

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION**

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



**Ruth A. Wong
Director**

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, November 13, 2019**

Present:

Absent:

Commissioners

Commissioners

Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Hector Elizalde
Thomas O'Shaughnessy
Thomas Lasser
Ruel Fuentesilla
Tess Banko

Jose Leal
Dennis Tucker
Michael McDowell

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 12:11 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Tom Lasser, 4th District.

Roll Call

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

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

None.

Chairman's Report

Director Ruth Wong provided an update on the County Counsel Brown Act Requirements; she contacted Lawrence Green, who clarified that the teleconferencing must be done in the county, therefore, it cannot be done out-of-state. The location must be agendized and must be posted at the site where the meeting is held, and it must be open to all members of the public with the ability to allow comments or input. Ideally a teleconference meeting should include authentication of the teleconferencing party.

Chair Patricia Jackson-Kelley has been privileged to be a guest speaker at the Oasis Senior Center in Santa Monica and also spoke via video at the Oasis in Baldwin Hills. She was also a guest speaker at Lynwood City Hall; collected boxes from the Jack and Jill of Los Angeles Chapter to be distributed to the women veterans as well as blankets to be distributed to the Downtown homeless population. To include, she attended many other veterans' events to date.

Guest Speakers

Dr. Steven Braverman, VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, shared his business and philosophy cards to the commission; it has the VA logo and mission to encourage folks to do their job, try to make less mistakes, zero harm to patients. He stated that the canteen services at the Sepulveda VA are not being used and costing \$90,000 annually. A plan is to expand the coffee shop on the 2nd floor.

Jim Zenner, Department of Mental Health, was able to provide a VPAN update for the Peer Access Network. VPAN intends to hire a total of 80 peers, both veterans and family members. The model was designed to work as access agents in outreach and engage veterans to link them to the VA if eligible. The focus is to alleviate homelessness and address suicide prevention. There are 5 teams made up of 8 (one at Patriotic Hall).

Lauren Duncan, Director, American Red Cross would like the organization to be known as a soft place and happy to help. When veterans are in need, they receive hygiene products. Currently, the veteran's history project, documents hero's; each family receives a DVD copy. Approximately, 95% of the work at Red Cross is done through volunteers in hopes to cast a very large net. This would be the 4th year hosting the Stand Down.

Melanie Martins, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LASHA), stated that it is a referral system that sends veterans and family out to Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Discussion on the By Laws Committee

Commissioner Lasser stated that the ordinance is now up to date. Before, the commission did not have a By Laws. However, now it needs to be developed. It should be simple since we get to create our own rules. We do need legal counsel and will discuss at retreat in December. It is a work in progress, there is more to come in January 2020.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Ruth Wong, Director, stated the following Departments updates:

- Introduced Roberto Alvarez, 5th District Liaison Deputy and Jorge Reynoso, an employee from the Internal Services Department who is temporarily assisting in Facility Management.
- Attended Elected Officials' Representatives Meeting at West LA
 - Met Dr. Steven Braverman, Director who shared his Director's Philosophy; working on staffing especially social workers
 - Construction on buildings 206 and 208 W LA campus
 - Blue Water Navy Vets – if denied, they are being contacted: takes effect Jan 2020
- Marine Room dedication in honor of Colonel Joseph Smith; uniforms and medals are displayed
- Veterans Day Celebration – First District American Legion Post 804 at Atlantic Avenue Park in East LA
- Veterans Day LA event at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum
- Veterans Procurement Conference held at Patriotic Hall – Supervisor Mark Ridley Thomas provided remarks
- Strategic Planning Conference highlighted priorities
 - Immigration, Justice Reform, Environmental Health, Sustainability, Child Protection, Integrated Health, Homelessness
- Initiating recording of DD214 with County Clerk; use government to government platform
- Census Kiosk – staff to man in lobby of building to educate the public
- Meeting with Commissioner Lasser and Banko to identify items in Board Letter regarding Latia Suttle
- Launched a kickoff for military veterans in Los Angeles County employees that are a part of the county family that are serving in the active reserves or have a veterans' designation. We have had about 300 applicants and about

30 people attended the meeting. We are going to design a Board of Director's that will initiate events, social events, and networking opportunities so that people in the county family who are veterans and military can get together and share resources, promotional opportunities, and any other important information that the county has to offer to its employees.

Agenda Items that are Deferred to Next Month's Meeting

- Discussion on the By Laws Committee

Follow-Up on Veteran Issues

None.

Good of the Order

Chair Patricia Jackson-Kelley attended the Board Meeting where the Board of Supervisors gave recognition their districts Veteran of the Year. Both General Wong and Commissioner McDowell were in attendance as well.

Commissioner Tess Banko stated that she attended eight different veterans' events over the weekend.

Commissioner Thomas O'Shaughnessy attended the Veterans Day LA event and was delighted that the Coliseum was able to keep its name. He also attended the LA County Federal of Labor breakfast for the 3rd year. He is the Co-Chair of the Policy Working Group for the Collaborative; the purpose is to look for ways that each group can be more effective and communicative.

Commissioner Ruel Fuentecilla stated that he was happy to be back and will attend the retreat. He attended the Los Angeles Veterans Day Inaugural event which was outstanding and met a red tail Squadron pilot from the Tuskegee Airmen. He has a meeting with the Mayor of the City of Norwalk to discuss the Stand Down that is set for Spring; Commissioner Fuentecilla wants to see how LA County can support the event.

Commissioner Tom Lasser stated that he had been involved in 13 different events; either as a speaker or a participant.

Vice Chair Hector Elizalde attended two events; 1) City of La Puente – Congresswoman Napolitano paid special recognition to the mother of staff sergeant Gonzalez, Marine veteran who was killed two months ago in Afghanistan. 2) City of Azusa – had a memorable and patriotic event; approximately 250-300 people in attendance.

Meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Stephanie Guerrero
Secretary
November 13, 2019