

Friends of Civil War Alcatraz meeting dated 03/27/ 2021

Present at the meeting was: Steve Johnson, John Fitzpatrick, Ken Felton, Dean Enderlin, Evelyn Mar, Frank Avila, Michael Bennett, Brad Shaw, Gary Hormel, Constance Smith

A big thank you to Steve Johnson who has provided his zoom account to allow the meetings to take place.

Previous minutes were reviewed and approved without amendment. Evelyn Mar proposed acceptance seconded by Frank Avila; there was no dissent .

Treasurer report: the checking account has \$6,402.77 and the saving account contains \$1,418.37. There have been no expenses.

Membership report: there are currently 24 members and membership forms for 2022 will be sent out in the fall. Donations are being urged. Report was accepted without amendment; Constance moved to accept, Ken seconded; there was no dissent.

Steve Johnson provided a report concerning the National Park Service and Alcatraz. The Rock has been reopened and visitors are allowed into the cell house. There are no formal interpretive programs, no groups are allowed to gather, masks continue to be required. San Francisco is currently in the orange tier, but NPS is concerned about contagion and therefore is continuing to work on a more conservative level. All volunteers must take a new class in COVID prevention and “relevancy”- the new emphasis in interpretive programs - before being allowed to return. Details are to be provided; no date is for the training has been provided at this moment. It is unlikely that volunteers will be allowed to conduct programs before late fall.

Frank Avila reported that Tom Starr, the ACWA coordinator for living history days at Fort Point, has stated that it is possible for a resumption of activities in August. Steve was of the opinion that October is more likely and he will speak with Ranger Nate about changing the Civil War Day to an October date. There was discussion of other possible sites, once permission has been granted, for expanding FOCWA activities – such as at the Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery and the Oakland Cemetery, both of which have designated plots for Civil War veterans.

Steve reported on the new positions for Ft. Point VIPs (volunteer in parks); the NPS is now accepting applications for three to six volunteers to man tables and answer questions from the public. The Fort is currently set up that all visitors must follow a one way path up one set of stairs to the top level of the fort and then return down a different flight of stairs. The positions will require three hours, two times a month for a season. FOCWA is proposing that we apply for these positions on the condition that we be allowed to wear uniforms. Constance requested that this be amended to include the term “appropriate dress” as it is impossible for her to pass a man at 500 feet, let alone 5 feet. We would also like permission to hand out brochures while volunteering at the park. Gary stated that if the request to wear uniform and/or appropriate attire is denied that members of FOCWA decline to apply for the positions.

Steve reported on the educational videos. He is really working on the proposed scripts and these will be sent to the participants for suggestions or rewrites. Once completed not only will the video be placed on the website but will be provided to schools and offered to visitor centers on Alcatraz and Fort Point. He hopes to have the filming completed by the last week of April. Constance stated that she is working with the City of Santa Rosa in conjunction with projects for the Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery and has been urged to apply to position as a teacher. She will use these contacts to disperse the video once it is completed.

John Fitzpatrick, a guide at Gettysburg, reported there is a planned 1st Amendment protest to occur at Gettysburg to “denounce disruptive Confederate reverence” in conjunction with the monuments placed at Pickett’s Charge. It has been applied for and will probably be approved. There is a requirement for all National Parks to provide places for such protests. It is unknown how large or how small the participation will be. [Note: It is the stated policy of the National Park Service that no Confederate monuments will be removed from Gettysburg]

Steve reported that he is continuing to work to get the statute of General Grant out of storage and placed in the officers circle at the Golden Gate National Cemetery. He plans to request the San Francisco Arts Committee to agree to its placement there. The VA will need to be involved as the cemetery comes under their purview. If there is resistance by any of these parties FOCWA will reach out to the De Young museum to see if the statute can be placed in their Civil War room.

Constance read a paragraph in the book by Thomas P Lowry which had reference to a soldier being assigned to Alcatraz for one year in 1863 for not only theft but for swearing at his commanding officer.

The next meeting will take place on 05/01/2021 at 10:00 AM