

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Ruth A. Wong
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, February 12, 2014

Present:

Commissioners

Bob Archuleta, Chair
Ramon Rodriguez, Vice Chair
Gary Chapman
Dave Culmer
David Hwangbo
Patricia Jackson-Kelley

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Tatiana Rosas, Executive Secretary
Stephanie Stone, Chief Deputy Director

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Approval of Minutes

Chair Bob Archuleta called the meeting to order at 1:34p.m., welcomed everyone for attending. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Neil Rubinstein. Commissioner Rodriguez motioned to approve Minutes from January 8, 2014 and seconded by Commissioner Jackson-Kelley. The Minutes were approved unanimously.

Roll Call

As noted above.

Chairman's Report

Chair Archuleta welcomed everyone and wished all "Happy Valentine's Day to all the beautiful ladies present" and stated he has pending calls to his two daughters.

Absent:

Commissioners

Fred Flores
Carvel Gay
Cheryl A. Shaffer

Comments from Audience (three minutes each)

American Legion Los Angeles Post 381

Peter Bernard, Police Post 381, and a member of the American Legion stated that they have not yet seen their space, they are aware that it is a cubicle and not an office. He stated that the IRS requires that they need to keep DD 214 in a filing cabinet in a locked office. He stated that US Vets has been given space in the building with cubicles that can be locked. They are a 501c(3) a non-profit not a 501c(9) a veteran organization. The County never had the intent in providing them with an office.

Chair Archuleta suggested that Mr. Bernard, Director Wong and he meet after the meeting and explore the issue and try to rectify the situation and report to the Commission at next month's meeting.

United States Veterans Initiative

Blas Villalobos, MSW, Director of Community Programs and Veteran Services, United States Veterans Initiative stated, "thank you all for your service."

Mr. Villalobos stated that AB 639 (John A. Pérez): Veterans Housing and Homeless Prevention Bond Act of 2014: Veterans Housing and Homeless Prevention Act of 2014. This bill would amend the Veterans' Bond Act of 2008 to reduce the amount of bonds that are authorized to be issued under the act from \$900,000,000 to \$300,000,000. The bill would enact the Veterans Housing and Homeless Prevention Bond Act of 2014 (the bond act) to authorize the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$600,000,000, as specified, for expenditure by the California Housing Finance Agency, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide multifamily housing to veterans pursuant to the Veterans Housing and Homeless Prevention Act of 2014 (VHHPA), also enacted by the bill. The bill would authorize the Legislature to amend the provisions of the bond act, by majority vote, for specified purposes. The bill would impose a specified reporting requirement on the Department of Housing and Community Development to evaluate, in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs, any program established by the former pursuant to the VHHPA. The bill would authorize the Department of Housing and Community Development to provide specified assistance to veterans.

The bill would provide for submission of a specified section to the voters at the June 3, 2014, statewide primary election, as specified. Mr. Villalobos stated that US Vets supports this bill and encourages other organizations to support it as well.

Military Families Are Resilient at Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services

Victor Rico, Clinical Psychologist, Did Hirsch Mental Health Services, stated he wanted to introduce their program to the Commission and inform that Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services received \$1.6 million grant to address trauma faced by Los Angeles Military Families.

Active duty and reserve military families and children who live in the South Bay/Harbor region of Los Angeles County - a mostly civilian community unequipped to recognize their presence or needs - have significant mental health challenges.

Unlike their counterparts who live on military bases with built-in networks of support, South Bay/Harbor military families have limited resources to help them cope with stressors related to military deployment and combat-related mental health problems. In public schools there is a lack of access to counselors who understand and can effectively treat the trauma and stress underlying military children's emotional or behavioral difficulties.

To combat ineffective mental health care, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has awarded Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services \$1.6 million over four years to train therapists and teachers throughout the region in evidence-based treatment models that bolster the coping skills of military families. The funding will also provide support and resiliency training to more than 1,300 military families coping with traumatic events related to parents' deployment and re-integration into civilian life.

50th Anniversary of 173rd Airborne Brigade

Raymond Ramirez, Board Member, 173rd Airborne Brigade National Memorial Foundation. The Memorial is dedicated to all Sky Soldiers who have served or will serve in the 173d Airborne Brigade. It stands as a tribute to those Sky Soldiers who fell in combat while answering our nation's call. It is equally dedicated, with unwavering gratitude, to those Sky Soldier families who suffered and sacrificed so much in our nation's efforts to preserve freedom. It also recognizes our allies who fell at our side while serving with uncommon valor.

Its purpose is twofold: to serve as a place of reflection and remembrance of those taken from us, and to recognize the legacy and achievements of this extraordinary Brigade. It is placed on this site in view of the National Infantry Museum, which serves to tell the story of the American infantrymen.

Chair Archuleta thanked him for his report.

Veterans Revolution- Robert Rosebrock

Mr. Robert Rosebrock, Co-Director, We the Veterans, provided the following:

- There are 20,000 homeless Veterans in Los Angeles, of which 8,000 are chronically homeless. This was the foundation for our Constitutional Right to assemble and protest the VA's malfeasance and misappropriation of Veterans lawfully deeded property and the maltreatment of disabled homeless Veterans.
- The VA has opted for a public neighborhood park and other misuse of this sacred land instead of building Veteran housing in accordance with the Deed of 1888, there are 20,000 disabled and disadvantaged Veterans living homeless and hungry on the dangerous streets of Los Angeles.
- The Veterans Revolution was founded upon the steadfast conviction that the Deed of 1888 is the "Law of the Land" and not the wealth and power of non-Veteran special-interest groups and political cronyism.
- Donna Beiter now has two strikes against her and she must be removed from public trust before she does even greater harm against more innocent Veterans. She not only violated Federal law by misappropriating Veterans property at the horrific expense of disabled homeless Veterans, but she is in full violation of her oath of office to support and defend the U.S. Constitution.
- General Shinseki has now been adjudged in Federal Court for illegal use of Veterans property, and he is also in violation of his own oath of office for refusing to terminate Ms. Beiter for violating the U.S. Constitution.
- The OVG has written Congressman Henry Waxman, who is the elected public servant entrusted to oversee this VA property, requesting that he demand the Obama Administration's Department of Justice immediately denounce any notion or plans to Appeal the Court's Judgment against the VA by formally withdrawing any and all possible Appeal options.
- In a letter to VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki from U.S. Congressman Henry Waxman, he wrote urging the VA to withdraw any appeal of the Judgment:

"Judge Otero's decision was a stern rebuke of the VA's interpretation of the "clear and unambiguous" language of the law. I believe the most constructive path the VA could take now would be to decline to spend resources on an appeal of the decision. I urge the VA instead to accept the decision as an opportunity to work to strengthen the programs that directly serve the needs of veterans on the West LA VA campus."

Mr. Rosebrock requested that the Commission send a letter to the Board of Supervisors requesting that they not support any appeal. Chair Archuleta requested a Motion.

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Motion: Commissioner Ramon Rodriguez motioned to have this packet, including the copy of the Court Judgment to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Carvel Gay and all were in favor.

Commissioner Culmer suggested that the letter should be made stronger and should piggy back on Congressman Waxman's appeal.

Chair stated the letter will come from the Commission to the Board of Supervisors.

VAC Strategic Goals for 2014 – Commissioners Cheryl Shaffer & Patricia Jackson-Kelley

Commissioner Shaffer stated that at last month's meeting it was decided the Commission would develop strategic goals for a 2014. The Committee met on January 3, 2014 and developed two goals that correlate with the Department's Strategic Plan.

Goal 1: Optimize Operational Effectiveness (Champion: Comm. Patricia Jackson-Kelley)

Objective 1: Study, advise and recommend to the Board of Supervisors special issues/concerns relating to veterans within Los Angeles County.

Activities: Participate in at least one County Board of Supervisors/City Hall meeting (each district). Study and identify at least one issue and make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors. Arrange for Commissioners to attend one leadership training (Commissioners Leadership Training) as well as exposure and basic training on veteran's claims processing.

Goal 2: Integrate Service Delivery (Champion: Comm. Cheryl Shaffer)

Objective 1: Serve as a means of communication promoting the military and veterans services in Los Angeles County by honoring veterans in several events.

Activities: Host a meet and greet breakfast in March to honor women veterans. Host a meet and greet in May to honor all veterans. Host a veteran's breakfast in November the week of Veteran's Day. Invite State, County and City officials; veteran's organizations and government agencies.

Chair Archuleta stated, "we applaud and thank you both for doing this; we commend the concept and basic training on the veterans claim process."

Commissioner Shaffer stated that the first Meet and Greet event will be in March and they need to have an ad-hoc committee set-up today. Chair Archuleta requested volunteers and Commissioners Shaffer, Jackson-Kelley, and Hwangbo volunteered to be on the ad-hoc committee. Also, four guests from the audience volunteered for the committee. Chair stated that the same volunteers on the ad-hoc committee would be for the May event and would request more volunteers in March for the committee.

Chair Archuleta requested a motion to accept the Veterans Advisory Commission Strategic Plan FY 2013-2014.

Motion: By Commissioner Cheryl Shaffer and seconded by Commissioner Ramon Rodriguez. All voted in favor.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report – Stephanie Stone

Brigadier General Ruth Wong, Director, asked that Department Report for the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs be accepted as written and provided the following updates:

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- Supervisor Antonovich's "Salute to Veterans and their Families" on May 24th at Arcadia Park from 10am – 2pm. We will invite veteran organizations to participate. The Department will have a resource table.
- This year the Department will nominate two individuals that were involved in the artifacts process to the 2014 Volunteer of the Year luncheon.
- Supervisor Don Knabe is the Chair of the Board of Supervisors for 2014.
- Two positions open in the Department the Supervisor position and the Veterans Claims Assistant III.

New Business

Nothing for new business.

Item's for Next Month's Agenda

- Status on the joint meeting of Los Angeles County and Orange County Veterans Advisory Commissions.
- VA Long Beach Healthcare System – Alice Martinez
- Report from the Ad-hoc Committee and update from each Commissioner on attending an event/meeting in their respective district.
- Report on letter to the Board of Supervisors
- Update on request from Police Post 381.

Good of the Order

Commissioner Culmer had nothing for the good of the order.

Commissioner Rodriguez had nothing for the good of the order.

Commissioner Chapman had nothing for the good of the order.

Commissioner Jackson-Kelley stated that veteran license plates are available as of February 25th. It's heart month at Sepulveda VA so wear red that day in support. There are 800 troops being deployed to South Korean. On February 24th the California Afro-American Museum will be honoring our veterans.

Commissioner Hwangbo had nothing for the good of the order.

Motion to adjourn meeting by Commissioner Rodriguez and seconded by Commissioner Shaffer. Chair Archuleta adjourned meeting at 3:45 p.m.

Tatiana Rosas
Executive Secretary
February 12, 2014

Note: The next Commission meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, March 12, 2014 at 1:30 p.m. at Bob Hope Patriotic Hall, 1816 South Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA.