



TOWN OF MIAMI LAKES, FLORIDA  
Veterans Committee Virtual Meeting Minutes  
**July 21, 2020**  
Government Center  
6601 Main Street Miami Lakes, FL 33014

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Nayib Hassan at **1633 hrs.** Vice Chairperson Michael Coote recorded the minutes.
2. **Roll Call: Present:** Nayib Hassan, Michael Coote, Ricardo Outerino, Angel Vazquez, Gary Cardenas, Edward Paez, Larry Bowman, Leonardo Rodriguez, Janiel Lazala, Dennis Polo, Mario Chavez. **Absent:** Bryan Bacallao, Pedro Fiallo, Alejanddro Sanchez.
3. **Public Comments:**

**Mr. William “Bill” Watts**, Director of Operations for **Fishing with Americas Finest (FWAF)**– *Veteran Fishing Therapy*, is a Non-Profit 501C3 which provides piscatorial therapy to Veterans diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Mr. Watts expressed his gratitude to the Town of Miami Lakes and the Veterans Committee which awarded FWAF the proceeds (approx. \$16,500) from the 2019 Jingle Bell Jog to offset their operational expenses in providing Piscatorial therapy to Veterans. Mr. Watts highlighted **20 Veterans a day / die from suicide**, and it is the goal of FWAF to assist in reducing that number through a catch & release freshwater fishing program that provides for 300+ Veterans a year through 80 volunteers working with the program. The program intends to extend the program to saltwater in the coming year. Contact info: [Info@FWAF.net](mailto:Info@FWAF.net) / ph# 786-351-6829

**Ms. Laura Whitfield**, PHR, SHRM-CP, Mission United Director, United Way of Miami-Dade and **Mr. Tomas Canela**, the United Way’s Manager of Veteran’s Services addressed the committee, Mission United in Miami is a single point of entry for veterans to access the help they need, at no cost. Mission United helps ease the transition to civilian life and address the unique needs of veterans. By connecting them to a coordinated network of community partners, we empower veterans and their families to lead productive lives in the community. Services include a pathway to financial stability, legal services, employment assistance and assistance with benefits. Their organization identified (2) Veterans who needed access to a service dog. One with emotional needs, the other with physical needs and Mission United does not offer those services so they wanted to make the committee aware of the need so if an opportunity or resource was made apparent, we could reach out to them. Their contact information. [missionunited@unitedwaymiami.org](mailto:missionunited@unitedwaymiami.org) or (305) 646-7130.

**Dr. Kent Cheeseboro**, Miami-Dade County Veterans Services Coalition (MDCVSC) serves as a resource in the county to assist Veterans, he addressed the committee to express his gratitude with the relationship he has with the Miami Lakes Veterans Committee and the Veteran friendly environment fostered by the Town of Miami Lakes.

**Ms. Emily Moreno**, Vice president of the Read, Hope, Achieve Inc. (a nonprofit in Miami Lakes), was introduced as an assistant and representative for Miami Lakes Mayor, Manny Cid. She greeted the committee on behalf of the mayor.

4. **Order of Business** (Deferrals, Additions, Deletions)



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- a. Committee member Angel Vazquez asked the committee to strike New Business 8a. **Jakeys Park** discussion. Mr. Vazquez had previously asked for the agenda item to be added, but it was agreed the discussion was outside the purview of the Veterans Committee and was being addressed by the Town of Miami Lakes city council. The item was removed from the agenda.
  - b. Vice Chair Michael Coote made a motion for consideration of adding **a moment of prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance** to the agenda as a permanent addition to all meetings included in New Business as 8c. Committee member, Mr. Angel Vasquez seconded the motion. Voice vote: Aye: All. Opposed: None. The item was added to the agenda as 8c.
- 5. Adoption of Minutes:**
- a. February
  - b. June
- Minutes were unavailable for review. Committee member Angel Vazquez made a motion to defer adoption of minutes. The motion was seconded by committee member Gary Cardenas. Voice vote: Aye: All. Opposed: None.
- 6. Presentations/Announcements: None**
- 7. Old Business:**
- a. **Special Response Team training for MDPD Town of ML for Veterans with PTSD.** Veteran committee Chairperson, Nayib Hassan has met with Councilman Luis Collazo, Town Mayor, Manny Cid, and ML PD Commander, Major Ruiz to discuss incorporating the Veteran's Response Team (VRT) training with officers in the town of Miami Lakes with the intent these officers could better connect with Veterans suffering PTSD and could assist in deescalating encounters with this subset of the town's population. The VRT program was developed based on the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) model of advanced CIT Training. Police officers who have graduated from the CIT training and who are also US Armed Forces Veterans are eligible to attend VRT training. Officers learn specific mental health needs of veterans and resources to assist veterans in Delaware. They learn how to interact as a "peer" as well as a CIT law enforcement officer when a fellow veteran is in crisis. A teleconference will be scheduled in August 2020 with town officials and the Veteran Committee Chairperson and the NAMI Delaware CEO and Executive Director, Dr. Josh Thomas email: [jthomas@namide.org](mailto:jthomas@namide.org) to further the discuss the inclusion of VRT in Miami/Miami Lakes.
  - b. **Veterans Day parade Grand Marshall selection.** The discussion centered on Miami Lakes being host to the longest running Veterans Day Parade in South Florida and the need to identify a Grand Marshall in advance of the proposed November 2020 parade date. Mr. Vazquez highlighted the need for early identification to allow the selectee the opportunity to prepare in advance, a point agreed upon by various members of the committee. Mr. Coote suggested the committee begin to think about alternatives to a large public parade in light of concerns with COVID. Discussion centered on the four months remaining and the fluidity of events surrounding the state and national response to COVID. Mr. Coote suggested the carrying of the colors along an abbreviated route with no other participants as a way to continue the tradition



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of the longest running parade in south Florida. Mr. Lazala is invested in addressing social distancing recommendations and mitigation strategies to be presented to the committee in the next 1-2 months. Mr. Brandon Diaz, Town of Miami Lakes Marketing and Digital Services Specialist will be responsible for the media campaign and is to ensure the request for Grand Marshall nominations be included on the Town website, in addition to inclusion in the newspaper, The Miami Laker. Further discussion was tabled.

c. **Jingle Bell Jog.**

- i. Mr. Hassan asked Town of Miami Lakes liaison, Mr. William Sanchez to ensure sponsorship packets were distributed via email to members of the committee IOT began soliciting donations for the event, recognizing COVID could have a considerable impact on the ability of the town to host the event and it was agreed it would be prudent to caution sponsors when soliciting donations as things could change.
- ii. Mr. Hassan suggested speaking with the Graham Company to see if & when Main Street would be available going into the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> week of December 2020.
- iii. A virtual run was suggested whereby people could register and then complete their run of their own accord and/or on a marked course where participants could record their own times, without having to close the streets and involve large crowds. The committee agreed to wait an additional 1-2 months to determine if the event could be hosted by the town in December 2020.
- iv. Recognizing sponsors from the 2019 Jingle Bell Jog with plaques and a Letter of Appreciation from the Town of Miami Lakes had previously been approved. However, to date no action has been taken. Committee member, Dennis Polo agreed to source and provide price estimates for the plaques based on his previous work with the USMC Toys for Tots campaign. He will provide an update at the August 2020 Veterans Committee meeting.

8. **New Business**

- a. **Jakey's Park** – Struck from the agenda by selfsame nominee, Mr. Angel Vazquez.
- b. **Veteran(s) in need of service dog.** No action required. Addressed during public comments.
- c. **Addition of Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance at the start of all Veteran Committee meetings.** Discussion limited, as all agreed. Mr. Vazquez felt inclusion of prayer would be appropriate, Mr. Rodriguez and Mr. Lazala supported a Moment of Silence. Motion to include a moment of silence and Pledge of Allegiance made by Mr. Coote, seconded by Mr. Rodriguez. Voice vote: Aye – All. Opposed – None.
- d. **Jingle Bell Jog Plaques** – No action to date. Committee member, Mr. Dennis Polo volunteers to contact trophy store and provide quotes by August 2020 meeting.
- e. **Veteran Committee shirts** – No action to date. ML Town liaison, Mr. Sanchez to take for action by August 2020 Veteran Committee meeting.

9. **Adjournment**

**1741 hours** – Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Leo Rodriguez, Seconded by Mr. Lazala. Voice Vote Aye – All. Opposed – None.