



Honoring an Exceptional Leader Task Force
16000 North Civic Center Plaza
Community Conference Room
Surprise AZ 85374

June 28, 2018

MEETING MINUTES – Approved with a footnote

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Michael. Frazier.

Roll call

Susan deJong, Arts & Cultural Advisory Commission Chair; Ken Chapman, Planning & Zoning Commission Chair; Michael Frazier, Assistant City Manager; and Mike Gent, Public Works Director.

Staff in attendance

Diane Arthur, Communications Director; and Gloria Bianco, Task Force Secretary.

Absent

Wayne Turner, Community & Creation Advisory Commission Chair and Robert Wingo, City Attorney.

Pledge of Allegiance

Item 1 – Approval of January 9, 2018, Honoring an Exceptional Leader Task Force meeting minutes.

Motion to approve the January 9, 2018, Honoring an Exceptional Leader Task Force minutes was made by Mike Gent. Seconded by Ken Chapman. Four yes votes. Motion carried.

Item 2 – Task Force Introductions

Mike Gent, serving as our Public Works Director for the City of Surprise. Ken Chapman, Planning and Zoning Commission Chair. Michael Frazier is the Assistant City Manager oversees seven departments including Police and Fire. Susan deJong, Chair of the Arts and Cultural Advisory Commission.

Item 4- Discuss the purpose and goal of the Honoring an Exceptional Leader Task Force

Michael Frazier read the purpose from the Policy and Procedures. There will be three Task Force meetings. The first meeting will focus on public input on ways to honor Brian Mancini. The second will be to select two or three of the ideas/options. The last meeting will be to select the final option (s) to be presented to the Surprise City Council. We will take these recommendations to Council at a work session followed by a regular council meeting for final approval.

Item 3 – Consideration and Action to elect a Chair to the Honoring an Exceptional Leader Task Force

Michael Frazier nominated Mike Gent to serve as the Chair. Ken Chapman seconded. Four yes votes. Motion carried.

Item 5 – Discuss ideas to Honor Brian Mancini

Mike Gent opened the floor asking the public to share ideas for ways in which the city should consider honoring Brian Mancini.

Barry Curseaden spoke about Brian's vision and passion to help his fellow combat veterans heal once they were finished with military service. He wanted to help veterans move away from prescription drugs and find more natural healing practices, such as yoga, nature, horse therapy, etc. Brian would interview combat veterans to help them work through their issues, all the while having to relive the tragedy he personally endured. He put others first. Barry suggested the idea of naming the fishing pond after Brian as he was so connected with nature and he loved fishing at Surprise Lake.

Velma Hixon told the task force that she and her husband Ray have lived in Surprise since 2010 and that a year later Brian moved two houses down from them. They were able to get to know Brian and his family, and they treated him like their own son. Brian would come and check if they needed anything and would always think of others before he thought of himself, even when his own medical problems would arise.

Ray Hixon has known Brian since 2011. He described him as a true hero. He stated that Brian helped people while he was serving in the military, and continued to help people after he came home. He took care of himself but did it in a way that also helped others, that was his therapy. He would hold huge get-togethers on Thanksgiving and Christmas with veterans providing laptops and meals. Mr. Hixon recommendation would be anything that would have to do with nature, a lake or park being named after him would be appropriate.

Budd Gilbert stated that he knew Brian for about five years. He then stated "How do you thank someone that saved your life?" He followed up with "Brian was humble, caring, sweet and serving." Budd, a Vietnam War Veteran said Brian found a healing strategy for him that introduced him to yoga, fishing and that he made himself available to talk to Budd in his backyard which was a Zen place for him. Budd considered Brian, his best friend after knowing him for a short while and not having friends for over 20 years. Brian had a vision of providing the gap between what was provided to veterans by the VA and what they needed. Budd said Brian wanted him to continue to carry the tradition by reaching out to people the same way he was reached out to and continuing the healing vision. Since then, Budd was elected to the Board of Directors of Honor House with the goal to carry out the tradition that Brian started. Budd said he would like to see a scholarship program set up in his name, focused on the family of a veteran or veterans that are returning home that is above-and-beyond what Honor House does, the scholarship would help someone else out of that abyss as Brian did for Budd and so many others.

Jackie Williams, Brian's mother, mentioned that Brian was an extremely humble man, he was a hero to her and many that knew him. Since Brian's passing, she has been honored to see all the people he touched and supported and that respected him. Brian spent four years at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center to learn how to walk and talk after being injured in combat. Brian knew his brain injury was more serious than his family knew, but he continued to help others as long as he could. Brian donated his brain to research to compare NFL (concussion) brain injury to explosive brain traumatic injury. Brian was a giver and not a taker, she stated. Jackie told the task force that she is honored that we want to remember Brian in some way.

John Williams, Brian's stepdad, described Brian in one word- Giver. He said, Brian lived the life and was the example of the man he wishes he could've been. He put others above himself at all times. Working with others was his therapy. Honor House graduated 15 guys every year and when you heard the testimonials I knew he had tapped into something. Brian was possessed by something positive. If Brian were here today, he would say don't give me a plaque, cornerstone or monument but put something in place that will help other veterans. The scholarship could be a possibility but any community program that would help others rise above where they have been.

Michael Frazier thanked the audience for all the suggestions and stated the task force would evaluate the ideas offered tonight and come back with suggestions at the next meeting.

Mike Gent recognized Brian's desire to give to others and was very impressed with Brian's concept of recognizing veterans. He suggested the idea of maybe a hiking trail, a park, plaza, lake or an event, to be dedicated to Brian and draw attention to all veterans, to assist them in the healing process.

Barry Curseaden followed up letting the group know that Brian was a poet and photographer. He mentioned WHAM's veteran's art program and that half of the people in the program are from Honor House.

Susan deJong said that when she was looking at all the information, she thought about the naming trails in his honor and plaque, but something else was needed that touches people and helps others. A sign is not enough, she said.

Ken Chapman was very touched by all the comments, video and suggestions and looked forward to the process to honor Brian.

Item 6 – Date and Time of the Next Meeting

Per Policy and Procedures of Honoring an Exceptional Leader, the next meeting needs to be held within 30 days of this meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 26, 2018, 6:00 p.m., in the City Hall Community Room.

Michael Frazier motioned to adjourn the meeting. Susan deJong seconded. Four yes votes, the motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

The foregoing instrument is a full, true and correct copy of the original document on file in the office of the City Clerk, City of Surprise, Arizona.

ATTEST BY: Gloria Bianco
Gloria Bianco, Task Force Secretary

DATE: September 12, 2018

Footnote to the June 28, 2018 meeting minutes, the minutes indicated that the next meeting would occur Thursday, July 26, 2018.

"Due to scheduling conflicts, the next meeting was later officially scheduled and posted to the city website for Tuesday, September 11, 2018, 6:00 pm in the Community Room."