

FOCWA Board Meeting Minutes

02/20/2021

Present at the meeting were board members Steve Johnson, Gary Hormel, Evelyn Mar, Constance Smith, John Fitzpatrick, and Jeffrey Vaillant. Members Robert Mayer, Chuck Gardali, Michael Bennett, and George Foxworth from the Sacramento Civil War Roundtable also attended.

Once again, thanks to Robert Mayer for his kindness and being the zoom host and for his recording of the meeting.

Minutes from the previous meeting were read and approved. Evelyn Mar proposed approval with Chuck Gardali as second; approval was unanimous.

During the reading of the minutes it was pointed out that Constance Smith has begun compiling a list of items necessary for the proposed three level diorama and their costs.

Treasurers report. The checking account contains \$6402.77. The savings account contains \$1418.37 No expenses were listed.

It was noted that the membership holds steady at 24 members and there was a donation \$50 in lieu of dues as none are being requested for 2021.

Membership recruitment is being urged by all members of the board both for numbers and for donations. Steve Johnson and Gary Hormel have compiled a list of former members and they along with Evelyn Mar will reach out in the fall to try to entice members into returning.

It was decided that in order to save money the post office box will be closed. Evelyn Mar as treasurer has agreed to have all correspondence directed to her home address at 251 Upper Terrace San Francisco CA 94117. Constance will hand in the keys to the post office and place a forwarding address no later than February 28, 2021.

Report on the status of both Alcatraz and Fort Point. As of March 5, 2021 The Rock will be open to Rangers and due to new regulations everyone will be required to wear a mask and to follow social distance requirements. There will be no programs and volunteers are not allowed as of this point. The County of San Francisco is concerned about conditions of on the ferry in order to transport people to the National Park so visitors may not be allowed at the present time. The situation is described as "fluid".

Fort Point hopes to open in March as well, with the new requirements that all visitors wear masks and follow social distancing rules. As at Alcatraz, there will be no formal programs and volunteers are not allowed. As in the previous plan, visitors will follow a marked, one-way path allowing them to see the waysides on the way up to the bar-bette tier.

John Fitzpatrick gave an analysis of the situation at Gettysburg regarding the proposal to remove statues and waysides referring to the Confederacy. He stated that there had been a memo issued reading "the National Park Service will continue to protect,

preserve, and interpret these statutes in perpetuity”. There are plans to upgrade the waysides to improve educational opportunities to view the battle and the American Civil War in a nuanced manner , not relying on the language used on all statues as they were placed in the early 20th century. He was also able to answer Michael Ben-net’s question that no statues have been damaged or vandalized in Gettysburg National Park.

John also explained that prior to COVID-19 in the busy season of May through October of every year different groups of re-enactors are able to provide living history displays. Permits were required if weapons were to be displayed. He stated that he had viewed on one occasion a single individual with a battlefield flag of Northern Virginia walking up and down the road fronting the Confederate monuments and interacting with the visitors without interference by the Rangers or law enforcement.

There was concern expressed about a rider onto a bill to the previous Congress which would remove all Confederate statues from federal property, but this was struck down before the bill was sent to the Senate. There is a move to rename all current, active army forts currently named for Confederate officers. Frank Avila stated that there is also a proposed law requiring all black powder weapons to be registered, licensed and forbidding loans between private individuals of black powder weapons unless the loan itself had been registered with the state agency. After some discussion, it was felt that this law will not be approved as it would violate the 2nd amendment and would not apply to modern weapons. it is hoped that the current Congress will take a more educated view of the issue.

Steve Johnson is trying to set up a meeting with upper management at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area to discuss the corporate culture that has appeared over the last several years amongst lower level supervisory Rangers. As previously discussed, these managers are verbally attempting to restrict or remove all reference to military history in the San Francisco Bay Area. Steve invited John Fitzgerald to join him at this meeting. The hope is that if upper management becomes aware of what the frontline supervisory rangers are doing there may be steps taken to clarify the situation. There was a great deal of concern that if seasonal rangers are not taught the military history of Alcatraz, they won’t be able to pass that information along to the public.

There was a proposed project to create a 20 to 30 minute video to be shown to all incoming rangers for both Alcatraz and Fort Point. If nothing else, having such a video made available and left in the library future generations of rangers will have access to an introduction to the very reason why Alcatraz became a National Park.

There was concern expressed that the Sons of Confederate Veterans are receiving “pushback” when they wish to have living history events and the Sons of Union Veterans, while privately supporting them, have not been publicly supporting them.

There was discussion of proposed activities for Memorial Day. Steve is working with the Golden Gate National Cemetery in order for FOCWA members to conduct graveside talks there even though there will not be any ceremonies and the parade has been cancelled. Constance said she previously proposed conducting these talks for the Boy Scout or other individuals groups that plant the flags on each grave for Memorial Day.

Constance reminded everyone of her proposed Christmas grave decorations for civil war veterans and the Santa Rosa rural Cemetery. She has brought the idea up to the Santa Rosa rural Cemetery preservation board (of which she is a member) and they are very excited the idea of fully uniformed soldiers from each side coming out in early December to place garlands on the graves of all of the veterans of "our war". Suggestions were made that both television and newspapers could be contacted for the Memorial Day event and the proposed December event.

There is a national wreath laying society- if this event is successful, we may wish to reach out to them in future years.

The next meeting was set for March 27, 2021 at 10:00 AM via zoom

Constance Smith

FOCWA Secretary