

KEWEENAW COUNTY VETERAN'S AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

June 8, 2012

Meeting held at the Keweenaw County Courthouse was called to order at 2:00 PM

Roll Call: Present: Chairman Finch and member Huovinen. Absent: Commissioner Rajala

Pledge of Allegiance

Motion to approve the April 13, 2012 Minutes: Finch/Huovinen Motion carried.

Guests: Don Keith

Old Business:

Discussion was held regarding the content of the proposed information letter to Keweenaw County veterans. More discussion will occur in August. Chairman Finch reviewed topics from the VFW District Convention held last month in Wakefield.

New Business:

Don Keith from Eagle Harbor presented a petition written by Rev. Elmer R. Liimatta from Chassell requesting that a National Veteran's Cemetery be established in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Keith gave the following information:

- The closest veteran's cemeteries are in Holly, Mi. (averaging 24 burials per day), Milwaukee, Wisconsin (soon to be closed due to being full), and Fort Snelling, Minnesota within the Twin Cities. Summary: The closest National Cemetery is about 400 miles away.
- Rev. Liimatta is the National VFW Chaplain and has considerable influence according to Chairman Finch and guest Keith. Keith explained that in order to establish a National Cemetery a minimum of 400 acres must be available for development.
- Keith then suggested that Mount Horace Greeley could be a suitable site for a National Cemetery for the following reasons:
  1. Horace Greeley had been an active military installation during the Cold War.
  2. Infrastructure is present that could be incorporated into the National Cemetery.
  3. First class roads connect the site.
  4. Sections 36 and 31 could be incorporated into the site plan resulting in some 1300 acres available.

5. An estimated two dozen full -time federal employees would be employed there along with additional hires in the summer (plus many more to develop the site).

6. Burials and yearly visitations would enhance the tourism in Keweenaw County.

7. A year- round staff would include security personnel to end the theft problem at Horace Greeley.

8. A National Cemetery would have low environmental impact.

9. Keith intends to use a 'chain of command' approach with this proposal by contacting all Keweenaw County committees seeking their support prior to presenting the concept to the Keweenaw County Commissioners.

Keith requested a motion to support the development of a National Cemetery in the Upper Peninsula from the Veteran's Affairs Committee of Keweenaw County. Chairman Finch made the motion. Second / Huovinen. Motion carried.

Adjournment: 3:30 PM

Respectfully Submitted:

Jim Huovinen

Next Meeting: August 10, 2012 2:00 PM