

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Ruth A. Wong
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, February 14, 2018

Present:

Commissioners

Thomas O'Shaughnessy
Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Tom Lasser
Fred Flores
Joe Leal

Absent:

Commissioners

Col. Julian Bond
Marcel Rodarte
Hector Elizalde

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Ruth Wong, Director
Tatiana Rosas, Executive Secretary

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Approval of Minutes

Chair Thomas O'Shaughnessy called the meeting to order at 1:36p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Vice Chair Patricia Jackson-Kelley. Chair O'Shaughnessy stated that due to a lack of quorum the Minutes of January 10, 2018 is postponed.

Roll Call

As noted above.

Chairman's Report

Chair O'Shaughnessy stated that he attended the January 17th Opening Ceremony for The Greatest Legislation - An American Legion Salute to the GI Bill. The exhibit will be available for viewing until the end of March.

Chair stated there is no current information to report on the Pueblo Project at this time. The Federal Advisory Body of the Veterans Administration the CVEB meets monthly on every third Wednesday and on the even months the meetings are held at Patriotic Hall. He also would like the ex-officio for the County to be a Commissioner.

Chair O'Shaughnessy stated that he has stepped down from "Objective – Make recommendations for tenants in Bob Hope, Patriotic Hall". He requested that this Item be placed on next month's Agenda.

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Los Angeles VBA Regional Benefit Office – Emmett O’Meara

Emmett O’Meara, Assistant Director/Acting Director, Regional Benefit Office, stated that as part of the Department of Veterans Affairs’ continued efforts to improve timeliness of services for Veterans and their families, VA unveiled the Decision Ready Claims (DRC) initiative, a disability claims submission option with accredited Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) that promises to deliver faster claims decisions to Veterans and their families. Veterans who choose to submit their claim under DRC can expect to receive a decision within 30 days from the time VA receives the claim. VSOs will ensure all supporting evidence such as medical exams, military service records, etc., is included with the claim submission. This advance preparation by the VSOs allows claims to be assigned immediately to claims processors for a quick decision.

DRC was first implemented May 1, 2017, at the St. Paul, Minnesota Regional Office, and is now available at all VA regional offices. While DRC is currently limited to claims for increased compensation (commonly known as claims for increase), and requires Veterans to work with VSOs, VA’s goal is to expand the types of claims accepted under the initiative and allow Veterans other ways to submit their claim under DRC. On November 2, 2017, the VA announced that it will launch the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program, or “RAMP,” with the goal of providing Veterans with the earliest possible resolution of their disagreement with VA’s decision on their benefit claims. RAMP will provide expanded opportunities for Veterans to enter the new, more efficient claims review process outlined in the Veterans Appeals Improvement and Modernization Act of 2017, which was signed into law by President Trump. By February 2019, all requests for review of VA decisions will be processed under the new, multi-lane process. VA’s legacy appeals process was slow and complex. The new law streamlines the process and includes safeguards ensuring claimants receive the earliest effective date possible for their claims. Participation in RAMP is voluntary, however, Veterans can expect to receive a review of VA’s initial decision on their claim faster in RAMP than in the legacy appeals process. The initiative allows participants to have their decisions reviewed in the Higher-Level or Supplemental Claim review lanes outlined in the law. The reviewer can overturn previous decisions based on a difference of opinion, or return it for correction. Participants who select the Supplemental Claim Lane may submit new evidence and may receive VA’s assistance in developing evidence in support of their claim. Veterans who disagree with the decisions they receive in RAMP can appeal to the Board of Veterans’ Appeals in the new process and have their appeal decided by the Board when the new law becomes effective in February 2019. Veterans who participate in RAMP will not be able to return to the legacy appeals process. VA encourages eligible Veterans with pending appeals to participate in RAMP and the benefits of the new review process.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Ruth Wong, Director, stated the following Department updates:

- On February 6, 2018, the Board of Supervisors adopted a motion to establish a Countywide Peer Network for Veteran’s Services and Housing. The motion directed the Health Agency Department Directors in coordination with the Director of the Community Development Commission and the Director of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, in consultation with the Director of Military and Veteran Affairs, the Director of US Department of Veteran Affairs Greater Los Angeles Health Care System and relevant non-profit stakeholders, as deemed necessary, to report back in 90 days with a plan to establish a veteran peer access network in Los Angeles County.
- Benefit Claims went up 10% and it is expected to exceed 10,000 claims.
- Military Leave Program – is a program for the active reservists in the County.
- The Veterans Culinary Program will start a spring session in March, 2018.
- The Department will be migrating to Windows 10.
- Supervisor Hilda Solis’ office requested a feasibility study of our parking lot to determine on a possible above ground parking structure to park 258 cars. The study was conducted in November, 2017 and the initial report was prepared and is at the CEO’s Office for review.

Community Presentations

None at this time.

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

Jack Ochoa, Infinity Government Procurement, small business advocate for small business enterprises. In Los Angeles County there are 335 small veteran businesses; there are too many veterans that don't or aren't aware of the services that are available to them, he stated.

John Motter, local community organizer that works with Ground Game LA. He would to have an opportunity to meet and talk about homelessness in Los Angeles.

Neil Gafney, Chair, Hawthorne Veterans Affairs Commission, stated he had an outreach announcement and wanted to invite everyone to an event on April 28, "Veterans Benefits Day" at the Hawthorne Memorial Center.

Item's for Next Month's Agenda

- Commissioner Lasser invite Captain Charlene Downey, Coast Guard at Terminal Island.
- Chair O'Shaughnessy to confirm Jodi Galvin to report on Community Veteran Justice Project.
- Chair O'Shaughnessy stated that he would like a Commissioner to contact the New York Historical Society Museum & Library and have a program brought to Patriotic Hall like the current one in New York City on "The war that defined a generation – Vietnam War (1945-1975." Commissioner Bond volunteered to work with the Chair on this program.
- Chair O'Shaughnessy stated the Annual Report for VAC be added to the Agenda.

Follow-Up on Veteran Issues

None.

Good of the Order

Commissioner Tom Lasser stated that the 2018 Torrance Armed Forces Day Celebration is scheduled for May 19, 2018.

Commissioner Patricia Jackson-Kelley stated that last Tuesday, she attended the Black History Celebration at the Mayor's Office. The Living Legend Award was given to Ms. Dionne Warwick and other honorees included Los Angeles Superior Court Judge David Cunningham III, Noel Massie, President of U.S. Operations for United Parcel Service, and herself.

Commissioner Joe Leal stated he had nothing for the good of the order.

Commissioner Fred Flores stated he had nothing for the good of the order.

Chair Thomas O'Shaughnessy stated that he received his driver's license designation and two weeks and \$29 later he received his new driver's license. He would like to see the statue amended for a cost savings for many veterans that may have difficulty with the fees.

Chair O'Shaughnessy adjourned meeting at 2:28p.m.

Tatiana Rosas
Executive Secretary
February 14, 2018

Note: The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled to be held on Wednesday, March 14, 2018 at 1:30 p.m. at Bob Hope Patriotic Hall.