

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Ruth A. Wong
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, December 8, 2021

Present:

Commissioners

Anthony Allman
Joe Leal
Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Jawana McFadden
Marcel Rodarte
John Gutierrez

Absent:

Commissioners

Brittanie Moore
Jennifer Campbell

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Stephanie Stone, Chief Deputy Director
Stephanie Guerrero, Executive Secretary

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Anthony Allman called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by newly appointed Commissioner John Gutierrez, 5th District.

Roll Call

There was a total of 6 Commissioners who attended the meeting; quorum present.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Commissioner Jawana McFadden to accept the Minutes for September 8, 2021 and seconded by Commissioner Joe Leal. With five yes vote, the motion passed.

Chairman's Report

Chair Anthony Allman stated that there was a Board Motion on 11/30/2021 to continue teleconference meetings, therefore, the Veterans Advisory Commission will be following that order. The notification for December's VAC meeting was sent out through Gov Delivery in late November. Moving forward, the Commission meeting notice will be sent out via Gov Delivery since MVA's email distribution list has been imported to that communication outlet. A request was received to update the public comment form to a digital format and hope to have it ready by next month. Chair Allman reminded his fellow Commissioners of a couple items: 1) send over pictures and biography for the website and 2) review Strategic Plan.

Public Comments

Latia Suttle, retired Army Chief Officer, who is an advocate for women veterans. Ms. Suttle stated that she has submitted public comment requests to speak at this commission meeting for the past few years concerning veterans who are not being properly identified in Family and Children's Court, thus resulting them not being connected to VA services. When Patricia Jackson-Kelley chaired the commission, there was an Ad Hoc Committee formed to look further into the issue, resulting into an 11-page document with suggestions. Later, Mr. Dimitri DeSilva provided a briefing on his findings. She has requested for a briefing at each meeting to keep the veteran community updated with any changes.

Chair Anthony Allman made note about her concern with the ability to register in advance to address the Commission and make it align with the BOS meeting. He will connect with the other Commissioners and discuss it further.

Ordinance and County Manual

Lawrence Green, County Counsel was introduced by Chair Anthony Allman to give a short briefing about the two areas of responsibilities when communicating with the Board of Supervisors (BOS).

Mr. Green outlines the two tracks for the Commissioners to reach out to the Board of Supervisors:

1. If a matter of such import that the commission as a body wishes to communicate its position/impression/concern to the BOS, the Commission would want to agendize that. Thereafter, there would be a presentation on it and the BOS would conduct a vote if it were to be a manifestation of the Board's will. Presuming that were to pass, a letter will need to be arranged by the Chair, Ad Hoc Committee, or MVA Admin Staff who handles the operational needs of the commission, which will then need to be signed by the Chair on the Commissions behalf. This can be done if the Commission as a body wishes to make a recommendation before the Board.
2. Commissioners in their individual capacity have the option to speak to the Board Deputy of their Supervisorial District and bring something to their attention. In doing that, each Commissioner represents themselves, not as a body.

As a precaution, the Commission would need to determine whether to present something to the Board in an individual capacity or as an entire body. The Commission does not have to worry about two readings because it is not an ordinance. The item must be properly agendized in order to be presented to the Board so that they can vote yes or no. It is not unusual for Commissions to send letters to the BOS, however, every meeting does not result in a letter; it usually has to be a matter of sufficient import that a Commission wants to communicate to the Board.

Chair Anthony Allman asked for clarification in terms of adding an item to the agenda, wondering if it's the general topic, the letter, or the communication that needs to be agendized to BOS. Lawrence Green responded, that it is preferential for the Commission to take a position and move forward with a letter that states its position so that it may be endorsed by the Board. In some instances, it will require a revisit.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Stephanie Stone, Chief Deputy Director, provided the following updates:

- Veterans Services – Number of veterans served last quarter in each supervisorial district with disability claims, education benefits, and housing.
- Information Technology (IT) – Revamping current phone system and reviewing the needs for upgrading IT and AV equipment for next year.
- Communication – Redesign of website to be more efficient. VAC notification was distributed via Gov Delivery and will continue moving forward in order to reach more veterans, as well as provide a digital public comment form. Social Media is largely utilized via Facebook and more recently on our new YouTube site.
- Patriotic Hall/Building – The initial Phase II plan for reopening in January has been postponed due to the new variant, DPH has strongly recommended to continue social distancing and maintain a teleworking schedule. MVA continues to provide public service with appointments only on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Funding has been requested for the next fiscal year to cover security and custodial expenses. All County Staff have been educated and notified to maintain COVID vaccination or COVID testing on the Fulgent database. As the department moves into reopening, MVA will work with tenants and partners to ensure that they are also either vaccinated or tested regularly.
- Wolf Connection – Eight women successfully completed the program in November. Planning on reconvening in January with a new cohort.

Agenda Items that are Deferred to Next Month's Meeting

- Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation – ordinance on discounted admission; Anthony Allman
- Los Angeles County Beaches and Harbor – ordinance on discounted parking; Anthony Allman
- Veterans Peer Access Network (VPAN) – update at every meeting; Joe Leal
- Veteran Demographics – gender and ethnic breakdown; Jawana McFadden

Good of the Order

Commissioner Joe Leal stated that college events coming soon LA Dodgers, Wellness, Compton Stand Down. SD1 speaking about VSOs using their posts to support Winter Shelters. Esperanza- Tiny Houses. Connect with VPAN in your area.

Commissioner Patricia Jackson-Kelley stated that she attended the Veterans Day Parade event which is the largest in the country. Senator had a breakfast for black women veterans. She is involved and will attend the Compton Stand Down.

Commissioner Jawana McFadden stated that the Mayor held a Microsoft Veteran Partnership workshop cohort of 25 plus veterans that received the training for the first time in LA County. This is a Great opportunity for veterans seeking employment in the technological sector.

Commissioner Marcel Rodarte gave a brief introduction of himself to the Commission stating that he is retired from the Air Force Reserve, served 4 years active duty in the Navy, and a former Commissioner. Mr. Rodarte is happy to be back. He also works with many elected officials and offered some assistance to his fellow Commissioners in connecting with the Board of Supervisors.

Commissioner John Gutierrez stated that he is looking forward to hearing more from VPAN. He's seen much of the work VPAN has done in the 5th District and is excited about what they achieve next year.

Chair Anthony Allman stated that he is hopeful that the presentation was useful. The Masterplan 2022 is in the public comment period. There have been lots of changes and will touch base with the other Commissioners. If any members of the public if want a briefing, feel free to reach out via email at contact@veteranadvocate.org.

A total of 30 participants were in attendance. Chair Allman closed the meeting at 2:33 p.m.

Stephanie Guerrero
Executive Secretary
December 8, 2021