

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Ruth A. Wong
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, December 12, 2018

Present:

Absent:

Commissioners

Commissioners

Thomas O'Shaughnessy
Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Fred Flores
Hector Elizalde
Tom Lasser
Joe Leal
Dennis Tucker

Michael McDowell

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Ruth Wong, Director
JeNai Davis, ASM I

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Approval of Minutes

Chair Thomas O'Shaughnessy called the meeting to order at 1:45pm. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chief Deputy Stephanie Stone. A special recognition to Navy veteran and former U.S. President, George Herbert Walker Bush who passed away recently at 93 years old was read by Stephanie Stone.

The Director of County of Los Angeles Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (MVA), Brigadier General Ruth Wong provided more information on President Bush regarding his service in Desert Storm.

Chair O'Shaughnessy announced that the approval of the minutes and the nomination committee would be held until there is a quorum of Commissioners at the meeting.

Roll Call

There was a total of 5 Commissioners at the meeting – there was no quorum. Also present:

- County Counsel – Mr. Lawrence Green
- Mayor Garcetti representative, Mr. Larry Vasquez (recently retired Navy veteran – 30 years of military service)
- Deputy of 1st District, Mr. Antonio Chapa
- CALVET representative – Mr. Anthony Rodriguez

Ordinance Update

County Counsel, Mr. Lawrence Green spoke on Advisory Ordinance

- Core concern:
 - Raise stipend – legally the Brown Act allows it but mechanically there are many moving parts – 14 allowable meetings. The Commission would need to address the Director as it is a budgetary item. Question of whether the ordinance will be amended.
 - Commissioner Lasser: who is the final arbitrator for the changes? Are you the legal County Counsel of MVA?
 - Response: It goes to the Ordinance which then goes to the Board and then it approved, becomes a law; it depends on the requirements of this Board – if County Counsel must be a veteran, etc.
 - BGen Wong: have any other Commissions requested a stipend increase?
 - Yes, but County Counsel doesn't know who. There is a precedence.

Annual Report

Annual Report will be approved once there is a quorum. Consider changes for January meeting.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Ruth Wong, Director, stated the following Department highlights of events of recent month –

- Veterans Resource Day – highly successful
- Supervisor Solis and Kuehl swearing in
- Deputies Antonio Chapa and Deputy Joseph Martinez met with the First District Budget Deputy. Need more parking for veterans. Supervisor Solis also wanted to make sure we had the resources for upcoming Culinary class.
- We are #1 in the State for veteran benefits
- Increased outreach
- Increased utilization work – above 20%
- Homeless initiative for veterans
- Expanded electronic claims
- Increased productivity in Antelope Valley
- Expanded Culinary class with LATTC
- Launched Pathway to Citizenship workshop
- Partnered with CALVET for services
- Partnered with DMH

A copy of the Department Report will be given to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Tucker would like to submit material to add to the MVA newsletter.

DMH would like the LA Collaborative meetings to be held at Bob Hope Patriotic Hall. DMH will provide valet service for parking. The January meetings will be held at American Legion Post 43, so the first collaborative meeting will begin in February at Patriotic Hall. DMH wants a veteran-owned valet service to provide valet parking. DMH will provide notifications of meetings.

Question from Commissioner O'Shaughnessy: will DMH provide refreshments? He recommends the Culinary class provide refreshments should the class align with the collaborative meetings.

Public Comments: Comments from Audience on Items Not on Agenda (three minutes each):

Irving Pacheco regarding the California Complete County to prepare for the 2020 census. He would like a copy of the minutes for today's meeting. Commissioner Elizalde would like a census count for veterans.

Commissioner Fred Flores arrived at 2:27 p.m. A roll call was taken again. A quorum was formed upon his arrival. The minutes from the October 10, 2018 meeting were approved.

Strategic Plan

Review of Strategic Plan: Chair would like to know which Commissioner would like to work with the Building Manager of MVA, Jaime Gomez-Beltran, regarding the tenants in Bob Hope Patriotic Hall.

Item's for Next Month's Agenda

- Scrub the meeting locations
- Possible Hawthorne meeting
- Roll over agenda items not resolved
- Request more outreach for next meeting

Commissioner Elizalde would like February 13th meeting in Lancaster in the 5th District.

Appoint a Chair for nominating committee – Chair O'Shaughnessy would like to nominate himself to chair the committee since his term is ending.

Annual Report

Motion to ratify and support Annual Report – approved by Commissioners:

1st: Commissioner Leal

2nd: Commissioner Flores

Commissioner Lasser: apartment complex in Downey. He expressed the need for the Commissioners to support CALVET. CALVET representative, Anthony Rodriguez, mentioned a program that could help with housing in the area – was shared at the Veterans Resource Day event in Whittier on Friday, November 30, 2018.

Commissioner O'Shaughnessy expressed the need to be more supportive of the Los Angeles community.

Commissioner Flores shared favorable words in recognition of the former Director, Joseph Smith's recent passing.

Good of the Order

Commissioner Flores was working on parade development and learned of the death of Marine veteran from Team Red, White, and Blue who died in Thousand Oaks shooting. He shared favorable words on him.

Commissioner Leal spoke on the death of veteran Phil Bowers regarding his dedication and service. He also spoke of Reach Across America – looking for an active Coast Guardsman. Commissioner Lasser will search for someone from the Coast Guard to participate. Suicide Intervention Course – on December 19th and 20th here at Bob Hope Patriotic Hall.

Commissioner Tucker spoke on veteran Phil Bowers also. He thanked Commissioner Lasser on the Veterans Resource Day event in Whittier last month. He recognized the month of November as veteran month. He extended the recognition of veteran month to veteran families and caregivers. He thanked the Commissioners who attended the Metro veterans luncheon. Lunch was served to 475 veterans. He flew to Washington D.C. regarding veteran employment and received the Gold Star Award in recognition of employment. 100 service members received Los Angeles Rams tickets. On November 18th, he was honored at the Los Angeles Chargers games as a Desert Storm veteran and while there, he met with a Tuskegee veteran, Bob Friend, who is having trouble with his benefits in Orange County. He will reach out to the veteran office in Orange County to assist him.

Commissioner Elizalde thanked all Commissioners and Director Wong for their support on behalf of veterans who have been referred to the County field offices and received immediate assistance. He has been informed that there are some attitude issues with staff but will discuss it with her privately. There will be a Mental Health Consortium soon. Focus on VA Hospitals, especially West VA needs to be held accountable. VA should be at every Commission meeting. Our Commission attends their meetings – it should be reciprocated.

Commissioner Lasser attended a funeral for the unclaimed souls. 4 unclaimed veterans were buried with full honors. The Coroner's office provided information. The Coast Guard commissioned a new Cutter ship recently. 4 Cutter ships were assigned to the Coast Guard. Another commission of a Cutter ship will be coming soon. The Veterans Resource Day event in Whittier was well attended. He's never seen a 1st time event such as this attended and handled so well. He worked with the Air Force base for manner to allow those who are now in California and have a working license to be able to use such license in a profession in California.

Commissioner O'Shaughnessy closed the meeting in memory of those who have fallen which amounts to approximately 18 to 20 per day. He further stated that California has very high standards for licensing which is why it is difficult for veterans outside of California to use their license when they are from another state. He wanted to thank the City of Los Angeles LASHA department for their efforts in working on the behalf of those who need employment.

Meeting adjourned at 2:23 p.m.

JeNai Davis
ASM I
December 12, 2018

