

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION**

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



**Ruth A. Wong
Director**

**MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING
Wednesday, October 9, 2019**

Present:

Absent:

Commissioners

Commissioners

Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Hector Elizalde
Thomas O'Shaughnessy
Thomas Lasser
Jose Leal
Dennis Tucker
Michael McDowell
Tess Banko

Ruel Fuentecilla

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 12:07 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Tess Banko, 3rd District appointee.

Roll Call

There was a total of 8 Commissioners at the meeting – there was a quorum.

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

Walter Nared, LA Talk Radio, ran a radio program called "Walt's Focus on Veterans," which was designed to help support Veterans Organizations on digital radio. He is currently looking for sponsors to help get it back on the air.

Anthony Rodriguez, CalVet, Regional Field Agent, briefed on the new CalTap event DoD transitional program. MVA staff will be present at the event providing services and resources. An award was received for the most innovative program. He extended an invitation to everyone. The California legislature recently passed a bill to increase funding to the CalTap program. It will be rolled out into colleges.

Latia Suttle made an announcement that there is a Special Awareness event on October 28th which will be a free screening of a documentary film called "What Doesn't Kill Me." It is free to the public to raise awareness about domestic violence. She also wants to bring awareness to the current crisis of the Family Court, Children's Court and DCFS. She is an advocate for women veterans and their children, with hopes that the courts can identify what parents are veterans and provide additional resources to them; such as therapist referral for evaluation and court-ordered treatment. Motion by Commissioner O'Shaughnessy in support of making a motion that the Chair in consultation with the General pick two Commissioners for the Ad Hoc Committee to draft a letter to send out to the Board of Supervisors (BOS), highlighting the key issues for them to consider, seconded by Commissioner Tess Banko. All present were in favor. Motion approved. Chair: It's been moved in second that Ad Hoc Committee form a letter to send regarding these issues. Motion carries.

Kristie Hernandez, UCLA Veterans Affairs Relations, introduced UCLA's new Chief Liaison Nick Entrikin. Everyone is very happy to have him on board and Nick is very honored with only one week on the job.

Chairman's Report

Chair Patricia Jackson-Kelley opened with the Strategic Plan FY 2019-2020, and stated that there was no time to review and asked for all commissioners to read the plan. She gave an update on County Training and requested each commissioner commit to online e-training.

Guest Speakers

Judge Michael Nash, Executive Director, Office of Child Protection, briefed the commission and the public regarding the Office of Child Protection (OCP) works with children and families. The Board of Supervisors (BOS) created the office but did not give it authority, its role is more of a facilitator. A Strategic Plan was developed on how the system can work better; prevention of child abuse, improve safety, and enhance child well-being. The Strategic Plan and every report since 2016 are on the website at www.ocp.lacounty.gov. The Foster Care system was designed to prepare foster youth for independence. The goal was that they should exit the system with a family, not a pat on the back (law passed in 2008 – able to stay in the system until age 21).

Tom Ruck, Los Angeles National Cemetery, was excited to report on the Celebration/Dedication of the Columbarium. Cremation; is available to eligible veterans and spouses. There is no need to go to Riverside for burial, instead, LA National Cemetery is now available. Although, no one can predict the future, talk with your family about your wishes on where you want your remains kept, it is best to be prepared. He has been and will continue to get the word out. There is a pre-met eligibility, however, it does not guarantee a spot; it must be re-evaluated at the time of death. The Coroner provides casket burials for unclaimed veterans.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Ruth Wong, Director, retired Air Force veteran and flight nurse reports the following:

CEO visit highlighted: Arts and Culture, Women's Initiative, Communication, Military Reservist, Homeless Initiative, Safe Parking, CalVet, Veterans AJCC, U.S.Vets, and Department of Mental Health. Each topic was presented by staff and building tenants.

Move the DPSS field office to the Senior and Community Center in Lancaster.

San Dimas field office added a second day and two VSO's.

Safe Parking will begin on December 1st from 9pm to 6am, Sunday through Saturday of 20 vehicles max.

Patriotic Hall new hours are from 8am to 5pm. MVA staff are responsible for opening and closing the facility.

Culinary Arts Program graduation was in September. The next class will be held in February/March.

Veterans Day LA event at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum on November 11th at 10 a.m.; a flyer was produced and disseminated to county employees.

Navy bell will be transported to the Coliseum and used during the torch lighting ceremony.

Hispanic Heritage upcoming event on Friday, October 4th - Otto Padron, Guest Speaker, Colonel in the Army Reserves and President and CEO of Merula Media, which is the fastest growing minority owned Media Company in California. Antonio Chapa, District Director/Veteran and Homeless Liaison, 1st District was also in attendance.

Dedication of Marine Room in honor of Colonel Joseph Smith will be held on November 8th at 10 a.m.

Status Update: Patriotic Hall parking structure and affordable housing for veterans.

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

Vice Chair Hector Elizalde asked about appointing alternates onto the Commission because there are too many absences. General Wong stated that she has requested for the vacancy for the 1st District to be filled because it has impacted the quorum to some degree. He asked Commissioner Leal to help request to fill the vacancy. Commissioner Leal stated that he has been made aware that Supervisor Solis is going to select who she feels is appropriate and is looking for a female veteran because she wants the balance. He made the suggestion of a call in option to the meeting in the event of an emergency or traveling. General Wong agreed that the call in option can be explored.

Commissioner Tess Banko stated that she works with the American Legion and helps out with the Stand Down on the VA campus. She was honored and happy to be a part of the commission.

Commissioner Michael McDowell stated that he appreciates all fellow commissioners for attending today's meeting.

Commissioner Dennis Tucker informed that the 2nd District was in collaboration with KJLH, other veterans organizations, including MVA to support of the 3rd Annual Men's Empowerment Summit on September 9th. Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas was in attendance and was one of the guest speakers. One week later, the 2nd District was heavily involved in the 16th Annual Homeless Veteran Stand Down in the city of Compton on September 16th. The 2nd District has partnered with the Bell Employment Fair upcoming on November 13th. He stated that gardening is very therapeutic for veterans and would like to incorporate that somehow in the plans for the new housing for veterans that is coming to Patriotic Hall. Lastly, he needs a veteran from the Vietnam era to sit on a panel in March 2020 and speak to high school kids, preferably one from each branch of service and has asked the other commissioners for their help.

Commissioner Joe Leal thanked everyone who reached out to him during a difficult time. They renovated a home for a Marine family in the 1st District in Pomona which cost about \$250,000 due to water damage and termites. It took about 3 weeks to rebuild it. Extreme Home Makeover will air the episode in January 2020. It was a very humbling experience.

Commissioner Tom Lasser gave a shout out to UCLA for taking shots from a small group of angry veterans. They have a great ROTC program. They need to be proactive and promote in order to protect themselves. Please support Veterans Day. He suggested that the Red Cross be invited to speak on their services at the next commission meeting in November.

Commissioner O'Shaughnessy stated that VPAN had their quarterly steering committee advisory group live meeting versus every other month phone call on the 19th. A lot of work is being done on the tech side of things, as far as the subcommittees and how they are working; it's running a little slow because they are trying to get all the tech and everything put together. VPAN is progressing very strongly with the collaborative.

Chair Patricia Jackson-Kelley attended the first Veterans Conference in Dallas, by the Department of Veterans Affairs; it was very well done. All the entities from the Department of Veterans Affairs presented. She spent some time speaking to the National Homeless Coordinator. He is interested in working with us on the massive problem (as he put it) that we are experiencing here in Los Angeles. She attended the screening of the Six Triple Eight, that is about a group of African American women veterans who went overseas and moved a massive amount of mail that was stagnated. The gentleman who wrote the movie was at the screening and did a Q&A. He will be returning back to LA during Women's History month and will be doing the screening again. Latia Suttle is the National Public Relations person with the National Association of Black Military Women, who is working very closely with that. The Chair has been volunteering at the LA Outpatient Clinic on Tuesday mornings; serving coffee and pastries to the veteran community. They have a clothing room and are looking for T-shirts, socks and under garments for men. The donation items must be new. They already have many women items. Please help spread the word.

Meeting adjourned at 2:26 p.m.

Stephanie Guerrero
Secretary
October 9, 2019