

LOUISIANA NAVAL WAR MEMORIAL COMMISSION

Minutes of Commission Meeting

March 6, 2023 – 4:00 p.m.

REVISED 11/15/2023

Members present:

Richard Brandt
H. Davis Cole
Col. David W. Couvillon
Robert Hawthorne
Joe Jenkins
Donnie J. Miller, III
Larry Muenzler
Les Nicholson
Katie Pryor
Karen St. Cyr
Earnest Buckner, LDVA designee
John Wells
Roderick Wells

Members absent:

Michael Vicari
C.J. Krueger
Robert Schilling (Resigned)

Others present:

Parks Stephenson, Executive Director
Tim NesSmith, Ship Superintendent

Call to order: At 4:05 o'clock p.m. the meeting was called to order at the Museum by the Chairman, H. Davis Cole, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner Jenkins.

Agenda: The Chairman/ Commissioner H. Davis Cole announced that a quorum was present and asked if there were any additions or changes to the agenda. There were none so he proceeded to the business of the Commission.

Treasurer's Report: Commissioner/Treasurer Larry Muenzler reviewed the latest financial reports and asked if there were any questions. It was noted that FY 2022 had been a better than anticipated year with \$159,000 over budget. Good results in group tours, building rentals. The month of January had been a slow start to the financials but it was expected to improve. The need to purchase three additional immersible pumps and 2 generators for \$10,000 to pump water out of the ship was also included in the expenses. There were a few questions and comments; on a motion duly made by Commissioner/Treasurer Larry Muenzler, and seconded by Commissioner Dick Brandt, the financials were accepted and approved without dissent.

Commissioner Les Nicholson asked if the Commission had any policies or procedures in place to spend contingency funds outside of budgeted items which would allow the executive director to make expenditures without prior approval from Commission or President of the Commission. There were none. Commissioner Karen St. Cyr made a motion to request Commissioners Bob Hawthorne and Les Nicholson look into the matter, and research and develop a policy and guidelines which allow the director to make necessary or emergency expenditures in the future and report back to the Commission so guidelines/policy can be established. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Muenzler and passed without objection.

Ship Status report:

The water inside the hull, though manageable at the moment, still provide significant corrosion risk, especially along the keel and areas where the watertight bulkheads are connected to the ship frames. The extra pumps that were purchased with a Foundation funds in January have been effective in controlling flooding in the lower hull. The flooding we are experiencing is unacceptable and may worsen as the ship floats more freely but we have yet to experience catastrophic flooding due to the mitigation steps taken. The vessel if also experiencing “rust eruptions “in the galvanized steel used on the main deck in the stern section and reached a critical stage on the port side. The executive director authorized the purchase of plate steel to patch an approximate 24’ x 6’ area. The vessel must be taken to dry dock for rehabilitation as soon as funds are found and secured. Home Depot has provided a \$1500 Community Grant for the museum, LSU Sigma Kai and an Eagle Boy Scout also worked on the ship/museum as volunteers.

Executive Director’s report:

Parks Stephenson gave a detailed report of the condition of the Museum and the hull and possible steps needed. A lengthy discussion followed. Highpoints of the discussion included the need a comprehensive plan to secure funding for the ship’s restoration. It is estimated to cost between \$8 to \$10 million to take the vessel to dry dock and the restoration must take place as soon as possible. GIS Engineering is conducting a survey of the ship and working on cost estimates for rehabilitation. The contract for this work is \$100,000.

Staffing is the most significant challenge for the Museum. The Museum is constantly short-staffed, with core staff often having to stand full shifts and/or relief for the 2 basic positions to keep the Museum open. The issue is two-fold, budget and current museum pay is not competitive to the market. The Museum entry pay of nine (\$9) dollars an hour for a new employee.

The Nao TRINDAD tall-ship will visit the Baton Rouge March 13-25, 2023 and will be docked along side the USS Kidd port side. Staff is readying for the ship’s arrival and tours of the vessel will be open to the public.

The State Facilities Planning and Control office sent an inspector to survey the Museum building roof, who recommend complete replacement of both the building roof and skylight over the P-40 courtyard. One of the two air handlers in the building’s HVAC system failed last month. The

selection board for the architect to plan the work is scheduled for March 15, 2023. The repair is our responsibly and we contacted LA Controls to replace the worn-out blower's drive shaft. This work is in process. New carpet will be installed on the second floor of the building after the fund raiser Roarin' on the River in late March.

In addition to the visit of the Nao TRINDAD in March, the Museum has a number of upcoming events: Annual Roarin' on the River – March 27th; Operation Bid Fish – June 6th, and July 4th Patriots and Pirates.

Old Business: The chairman opened the floor for old business. There was none.


New Business: The chairman asked if there was any new business offered. Commissioner John Wells who also serves as the Chairman Military-Veterans Advocacy, Inc. ® noted that his organization would be sponsoring a new program designed to assist Veterans with wellness suffering from PTSD and other conditions. This program began as a Canadian project and wildness therapy. Louisiana will be the first site for this program in the United States. Mr. Well's asked the Commission if they would be interested in hosting this program on June 6th and assist with advertising and publicity. His organization has allocated \$1,000 to "Veterans Get Outside Day" and would donate this amount to the Museum for hosting the event. On a motion by Commissioner Karen St. Cyr; seconded by Les Nicholson, the Commission unanimously approved sponsoring the event.

Committee Reports:

Commission Chairman K. Davis Cole discussed Committee chairs and assignments for this year. They include: Executive Committee – Davis Cole; Nominating Committee – Joe Jenkins; Government Relations - Les Nicholson; Dry Dock/Hull Committee – John Wells and Fundraising Committee – Davis Cole. He noted than Commissioner Les Nicholson will be working on a strategy to secure Capital Outlay sources and working with city -parish and the congressional delegation to secure other government grant possibilities.

Public comments: The chairman asked if there were any comments from the public. None was mentioned.

Adjournment: After brief comments, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 6:00 p.m.



Karen St. Cyr, Secretary