

# LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Ruth A. Wong  
Director

## MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, January 11, 2017

### Present:

#### Commissioners

Kristine Stanley, Chair  
Antonio Chapa  
Dave Culmer  
Tom Lasser  
Patricia Jackson-Kelley  
Thomas O'Shaughnessy  
Col. Julian Bond  
Ramon Rodriguez

### Absent:

#### Commissioners

Fred Flores  
Carvel Gay

### County Department

#### **Military and Veterans Affairs**

Ruth A. Wong, Director  
Tatiana Rosas, Executive Secretary

#### Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Approval of Minutes

Chair Kristine Stanley called the meeting to order at 1:34p.m., and welcomed everyone for attending. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Captain Christopher G. Montes (US Army). Commissioner Rodriguez motioned to approve Minutes of November 9, 2016 and was seconded by Antonio Chapa. The Minutes were approved unanimously.

#### Roll Call

As noted above.

#### Chairman's Report

Chair Stanley stated the Commission has a Strategic Plan and moving forward she hopes that they make a difference and that the County is more aware of the Veterans Advisory Commission.

#### Privatization of the VA & Discuss to Recommend to the Board to Oppose

Commissioner O'Shaughnessy stated that with the current changes in administration and a new set of Supervisors; he is recommending that the Commission ask the Board of Supervisors to take a position to not support the revitalization of the Veterans Administration (VA).

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Commissioner Culmer suggested waiting until there is a set proclamation or legislation to make that change. Commissioner Rodriguez stated that the Commission did this last year. Commissioner Jackson-Kelley suggested a letter from the Commission opposing before anything solidifies. Chair Stanley stated that she agrees with Commissioner Jackson-Kelley to send a letter to the Board of Supervisors.

Motion: Commissioner O'Shaughnessy motioned to have the Commission send a letter to the Board of Supervisor opposing any privatization of the VA. Commissioner Jackson-Kelley seconded the motion.

Commissioner Chapa recommended to wait until next month since there is a new secretary and in nine-days the new administration takes office. He stated that the new secretary was appointed by President Obama, and to wait and see if the new administration solidifies.

Commissioner Bond stated that he agreed with Commissioner Chapa and also suggested that an analysis also be done.

Commissioner O'Shaughnessy agreed to table his motion until the February meeting. He rescinded his motion until the February 8, 2017 meeting. Item to be placed on the agenda.

**Man's Best Friend – Reuben and Hera**

Reuben Roque stated that he was going to share his story and that of Hera, his now service dog. Hera was thrown over an L.A. cliff in October, 2016, she went 15 to 20 feet over the cliff and a bush broke her fall. The shocking scene was captured on a neighbor's home security camera. The neighbor reported the incident to animal control and turned over the security video to authorities. The Los Angeles County Animal Control protocol required Hera be taken from the Roque family long enough to be spayed and microchipped, which is a requirement before they could legally adopt her.

Commissioner Culmer asked what is the connection between Reuben and Hera and the VAC. Ruth Wong stated that their success story is to bring awareness that there are animals in shelters needing homes and there are veterans in need of a companion or service dog.

**Veterans and Access to Treatment Court – Jodi Galvin**

Jodi Galvin, Chair, Legal & ReEntry Committee, LA Veteran Collaborative distributed drafted handouts, a draft motion for the Board of Supervisors stating the "Unnecessary Incarceration of Los Angeles County Veterans," description of the Community Veteran Justice Outreach Worker Project (CVJO), and a copy of the brochure.

The Los Angeles county jail system has approximately 500 incarcerated veterans and many out of custody justice involved veterans. Currently there is no tracking mechanism for incarcerated veterans to follow what happens once a veteran enters the criminal justice system. The project would create a tracking system for all incarcerated vets, a screening mechanism for the veteran criminal statutes, and a screening mechanism for services and resources to help ensure that all incarcerated veterans are connected to the services they need such as VA benefits, discharge upgrades, housing, employment, health care and more.

Ms. Galvin asked if anyone knew what a Veteran Treatment Court was and Commissioner Patricia Jackson-Kelley responded, "That a veteran in court will get a treatment court vs. going to jail." Ms. Galvin stated that Penal Code Section (PC) 1170.9 Alternative Sentencing statute allows for treatment instead of incarceration. Options include different kinds of restorative relief including reducing felonies to misdemeanors, dismissing of fees and fines, and the sealing of records. PC 1170.91 allows for conditions like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to be used for mitigation in sentencing. PC 1001.80 Misdemeanor Pre Plea Military Diversion allows some veterans & military to do treatment programs instead of incarceration. If successfully completed, cases will be dismissed.

Ms. Galvin explained the Community Veteran Justice Outreach Worker Project (CVJO). This Outreach Project would assist the 500 incarcerated veterans in LA County Jails on any given day. Work to identify and assist the many (thousands) veterans out of custody with misdemeanor cases and assist the 2 LA Veteran Treatment Courts rooms which handles 100 felony (only) cases at any given time. Allow veterans to fully use the veteran statutes in all the criminal courts in the 26 criminal court houses in LA County; and connect justice involved veterans with all the services and resources they need, provide an exit plan with wrap around services for all incarcerated vet in LA county jail.

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Ms. Galvin would like to get the Commissions to support this motion and to have each one of them to get their respective Supervisor to champion the cause.

Commissioner O'Shaughnessy asked if it was approved by Supervisor Solis for this to go out and Ms. Galvin stated that this is only a draft and has not yet been approved by the Supervisor. Commissioner Antonio Chapa asked that the draft letter not be distributed with the Supervisor's name on it.

**Tenancy Assessment – Commissioner Thomas O'Shaughnessy**

Commissioner O'Shaughnessy stated that he has met with Gen. Wong and Jaime, Building Manager and the concern was to have an organization in the building long-term and not contacting or connecting with veterans on a regular basis. It was suggested that these organizations share a part-time cubicle. Commissioner O'Shaughnessy asked the Commission to review the Tenant Occupancy Assessment Form so that there can be a vote at the next Commission meeting.

Chair Stanley asked that a committee be establish and requested two additional Commissioners be a part of the committee to establish and finalize Assessment Form. Commissioner O'Shaughnessy stated that the purpose of the committee is to determine how tenants will stay as either permanent (1 year) or as a part-time tenants.

Director Ruth Wong stated that there has not been any allocation of funds for a parking structure in the near future. The department is researching valet services and will be asking the tenants to park off-site.

Commissioners Julian Bond and Patricia Jackson-Kelley joined the Committee.

**Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report – Ruth A. Wong**

**Department Activities –**

Supervisor Veterans Claims – New Supervisor George Dixon started on December 1, 2016.

Veteran's designation on Driver's License (Nov. 11, 2015 – December 31, 2016) – 6,063 veteran's verifications issued since November 11, 2015. 1,380 claims filed with \$1,609,407 in monthly awards and \$568,755 in retroactive payments & \$4,640 in lump sum.

**Ceremonies and Commemorations –**

December 5<sup>th</sup> – attended the Swearing-In Ceremony for Supervisor-Elect Janice Hahn; District Attorney Jackie Lacey and for Supervisor-Elect Kathryn Barger.

December 6<sup>th</sup> – Chair of the Board Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas Welcome Reception for New Supervisors at the Music Center.

December 8<sup>th</sup> – Dedication of Kneeling Soldier and Battle Cross Statue Unveiling Ceremony in the City of El Monte

January 1, 2017 – Public Defender Ron Brown retired

January 23, 2017 – Retirement Luncheon for DCFS Director, Philip L. Browning

**Meetings and Conferences-**

December 7<sup>th</sup> – MVA Holiday Luncheon in the 8<sup>th</sup> Fl. (Nimitz Room)

December 21<sup>st</sup> – Civil Grand Jury

December 22<sup>nd</sup> – Meeting with Public Guardian Office Deputy Connie Draxler to reestablish partnership

December 28<sup>th</sup> – Meeting with CEO Sachi Hamai

January 5, 2017 – Conference with LASHA and the Los Angeles Veterans Alliance and Secretary Robert McDonald, Mayor Eric Garcetti, and Board of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas in the auditorium

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January 11, 2017 - Meet & Introduction 4th District Deputy Lynda Johnson and tour of SS Lane Victory in San Pedro and arrange Board presentation to recognize Merchant Marines World War II

January 14, 2017 – 2<sup>nd</sup> District Empowerment Conference at USC

January 19, 2017 – Department Head Meeting at Hall of Administration

January 19, 2017 - Meeting with Janet Chin, District Director, State Senator Ed Hernandez

January 26, 2017 - College of the Canyons Meeting to establish partnership with Veterans Resource Center

**Military & Veterans Affairs (MVA) Staff**

Interviewing ASM I for Building Operations  
New Career Development Intern (CDI) – Stephanie Guerrero

**New Administrative staff**

Hovhannes Vardanyan and Todd Tortorici

**VAC Strategic Plan Committee Report – Commissioners Hesse, Chapa and O’Shaughnessy**

The VAC Strategic Plan FY 2016-17 was reviewed. All needed corrections were identified. Goals I through III were reviewed and assignments to Goals and Objectives were provided.

Goal #	Objective #	Commissioner Assigned to Goal
I		Thomas E. Lasser
	1	
	2	Patricia Jackson-Kelley
	3	
	4	Patricia Jackson-Kelley
II		
	1	
III		Chair Hesse & Col. Julian Bond
	1	

- a. MVA & VAC Campaign Committee – Thomas Lasser stated staff has compiled a Commission packet/folder to disburse to the public.
- b. Community Recognition Committee – Patricia Jackson-Kelley stated she will work with Chair Stanley to develop a form to be able to nominate someone and by the March meeting will have someone to be recognized.
- c. Bob Hope Tenant Committee – Thomas O’Shaughnessy (absent).
- d. Event Chair – Patricia Jackson-Kelley is working with Stephanie Stone on a program for Black History Month. The Tuskegee Airmen Foundation will have an event on February 18<sup>th</sup> and the American Legion will honor 23<sup>rd</sup> District, Department Commander Gary Leach on March 18<sup>th</sup>.
- e. Suicide Awareness & Prevention Committee – Kristine Stanley will engage Clay Hunt and will connect with DMH at next month’s meeting.
- f. VAC Professional Development Committee – Colonel Julian Bond stated he looks forward to working with Chair Stanley. Tom Lasser suggested a retreat for the Commissioners.

It was decided that the VAC February meeting continue at Patriotic Hall and possibly have the March meeting off-site.

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**Comments from Audience (three minutes each)**

Lynda P. Johnson, Deputy, Supervisor Janice Hahn, introduced herself as the Supervisor's Deputy for Military and Veteran Affairs and for Parks and Recreation. Ms. Johnson stated she's been a county employee for 30 years, and her father served in the Navy for 20 years and her son went to the naval academy and is a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the Marine Corps. Ms. Johnson provided her email: [lyjohnson@bos.lacounty.gov](mailto:lyjohnson@bos.lacounty.gov) and her cell is (213) 705-6250.

Robert Hernandez, Battle Bridge, provides services to veterans at Patriotic Hall through US Vets. He introduced Eric Woolridge, No Man Left Behind, stated that many of the veteran's problem are related to trauma. Peer to peer support is vital. They both stated that their programs would be a great addition if they officially had space in the building.

Captain Christopher Montes, Commander for the Western Regional for the Army, just wanted to introduce himself to the Veterans Advisory Commission.

**New Business**

Nothing for New Business.

**Item's for Next Month's Agenda**

- Los Angeles National Cemetery – Thomas Ruck
- Invite Charles Green and a Security representative
- License plates with the Purple Heart, Medal of Honor Recipients should get free parking

**Follow-Up on Veteran Issues**

None.

**Good of the Order**

Commissioner Dave Culmer stated he had nothing for the good of the order.

Commissioner Julian Bond stated it was a pleasure working with Supervisor Antonovich and now looks forward to working with Supervisor Barger.

Commissioner Ramon Rodriguez stated he had nothing for the good of the order.

Commissioner Antonio Chapa invited all the Commissioners to attend events. The LAHSA Homeless County is scheduled for January 24<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Tom O'Shaughnessy stated he was nominated and accepted as part of the CVEB. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs stated that there were 120 bills submitted to Congress and 10% were acted on. A concern, if there is a way to engage Tri Care and Medicare and lower costs. Inquired if there was a map of all veteran memorials and monument; Commissioner Chapa stated that there wasn't. What are the city statutes and county statutes on someone that graffiti's a memorial/monument?

Commissioner Tom Lasser introduced Neil Gafney, Chair, Hawthorne Veterans Affairs Commission, retired as a Colonel while on his last assignment working for the Chief of Engineers in Washington, DC. .

Commissioner Patricia Jackson-Kelley stated she would defer her report due to time constraint.

Chair Kristine Hesse thanked everyone for attending. Commissioner Rodriguez motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Commissioner Chapa. Meeting adjourned at 3:25p.m.

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Tatiana Rosas  
Executive Secretary  
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Note: The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, February 8, 2017 at 1:30 p.m. at Bob Hope Patriotic Hall, 1816 S. Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90015.