

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Ruth A. Wong
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, June 14, 2017

Present:

Commissioners

Kristine Stanley, Chair
Fred Flores
Dave Culmer
Tom Lasser
Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Thomas O'Shaughnessy
Col. Julian Bond
Hector Elizalde
Jose Leal

Absent:

Commissioners

Tom Lasser
Marcel Rodarte

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Tatiana Rosas, Executive Secretary

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Approval of Minutes

Chair Kristine Stanley called the meeting to order at 1:31p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Jose Leal. Commissioner O'Shaughnessy requested a moment of silence for the victims and families of the June 3, 2017 London Bridge Attack.

Roll Call

As noted above.

Chairman's Report

Chair Stanley welcomed everyone for attending and introduced two newly appointed Commissioners Hector Elizalde, appointed by the Fifth Supervisorial District and who also closely works with Congresswoman Grace Napolitano. Jose Leal, appointed by the First Supervisorial District works with DoD and the Guard and Reserve and is very involved with Vet Hunters. Welcome both!

Tenancy Assessment Committee Recommendation

Chair Stanley stated that the Commission was asked by the County Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to review the tenants in Patriotic Hall based on how often they are providing services in the Hall. How many veterans they service at the Hall and this recommendation was based on this process. Commissioner O'Shaughnessy was the lead in this process and will read the recommendation of the Committee.

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Commissioner O'Shaughnessy stated that the objective is to enhance the level of services for veterans and families, bring in more tenants who provide direct services, and to fully utilize space at Bob Hope Patriotic Hall (Hall). Further, we wanted to measure the effectiveness of each tenant serving veterans and whether the use of office space was in accordance with the County of Los Angeles License Agreement signed by the tenants in 2014/15. To accomplish this, the Committee evaluated the level of services for veterans and families delivered by the nonprofit and veteran's service organizations occupying office space at the Hall (phase I).

The Department will coordinate with CEO Real Estate Division to renew the License Agreements for tenant's assigned space at the Hall. The existing use of the Doolittle Room will be reconfigured to allow for an open-office space environment and three cubicles (A, B, & C) to be shared:

- Cubicle A to be shared by: American Legion County Council (to be the lead by developing a schedule within all four organization for the use of the space), District 17, Post 8, and Police Post 381.
- Cubicle B to be shared by: Tuskegee Airmen Foundation and Vietnam Veterans of America
- Cubicle C to be solely assigned to CalVet who will identify other State resources such as housing, finance, and human resources.

The Transportation Foundation of Los Angeles also known as the United States Veterans Foundation and the U.S. 8240th Army Veterans Association will not be invited to renew their lease agreements.

Phase II (July/August 2017) of this assessment will require the Committee to look at the 4th floor and assess the space there. Phase III (September/October 2017) will include invitations to nonprofits and veteran service organizations who remain on the waiting list to occupy or share office space in the Hall. The same qualification process will be used in making our selections.

Commissioner O'Shaughnessy stated the Committee recommends this report and motions: that the Commission send a letter to the Board of Supervisors with their recommendations and that the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs send notice to all tenants effective implementation date of July 1, 2017.

Chair Stanley asked that before the Commission votes on the motion presented; she would like to give the tenants (a lead representative of that organization) and opportunity to make any comments.

American Legion Post 8

Hugh Crooks stated that he came before the Commission five years ago on the same issue. Post 8 is the only Charter tenant and they would like to get their office back on the 8th floor. He referred to the fact that this is a veterans' memorial building and is covered by State law for historic purposes. Room 800 was designated by the founding members of the American Legion in 1925 for Post 8, the last charter tenant at a veteran memorial hall. He stated it is imperative that they move back to the exact location where they started because they are the last charter tenant. He stated that the Commission said no, five years ago, and they went to the press and the CEO gave them back their office. Hugh suggested that the Commission contact their County Counsel because they are in violation of the agreement. He stated that he would submit letter by the CEO where it states that the 8th floor office is for the use of Post 8. "VSOs gave up lots of space for the renovation. It's our building – we built it for the County."

American Legion County Council

Robert C. Brown, Adjutant, Los Angeles County Council, stated that what the County now does on the second floor the Council did on the fifth floor. They have been in the building since 1932 and they use to have an Adjutant five-days a week (8hours a day). They went from a whole floor to a cubicle in the basement and now they are being asked to give that up too. Soon there will be nowhere else to go to that is not fair or right.

Chair Stanley stated for the record that they are not being evicted.

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Police Post 381

Peter Bernard, Past Commander for Post 381, stated he is also the legal advisor for the Post. The Police Post has been in the building since 1931. Mr. Bernard stated that he has provided the County with military code 1262 which it explains, "what is a legal veteran organization" by the Internal Revenue Service. He stated that only legitimate veteran organizations should occupy Patriotic Hall and not organizations that want to use the County and veterans to get space in the building. He is requesting that the County get legal opinion on the law that specifies, "What is a veteran organization and who has first priority to come into the building if there is space available." He requested that County Counsel define 501c(9) the IRS status which allows for veteran exemptions and priority to veteran organizations.

Mr. Bernard stated that they would like a printout of the realignment and they would like to keep their space as they have it. They cannot meet at the Hall because they meet at 7pm and the building is closed.

Chair Kristine Stanley stated that the reason this conversation started – how we can better serve the community to serve more veterans. She understands the foundation of the American Legion, she is not asking or they are not taking anything away from the Legion; just asking that cubicles be shared to better serve and support our veterans.

Hugh Crooks stated, "As an 38 year old County retiree, he was all in favor of having a One-Stop Shop. Just don't take our space. Don't do it off our backs of our sweat."

Comments from Agency not nominated to stay (lead representative):

Transportation Foundation of Los Angeles/United States Veterans Foundation

Ms. Tamiko Hirano, President and CEO, stated that they would like to address the issue of evicting them from this building. The premise of a One-Stop Shop does not mean all veterans coming to this building. We have veterans that have transportation issues. We have raised \$54million for this service (internship services and resume services) to help veterans transition back into civilian life. Our services are vast and we reach out to colleges. The veteran's average salary is approximately \$70,000 a year.

Ms. Hirano also stated that they work with ESGR. She is also on the Board for the LA National Cemetery and they reach out to veterans in all of Los Angeles County. "This building is going for the for-profit organizations; and US Vets charges for their services."

Commissioners Discussion

Commissioner Thomas O'Shaughnessy read from the draft Board letter, "In October 2016, the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA) received a 2016/17 Priority from your Board to enhance the level of services for veterans and families, bring in more tenants who provide direct services, and fully utilize space at Bob Hope Patriotic Hall. Further, we wanted to measure the effectiveness of each tenant serving veterans and whether the use of office space was in accordance with County of Los Angeles License Agreement signed by the tenants in 2014/15. When you spoke to us you stated documents that you had that have yet not been submitted. Also, on Post 8, you stated that they do not have an active status with the Secretary of State. Legacy is a factor but we have to look at what we have in writing."

Mr. Hugh Crooks responded that he thought the Commission would seek guidance from the County's Council and ask what this building is deemed for and he thought that as an entity they would check with the lawyers. He also stated that he had the veteran's code.

Chair Kristine Stanley stated that they were tasked as a Commission with doing this assessment by the current Board of Supervisors.

Commissioner Julian Bond stated, they are losing the intent which is to "enhance the level of services for veterans and families. I do believe legal sufficiency is required."

Commissioner Thomas O'Shaughnessy recommended this item be tabled until next month's meeting to be able to inquire with Council. Chair Stanley asked the Hugh Crooks provide paperwork on all documents that he has referred to.

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Motion by Commissioner O'Shaughnessy to hold Agenda Item "Bob Hope Patriotic Hall Tenant Assessment" to next month's meeting on July 12th." Seconded by Commissioner Patricia Jackson-Kelley. All were in favor and motioned passed unanimously.

Commissioner Hector Elizalde asked Hugh Crooks if the assessment was sufficient enough to express your concerns and Hugh Crooks responded that it wasn't enough. The Commission didn't understand that they are not like other organizations.

Chair Kristine Stanley asked the Mr. Crooks do a list in bullet format on those issues and submit all supporting documents to Tatiana by end of day June 30th. Mr. Crooks responded that he would but a lot of this information is in the Commission's Minutes.

Commissioner Joe Leal stated that many of the Commissioners weren't present 5years ago.

Chair Kristine Stanley stated that moving forward they will have ongoing public discussions and documentation.

Mr. Edward Grice, Tuskegee Airmen Foundation asked to be allowed to address the Commission.

Tuskegee Airmen Foundation

Edward Grice, Executive Director, Tuskegee Airmen Scholarship Foundation stated he has been two years with the organization. When the Foundation learned of the County's effort to increase traffic at Patriotic Hall they hired a full-time staff person. He wanted to go on record that sharing a space will be challenging when they have committed to doing math assessments for veterans free of charge. Also, if there is an increase in space allocations they would like to be considered for additional spaces.

Election of Officers

Chair Stanley asked for volunteers for the sub-committee. Colonel Bond stated he would be Chair and Patricia Jackson-Kelley volunteered to participate.

Item's for Next Month's Agenda

- Fifth District Presentation of Scroll to Carvel Gay
- Bob Hope Patriotic Hall Tenant Assessment
- Veterans Advisory Commission Meeting Locations
- Election of Officers

Follow-Up on Veteran Issues

None.

Good of the Order

Commissioner Culmer stated that for the last eight years Robert Rosebrock and fellow veterans have been assembling at the VA Campus every Sunday to protest what they believe is the VA's failure to make full use of the expansive property for the benefit and care of veterans, particularly homeless veterans. Rosebrock was cited for allegedly displaying the American flag on the fence adjacent to the entrance to the Veterans Park. He was acquitted of illegally hanging an American flag and Rosebrock will be filing a lawsuit now against the VA.

Commissioner Joe Leal stated that when he wanted to have a deployment ceremony, this request was something new and different but it happened. The leadership at Patriotic Hall worked with him and were willing to try it out. He understands that there are funding issues, but he knows that if everyone gets creative and works together then great things can happen. There was a Paint Night event on June 2nd here at Patriotic Hall and it turned out very well. There will be a Pomona Job Fair on July 13th and encouraged everyone to attend.

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Commissioner Julian Bond stated that today is the 242nd Birthday of the Army. He also attended Supervisor Barger's 20th annual "Tribute to Veterans and Military Families" at Arcadia County Park. Mr. Hugh Crooks was also in attendance and presented a scroll on behalf of the Governor.

Commissioner Fred Flores stated that he's worked for Congressman Berman for 20 years and is a member of the American Legion and a Marine. He's the founder of the San Fernando Valley Veteran's Day Parade which he started with his son in 1989 after always driving to Long Beach to participate in their parade.

Commissioner Thomas O'Shaughnessy stated that on Friday, June 16th there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony and celebration opening of Building 209 being hosted by VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (VAGLAHS), which will permanently house 54 Veterans through permanent housing and supportive services.

Commissioner Hector Elizalde stated that he would like copies of the tenants assessments. Chair Stanley responded that Commissioner O'Shaughnessy can assist him with that request and would be able to brief him on the process. He also encouraged everyone to attend Congresswoman Grace Napolitano's 6th Annual Veterans Forum to be held at the Azusa National Guard Armory on June 7th.

Commissioner Patricia Jackson-Kelley stated she was pleased to have been a part of the Army Celebration and cake cutting ceremony held at the Board of Supervisors meeting. She will be attending the Quiet Champion Awards Luncheon on June 16th at the Biltmore Hotel where she will be honored alongside L.A. Deputy Mayor Brenda Shockley. She will also be attending a Los Angeles Sparks game where she will be the honoree.

Chair Kristine Stanley announced that The 2017 Veterans Job & Resource Fair will be held on July 13th at the Pomona Fairplex sponsored by Supervisor Hilda Solis and also encouraged everyone to distribute the flyer on the Culinary Arts Program and recruit more participants.

Commissioner Bond motion to adjourn and it was seconded by Commissioner Elizalde. Meeting adjourned at 3:01p.m.

Tatiana Rosas
Executive Secretary
June 14, 2017

Note: The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, July 12, 2017 at 1:30 p.m. at Bob Hope Patriotic Hall, 1816 S. Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90015.