

Sarasota County Veterans Commission

DRAFT MINUTES

Thursday, March 24, 2016

The Community Foundation of Sarasota County
2635 Fruitville Road, Sarasota, Fl. 34237



- Meeting called to order at 1PM
- Secretary Marlene Hauck was absent
- Opening prayer was conducted by President Ted Smith
- Minutes from last meeting were approved
- Treasurer Rick Rogala reported an ending balance of \$1799.47 report accepted

- Congressional Update given by Danny Bilyeu. HR bills involving veteran home foreclosures are still in process and ID cards are still in committee.

- Commissioner Paul Caraguilo will support the efforts to keep Unconditional Surrender statue in its current place. He will attend and present County Proclamation at the **America Thanks You Ceremony** on March 29th at the Sarasota National Cemetery.

- Renee Gilmore, President of The Saja Group, presented an overview of the SCVC Strategic Plan. Slides included the new Mission and Vision statements. A template for a SWOT analysis was presented and written feedback was requested from members and stakeholder.

- Steven Garcia, Sarasota County VSO, reported that claims for Camp Lejeune water contamination are being accepted. Marine and Navy personnel stationed there between 1953 and 1987 are eligible.

- John Rosentrater, Director of the Sarasota National Cemetery, recognized the **Seebees Memorial** recently dedicated June 12, 2016 at 6PM. Flags for the Fallen will be placed, volunteers are appreciated.

- Beck Ludwig reported that the **Women Veterans Retreat** will be held September 29 to October 2, 2016 at Day Springs Conference Center. Major sponsor is Gold Coast Eagle Distributors. More sponsors and financial contributions are needed; \$400 per veteran covers the entire weekend retreat.

- BGen Jim Hesson reported on the upcoming **50th Vietnam Anniversary Ceremony** to be held March 29th at the Patriot Plaza, 5PM. Vietnam War Era veterans will be honored and the lapel pin presented. Col. Ben Knisely is the guest speaker.

- Representing the Blue Alert Foundation, Founder/President Tom Berry will be presenting the foundation's efforts to support Law Enforcement families. The recent National Football League endorsement of the Blue Alert Foundation is a big step to helping the organization build capacity to aid families of fallen officers.
- Harvest House Executive Director, Erin Minor shared the new housing made available for the homeless that includes many veterans. A two-year program of counseling for substance abuse. Harvest House partners the VA and is very successful in its transitional services. A motion to donate \$100 was passed.
- Phil Gorelick from JFCS announced the annual **Stand Down** will be held April 16th, 8AM to Noon at the Health Department and Payne Park.
- Maverick Johnson shared information about the Dennis V. Cooper Foundation, which honors Johnson's father. Dennis V. Cooper was a US Marine helicopter pilot. Cooper was injured in action and sustained injuries that for years were misdiagnosed before he died suddenly from stage 4 cancer. Johnson's efforts are to honor his father through the foundation's **Wishes for Heroes** program. Monies are used to help grant a wish for dying veterans. A motion to donate \$100 to the foundation was passed.
- Kim Lege from Keller Williams Realty explained her expertise in providing VA home loans. Handouts containing details were distributed.
- Brian Russ, Commander of the Vietnam Brotherhood Alpha Company, requested support in letting our political representatives know of the urgency to extend the Agent Orange Act of 1991 that expired last September because too many Vietnam veterans are still suffering. The act allows specific conditions under which Vietnam veterans may receive medical benefits.

Respectfully submitted,

Ted Smith

Substituting as Secretary in the absence of Marlene Hauck