

# Sarasota County Veterans Commission

Minutes: October 22, 2015

- Meeting was called to order by President, Ted Smith at 1:00. Opened with a prayer by Chaplain, Barbara Vaughn, followed by Pledge of Allegiance.
- Welcome to new 2nd Vice President, Matt Erny.
- Captain O'Neill moved to accept Minutes from September meeting. Minutes accepted.
- Treasurer's Report was accepted subject to Financial Committee review.
- Vice President, Todd Hughes, introduced two visitors, Carlos Moreira and Jeremiah Robinson, who are now working with him at USFSM.
- Congressional Updates: Danny Bilyeu had no report from Congressman Buchanan's office as Congress is on a break.
- State Representative Julio Gonzalez reported on re-districting for Florida's congressional districts. It appears that final maps will be determined by the courts. He is working on a bill to streamline the transition of medical professionals to the state of Florida.
- Jim Hesson, Commemorating the Vietnam War, reported that pins for all Vietnam veterans are currently on order. The purpose is to let every vet know that their service is/was appreciated.
- Terry Acton, Veterans Service Officer, reported on the parade set for Veteran's Day in Sarasota.
- John Rosentrater, Cemetery Director of Sarasota National Cemetery, introduced his wife, Geralyn, visiting with us today. He announced a job

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- opening for a temporary grounds keeper, currently advertised on line at USAJobs.com. He also offered M-1 Grand Rifle maintenance manuals to Honor Guard groups. He reported on the 173rd Airborne Battalion ceremony held on Oct 9th to dedicate their monument on the “Memorial Walk.” He also advised of the upcoming Unaccompanied Memorial Service on Nov 10th at 3:00 p.m. This will be the first “Call to Honor” burial service in Sarasota. The Missing in America Project locates unclaimed cremains and arranges ceremonies for their committal. On Veterans Day there will be a Mass arranged by the Knights of Columbus in the Patriots Plaza amphitheater. Looking ahead, he announced that Wreaths Across America would once again place wreaths on the now 9,200 grave sites at Sarasota National Cemetery.
- Ted Smith, speaking on behalf of Gene Sweeney, announced the lighting of the 911 Memorial in Patriots Park in Venice.
- Jerry Koontz of the Manatee County Veterans Council announced an upcoming Stand Down for veterans, and also the Veterans Day parade in Palmetto.
- Art McGinnis, representing the Charlotte County Veterans Council, spoke about their Quilts of Valor Program, then presented beautiful quilts to Captain O’Niell and Frank Hodalski.
- Kevin Sifferman of Concerned Veterans for America announced a number of up coming events, including a Breakfast on Oct 28th at 9:00a.m.
- Norm MacLellan announced the Veterans Day ceremony to be held at Patriots Park in Venice. This year, the Marine Corps League will be the sponsor of the event. He also announced an event at Venice Elementary school to honor veterans. The event is open to all veterans at 9:00 a.m. on Nov 10th, just check in at the administration office at the school.

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- Florida Veterans for Common Sense has taken on a new project. The Farm Project is to develop sustainable organic farming that will train and employ veterans in micro-agricultural management and other agricultural skills.
- Brian Saum of the Jewish Family and Childrens Services reported they are now housing vets before they become homeless. They have had a 90% success rate with Functional Zero which now houses veterans first, then tackles the other issues they face. They are also working with the police to find housing for vets instead of jailing them. They are also holding a Stand Down on Saturday.
- Bob Manass is working with Vet to Vet, a peer to peer program and the National Association of Mental Illness. He is seeking a “home” for these programs.
- George Lindenfeld announced that his book, “The Twenty Minute Trauma Fix” will be released on Amazon on Nov 4th.
- Bob Marrah, of the Knights of Columbus, expanded on the “Missing in America” project mentioned earlier by John Rosentrater. Bob will be the Master of Ceremonies for the ceremony that will place the cremains of nine veterans and three spouses in the columbarium. The Patriot Guard Riders will also participate with the Knights of Columbus.
- On behalf of Blue Star Mothers, Linda Atkins will be accepting donations for “Wreaths Across America” at Sarasota National Ceremony. The cost is \$15.00 per wreath.
- Marty Donner of the Sarasota-Manatee Navy League said that they had recently celebrated the birthday of the U.S. Navy. They will hold a (somewhat belated) birthday celebration of the Marine Corps birthday on Nov 18th.

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- Bill Bowen of Post 8118, VFW, called our attention to a Health Fair to be held at their Post on Oct 26th from noon to 4:00 p.m. A number of health related organizations will be participating and providing services.
- CDR Michael Landen of the DAV announced that they have a trolley in the Sarasota Veterans Day parade. Any vet who would like to join them and ride is invited to come to their post on Bee Ridge Road that morning.
- Ben Knisely also mentioned the Sarasota Military Academy's participation in the parade.
- SCVC is collecting toys for Linda Craig's Manasota Operation Troop Support. Bring a toy to our next meeting. These presents will be for the children of our troops serving overseas and not home for Christmas and the holidays.
- Manasota Goodwill is also welcoming vets to walk with them in the parade. From 3 to 6 p.m. that day they will also be holding a turkey giveaway.
- Danny Bilyeu commended the high caliber of Sarasota Military Academy students. Their Regimental Commander recently won the national Boy and Girls Club award.
- Woody Schiffman advised that we should do our homework regarding the many requests we all receive for contributions to veteran group. He suggested checking out any charity with [CharityNavigator.org](http://CharityNavigator.org) before giving.
- 50/50 drawing was held with \$30 in the pot. The winner was Ben Knisely.
- Benediction was provided by Chaplain Vaughn and the meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.