

**MOTION:** Motion was made by Larri Gerson and seconded by Frank Vanore

**VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

- b. Approval of February 2024 Minutes

**MOTION:** Motion was made by Frank Vanore and seconded by Eric Keaton to approve the February 2024 minutes.

**VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

- c. Welcomes – The committee welcomed the following members of the City of Dunedin Human Resources (HR) Department: Ms. Theresa Smalling (Director) and Ms. Alex Simpkins (Manager). The committee also recognized the presence of Vice Mayor Moe Freaney and Commissioner Jeff Gow.

- d. POW MIA Flag Ceremony – Rob Cozen expressed his appreciation to the committee members for their efforts in garnering the City's approval to fly the POW MIA Flag under the U.S. Flag at City Hall. The Ceremony was held at City Hall on Tuesday, March 5, 2024.

- e. City of Dunedin HR Department – The committee had requested information regarding any consideration veterans might receive with regards to the City’s hiring practices. Ms. Smalling and Ms. Simpkins stated the city complies with State statutes with regards to all hiring. Furthermore, there is a “Veterans Preference” instituted that requires a first round personal interview for any veteran applicant. There is also verbiage for disabled veterans and veteran spouses. All applicants (veteran and non-veteran) must meet the minimum positional qualifications. Approximately 10% of the City’s employees are military veterans.

NEW: A review of the City of Dunedin web site shows a link to the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs describing ‘veterans’ preference’ as described in Florida State Statutes (FS 295.07, 295.11). Here is a link:

<https://floridavets.org/benefits-services/veterans-preference/>

- i. Action: Larri Gerson will review these documents and make recommendations to the committee for further consideration to the City Commissioners. Item to be added to the April meeting OLD BUSINESS agenda.

## 2. OLD BUSINESS

- a. POW MIA Table (Missing Man/Fallen Comrade Table) – Jim Spangler provided a comprehensive information paper addressing the protocol and background of the Missing Man/Fallen Comrade Table. The committee was considering a table arranged in the City Hall lobby. After considerable discussion a motion was made to strike this item from our 2024 Plans of Action.

**MOTION:** Motion was made by Jim Spangler and seconded by Eric Keaton

**VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously

**ACTION:** In its place the committee will consider a Fallen Soldier Memorial. Jim Spangler will provide the committee with additional information at the April meeting. Item to be added to the April meeting OLD BUSINESS agenda.

- b. Possible Renaming Section of the Pinellas Trail – No discussion, topic to be added to the April meeting OLD BUSINESS agenda.
- c. Donald Roebling Park – Larri Gerson provided a comprehensive information paper on the significance of Donald Roebling’s Alligator amphibious tractor. The committee watched a video of the importance of these vehicles during WWII. Another YouTube video was identified that ties the Alligator directly to the region of Sterling Park. This YouTube video will be forwarded to the committee members and the topic will be discussed at the April meeting. Item to be added to the April meeting OLD BUSINESS agenda

## 3. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Veterans Alliance of Clearwater – Mr. Groover and Mr. Shaffer introduced themselves and described the Alliance hosting their 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memorial Day

Celebration to be held at the new BayCare Sound and Coachman Park in Clearwater. This event will run from Friday, May 25 – Sunday, May 26 and include a parade, festival and concerts. There are an estimated 90,000 military veterans in Pinellas County. Rob Cozen asked Mr. Groover and Mr. Shaffer to continue to keep our committee updated on events and activities that might provide synergy with our efforts in the City of Dunedin.

#### 4. OPEN FLOOR

- a. None

#### 5. NEXT MEETING

The next committee meeting is scheduled at 10AM on Wednesday, April 10, 2024  
NOTE: This is a change from the published date of April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**MEETING ADJOURNED 11:11 AM**

**MOTION:** Motion by Jim Spangler and seconded by Frank Vanore

**VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously

*Disability Provisions: It is the policy of the City of Dunedin not to discriminate against disabled persons in employment or the provisions of services. If you have a disability that requires accommodation, please notify the ADA Coordinator 48 hours prior to the scheduled meeting at (727) 298-3043.*