

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Ruth A. Wong
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, January 8, 2020

Present:

Absent:

Commissioners

Commissioners

Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Hector Elizalde
Thomas O'Shaughnessy
Dennis Tucker
Joe Leal
Ruel Fuentesilla
Tom Lasser
Michael McDowell
Tess Banko

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Ruth Wong, Director
Stephanie Guerrero, Secretary

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Approval of Minutes

Chair Patricia Jackson-Kelley called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Bob Brown, American Legion County Council.

Roll Call

There was a total of nine Commissioners at the meeting – there was a quorum.

Chairman's Report

Chair Jackson-Kelley stated that a lot of good things came out of the retreat in December. The commission decided to explore Adulting training, which are survival skills to decrease homelessness in vet population. During the retreat in December 2019, the Strategic Plan was discussed. Beginning in February, there will be an assigned Commissioner to provide a report each month on the Strategic Plan.

Ruth Wong recently read an article about a program soon to be offered at UC Berkeley called “Adulting.” The program is made available to future graduates that offer training in personal budget, building a resume, applying for jobs and navigating romantic relationships during a time where online interaction is hindering face to face encounters. This program may be beneficial to our veteran community transition from the military to civilian life.

Commissioner McDowell is conducting qualitative data which are “Deep Dive Interviews” specific to individuals about 10-20 homeless or sheltered veterans. The data shows that these individuals do not know how to handle personal finances and misuse drugs which often leads to criminal activity. He believes that the adulting classes will work because they need to learn basic skills and how to budget their money properly.

Commissioner Tucker has reached out to his good friend Francisco Rodriguez, who is the Chancellor at the largest Community College syndicate in the United States. Commissioner Tucker is going to connect him with Commissioner O’Shaughnessy to help with the adulting project for the veteran community.

Motion by Chair Jackson-Kelley and Commissioner McDowell in support to proceed with the Adulting Classes discussion in relating to homelessness and seconded by Commissioner O’Shaughnessy. All present were in favor. Motion approved.

Public Comments

None.

Guest Speakers

Anthony Rodriguez, the CalVet Regional Field Agent provided an update on their services. CalVet is the State of California Department of Veteran Affairs who supplement and augment what the federal government does by trying to fill gaps. He is the subject matter expert in resources with Federal, State, County and City benefits in the areas of housing, healthcare, education and unemployment. The main purpose is to fully connect veterans with the benefits available to them.

Brad Pedersen, CalVet Home Loan, stated that there are many programs. He really supports the Adulting classes because finances are important for home loans. CalVet Home Loans are a non-commission lender. CalVet does VA loans and they take the time to manually underwrite every loan; there is no minimum FICO score. CalVet is currently in process of working on a re-finance program. In the meantime, they refer out to other resources.

Nick Entrikin, Chief Liaison, UCLA Veterans Affairs Relations introduced himself and his colleague Kristie Hernandez, Director, UCLA Veterans Affairs Relations are here to provide a brief over view of the various programs and partnerships with the VA. The Jackie Robinson Stadium is the usually the topic of conversation/discussion which was opened in 1981. UCLA/VA also has many other programs such as UCLA Athletics, UCLA/VA Veterans Family Wellness Center (VFWC), and UCLA School of Law Veterans Legal Clinic (VLC) that provide military appreciation tickets, services, workshops, and assistance to the veteran community. For more information or for registration, please visit www.UclaBruins.com/Military and www.vfwc.ucla.edu.

Maurice Wilson, Operation Skillbridge is an LA Based Program and Partnership with the Pacific Battleship in Iowa. The program is called Reboot that has been operating in San Diego for about 10 years now by providing transitional services to veterans. There are two prevailing issues: 1. Veterans do not know what they want to do next 2. Veterans do not want to do the same work as when they were in the military. As a result, a reintegration plan has been created. For example, there are already existing resources, therefore, we must identify what organizations are well positioned to solve these issues. Essentially, we want to send veterans to the subject matter experts for the services they are seeking. This is a helpful way to support our veterans and each other.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Ruth Wong, Director, stated the following Department updates:

VA Elected Officials Representative Meeting

Homeless Program – looking at motel vouchers, need partners to fund, and need database of landlords to participate in program. Recently learned that HUD/VASH vouchers are only being used at about 70 percent because there are not enough homes for the demand. Also looking at temporary housing solution; build modular housing at WLA and Sepulveda 116 beds per unit. The cost is \$13 million for each structure.

CBOC at Gardena – transferring from WLA to Long Beach to provide specialty care.

Arcadia – small clinic team with one physician. Will need at least 1,200 veterans enrolled to fully operate.

MVA is currently working on new phone system to handle high call volume and appointments.

4th District will fund two part-time Veteran Service Officers for one year; one in Whittier and one at Patriotic Hall.

American Legion National Commander's Dinner on Dec 14 – honored two Battle of the Bulge veterans.

Equine Therapy for Women Veterans hosted by L.A. Sparks.

Secretary of the Army Ryan McCarthy briefed Community Leaders about the future of Army – 180,000 deployed, only 60 percent needed recruitment requirements, new advertising campaign, Los Angeles is the second largest district in U.S., and need access to high schools.

Announcements

Veterans Town Hall at W. L.A. tonight from 5 to 7 – Facebook live

Culinary Arts Program Spring Cohort 2020 starting in February

Levitt and Quinn Family Law Clinic for Veterans – Divorce, Spousal and Child Support, Custody/Visitation, Military Pension, Marital Property

Bar Association Legal Clinic for Veterans – outstanding tickets, warrants and cleaning criminal records.

Agenda Items that are Deferred to Next Month's Meeting

- Draft 2020 calendar
- 2nd Chance Fair Act and Employment – Commissioner Tucker volunteered to take the lead

Follow-Up on Veteran Issues

None.

Good of the Order

Chair Jackson-Kelley attended several events such as the American Legion National Commander, VSO Meeting at the VA, Women's Program and Holiday Party at the LA Outpatient Clinic.

Commissioner Banko stated that the West LA VA campus will have the federal veteran's community oversight and engagement board happening which oversees the draft master plan settlement. This will be at the VA hospital, 1st floor on January 15th and 16th at 8:00am.

Commissioner O'Shaughnessy suggested to General Wong that when it's time to celebrate another anniversary of WWI or WWII, perhaps do a showing of the movie Hell and Back – starring Audie Murphy.

Commissioner Fuentecilla attended a holiday party in Cerritos. He continues to work with Mayor for the Memorial event in May. He suggested for the commission to consider adding Whittier, Lakewood, or Bellflower for the 4th district to the 2020 VAC meeting locations.

Commissioner Lasser stated that the City of Hawthorne are planning to build a 16-unit complex for veterans on a city owned property.

Vice Chair Elizalde also participated in the meeting with the VA Director. He was delighted that he was able to call into the meeting. He reminded and encouraged everyone to tune in to the Townhall Meeting that would stream live later tonight at 7pm on Facebook.

Commissioner Tucker stated that he was in touch with the Korean Military Community in efforts to spread the word about the Veterans Advisory Commission meeting that is open to the public to attend every second Wednesday of each month. The purpose of the meeting is for veterans organizations to meet the commissioners and brief them on their best practices or raise awareness with any concerns. He stated that he is available to volunteer at the Women's event held at Patriotic Hall in March. LA Metro has recently changed their job specs; about 66% of jobs required a degree and can now be substituted with one year of military experience. This newly updated information is now up on the Metro website.

Commissioner Leal announced that Supervisor Solis has appointed a new commissioner for the 1st District and has been very with the homeless shelters along with mental health services. He works with an agency and has been able to hire a lot of veterans that have just been released from active duty.

Commissioner McDowell stated that homelessness must be prevented and we must get it right.

Meeting adjourned at 3:29 p.m.

Stephanie Guerrero
Secretary
January 8, 2020