

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

2615 S. GRAND AVE., SUITE 100
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90007



United We Stand



Joseph N. Smith
Director

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, September 14, 2011**

Present:

Commissioners

Bob Archuleta, Chair
Carvel Gay, Vice Chair
Dave Culmer
Steve Rosmarin
Stephanie Stone

Absent:

Commissioners

Mark MacCarley
Ramon Rodriguez
Fred Flores

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Colonel Joseph Smith, Director
Tatiana Rosas, Executive Secretary

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Approval of Minutes

Chair Bob Archuleta called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Dave Culmer. Due to a lack of a quorum, only five Commissioners present, the approval of minutes was postponed.

Roll Call

As noted above.

Chairman's Report

Chair Archuleta stated that the nation came together on September 11th (9/11). We were attacked and as a nation we fell to our knees not on our backs, but we have recovered on this the 10th anniversary. The memorial was very touching and moving; the respondents, survivors, and families, all came together to honor those that sacrificed their lives that day. In Montebello Park we prayed at the veteran ceremony at 7pm at Rose Hills at the Sky Hill Chapel in Whittier. Across the country all veterans and the nation came together.

Comments from Audience (three minutes each)

Jeanne Bonfilio, Public Information Officer, Veterans Home of California, stated that currently there are 60 residents at the skilled nursing unit and the Home has the capacity to house 300 people. Ms. Bonfilio stated that there is no waiting list at the Lancaster and Barstow Homes and there has to be no service related disability to be accepted and homeless vets take priority at the Homes.

Commissioner Rosmarin commended Ms. Bonfilio for the excellent job at the Motorcycle Ride event on 9/11. Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky and other well know entertainers were in attendance.

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Commissioner Stone inquired as to the age limitation for entering the Home and Ms. Bonfilio responded that there is no age limitation if there is a disability or 55 years if the veteran has an honorable discharge.

Commissioner Stone asked on how long does it take to admit a homeless veteran into the Home and Ms. Bonfilio stated that each veterans is processed as a case by case basis and she has seen the process take as fast as a couple of weeks to get a veteran off the street. Ms. Bonfilio also stated that backgrounds checks are done prior to acceptance and a non-veteran spouses can live in the Home with his/her veteran spouse and if the veteran spouse passes the non-veteran spouse can continue to stay in the Home.

Commissioner Stone also inquired if they can advocate for a veteran to enter the Home if the veteran that is or will be homeless. Commissioner Culmer said that he would not recommend this action due to it being impractical and cumbersome and possibly slow the process. Ms. Jeanne Bonfilio explained that all the applications are confidential and staff will always work with the veteran to ensure that the applications are completed and the veteran is accommodated.

Commissioner Culmer asked if there had ever been a veteran that was denied entrance into the Home and Ms. Bonfilio stated that she's only ever heard of one.

City of Glendale Housing Program – Peter Zovak

Peter Zovak, Deputy Director of Housing for the City of Glendale, stated since his presentation to this Commission about a year ago where he expressed the City of Glendale's desire to develop affordable housing and jobs for veterans. He is now happy to report that as of July the City has entered into a 53 unit housing projects with Mercy Los Feliz Housing. The project is not scheduled to break ground until June 2012. The project is not exclusively for veterans but has a veteran's preference.

Ms. Eileen Saenz, Verdugo Jobs Center, stated she assists newly discharged veterans to gain the skills they need to reenter the workforce. Ms. Saenz distributed a flier from the Verdugo Jobs Center for veterans only job course.

Chair Bob Archuleta excused himself at 2:13pm from the Commission meeting and passed the gavel to Vice Chair Gay to preside over the Commission meeting.

Vet Hunters – Ron Hansel

Mr. Ron Hansel, VP Vet Hunters Project, a component of Welcome Home Viet Nam Vets Day, and President, Southern California Veterans Employment Committee, gave an update on "The Ride against Homelessness Bike Ride". The bike ride was designated to raise awareness and support of our homeless with a focus on the homeless Veterans.

The journey started on July 27, 2011, from The Salvation Army Bell Shelter, Bell, California and the final destination was St. Louis, Missouri. Upon arrival in St. Louis they participated and addressed the AMVETS National and the Department of Veterans Affairs during their National Stand Down on August 7, 2011. The Vet Hunters Project Platoon visited homeless shelters, Veterans hospitals and burn centers and met with Homeless Heroes and Wounded Warriors. Mr. Hansel stated they had a film crew documenting the entire ride, including preparations and training. VA Secretary Eric Shinseki and National AMVETS Commander Jerry Hotop were in attendance at the AMVETS National Opening Ceremony where The Vet Hunters Project was supposed to have been given the opportunity to share the names and faces of our forgotten Warriors that they met on their journey. But when they arrived in Missouri they were texted that they were no longer welcomed. Mr. Hansel stated it was very disheartening to have another veteran group do this to them. He stated that they continue to work to find solutions to assist homeless vets.

Commissioner Culmer commended him and the Vet Hunters for their posterity and posture during this ordeal. Commissioner Stone stated she hoped that they can act on this information when there is a quorum.

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Mr. Hansel informed that on October 20th at Whittier Narrows Park, the Stand Down is scheduled but may have to be postponed again but for one month this time due to a mosquito infestation. He also stated that there is a homeless tent in Long Beach and they are working on getting a bus to go pick up the homeless there and working on pick-up points with other cities. This is the best time of year to get our homeless vets off the streets with the cold season approaching. Commissioner Stone asked that he let the Commission know what they or the Supervisors can do.

Vice Chair Gay thanked him for his report.

Bob Hope Patriotic Hall Renovation – Bill Gelpi

Bill Gelpi, Principal Facilities Project Manager, Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, stated the following updates on the building and showed a power point presentation of the work being done inside Bob Hope Patriotic Hall:

- The front of the building is natural stone and it's being washed and will have a clear coat over it.
- The Auditorium is fully ADA (Americans with Disability Act) compliant.
- The building has been fire sprinkled and now has 2 triggers; a pre-action system and with 2 triggers going back to the fire panel so it can charge up with water.
- There are additional bathrooms that have been added to the half floors.
- In the 10th Floor Gym the floor has been reconditioned to mitigate noise.
- Completion date is mid-August 2012.

Mr. Gelpi stated that there were numerous amounts of hazardous materials created in 1925 that were found throughout the building. The carcinogenic used during this time period was lead, mercury, asbestos, etc.; hence a very aggressive abatement program had to be implemented to deal with the hazardous materials problem. He also stated that he is aware that Colonel Smith is in contact with the CEO working on a return to the building plan.

Vice Chair Gay and the Commission thanked Mr. Gelpi and Johann Vandenberg for the update and expressed their desire to have them return and keep the Commission apprised with updates.

Veterans Home Support Committee – Steve Rosmarin

Commissioner Steve Rosmarin stated that it's been approximately 14 months since the Commission passed a resolution to develop a support committee for the Home. He stated that they are working and on October 12th they will have the Committee report and the names of the people who will be participating.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report – Colonel Joseph Smith

Vice Chair Gay suggested foregoing the reading of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Department Report in lieu of Colonel Joseph N. Smith, Director's absence and accept the report as written

New Business

Nothing for New Business.

Item's for Next Month's Agenda

Veterans Home Support Committee – Steve Rosmarin

Am Vets representative to discuss why veterans were turned away in St. Louis, Missouri

Reminder by Vice Chair Gay that the October Commission meeting will be held at the West Los Angeles Home.

Commissioner Fred Flores will invite two Veterans for October's meeting to offer the Invocation and lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

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Commissioner Stone invited Commissioner Culmer and others interested in participating and meet with County staff to discuss developing a website on veterans, for veterans and their families, and discuss what are the needs form a veterans perspective.

Good of the Order

Commissioner Rosmarin; stated he and Mr. Alan Selnick attended the National Convention in Jacksonville, FL and heard Secretary Erik Shinseki's speech. New Jewish War Veteran Commander Folk is a Vietnam veteran and will be visiting California in early spring and hopefully his schedule will permit him to attend a Veterans Advisory Commission meeting.

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

Commissioner Stone; stated that on 9/11 she started her day cleaning the Vietnam Memorial Wall and after that went to the Cal Vet 9/11 Bike Ride. She is working with Goodwill on their pilot program and also attended a Workforce Investment Act training.

Commissioner Gay; he had nothing for the good of the order.

Vice Chair Gay thanked everyone present and adjourned meeting at 2:53 p.m.

Tatiana Rosas
Executive Secretary
September 14, 2011

Note: The next Commission meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, October 12, 2011 at 1:30 p.m. at The California State Home Los Angeles, 11500 Nimitz Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90049.