

# LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Ruth A. Wong  
Director

## MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, March 09, 2022

### Present:

#### Commissioners

Anthony Allman  
Joe Leal  
Jawana McFadden  
Marcel Rodarte  
John Gutierrez  
Jennifer Campbell

### County Department

#### **Military and Veterans Affairs**

Stephanie Stone, Acting Director  
Stephanie Guerrero, Executive Secretary

#### Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Anthony Allman called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by newly appointed Commissioner Dennis Anderson, 5<sup>th</sup> District.

Chair Allman gave a brief introduction to Dennis Anderson, who is the newest Commissioner representing the 5<sup>th</sup> District. Commissioner Anderson is an Army veteran who was a Cold War paratrooper at the end of the Vietnam War era. He is a licensed clinical social worker graduate of the USC veterans and military families program from the school of Social Work.

#### Roll Call

There was a total of seven Commissioners at the meeting during roll call; quorum present.

#### Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Commissioner Marcel Rodarte to accept the Minutes for February 09, 2022 and seconded by Commissioner Joe Leal; a roll call with no objections and seven yes votes, the motion passed.

### Absent:

#### Commissioners

Brittanie Moore  
Patricia Jackson-Kelley

## **Chairman's Report**

Chair Anthony Allman stated that MVA has sent out the notification of the Veterans Advisory Commission meetings to Gov Delivery on March 3, 2022 at 5:21 p.m. If you did not receive the meeting notice via Gov Delivery, that means you are not subscribed. Please visit the department website at [mva.lacounty.gov](http://mva.lacounty.gov) and subscribe by selecting the option to stay connected.

As for Commissioner action items, the draft Strategic Plan still needs to be reviewed and approved. Will place the Strategic Plan on the agenda to be voted on at the next meeting. Mr. Allman stated that one of the responsibilities of being Chair is that he needs to submit an Annual Report and he asked the Commissioners to please send any important items to him so that he may include it into the Annual Report. Also, last month, VPAN offered to host a tour of the Rally Points, so if anyone is interested, please connect with VPAN to set that up. A copy of each meeting recording can be found on MVA's YouTube channel by searching LA County Military and Veterans Affairs. Please be sure to subscribe. Lastly, there is a VA training opportunity on March 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> and this information went out through the County's mailing list.

## **Public Comments**

Milly Ng, Huntington Body Rejuvenation Centre, joined the meeting to educate veterans about how to treat a pain condition. She invited veterans to come and sign up for the first treatment which results in a 50 percent pain reduction. This can be achieved by addressing the root cause of the pain, instead of depending on pain killers.

Roy Delarosa is one of the founders for the Native American Veterans Association (NAVA). NAVA was founded 20 years ago in the Native American community in Los Angeles sponsored by the United American Indian community. Mr. Delarosa explained that NAVA provides services such as reintroducing indigenous veterans back to civilian life and visiting other veteran organizations, particularly American Legion and Veterans of Foreign War. NAVA invites all veterans to join their organization regardless of their gender and ethnic background. NAVA has been recognized by LA County, CalVet, and the VA for the work they do out in the community. As a spiritual advisor, Mr. Delarosa has visited the VA hospital often in bringing medicine to wounded veterans, however, has not been able to do that due to COVID. He is looking forward to providing that service again once the VA opens back up.

Chi Szeto, Department of Veterans Administration (VA), shared a bulletin to all the Commissioners. Mr. Szeto is one of the designated federal officers for the Veterans Community Oversight and Engaging Board who are redeveloping the West LA campus. There is a federal advisory committee that informs the secretary regarding the implementation of the master planning, as well as meet quarterly and do research. An opening for membership will be going out soon. Diversity is really important as they want to make sure voices are heard from different generations of veterans all across Los Angeles. If interested, please reach out to the Chair and to Chi at [chihung.szeto@va.gov](mailto:chihung.szeto@va.gov).

Michele Felix and Keith Niesen are Veterans Service Officers who represent the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs in Districts 2 and 5. They introduced themselves and let the public know that they assist veterans in their local area.

## **Guest Speaker(s)**

Lt. Col. Gloria Willingham-Toure, U.S. Army (Ret.) is the CEO of the Afram Global Organization and is the founder of its Village Projects. Women's History Month is very dear to her heart because it highlights the contributions of women. Every year there is a different theme and this year is "Providing Healing and Promoting Hope." Healing is the process of becoming sound or healthy again and hope is wanting something to be true and thinking it could happen. There are a few important milestones that are worth recognizing during women's history; 1909- first Women's History Day, 1978- Women's History Week launched, and 1987- Women's History Month launched. There are also parallel histories of women in the military such as the Army Nurse School was established in 1901. In WWII, there were more than 59,000 women serving. Overtime, women served in much greater capacities but died before receiving the recognition they deserved. By 1941, 350,000 women served in the U.S. Military and in 1948, President Truman signed into law making women a permanent part of the military, which is over 16 percent of the entire Armed Forces. Gloria stated, "let us not forget that Women's History is the history of our world."

Jim Zenner, Veterans Peer Access Network (VPAN), provided an update on the program. Mr. Zenner shared DMH's Strategic Plan 2020-2023cof transforming the LA County Mental Health System. There are three domains for the strategy;

Goal 1: Community Services focuses on enriching lives by meeting needs in an effective manner, Goal 2: Crisis Care focuses on intensive services that target individuals in crisis, and Goal 3: Re-entry Initiatives focuses on those who are isolated, experiencing homelessness, and entangled in the criminal justice system. Veterans are at-risk in combatting isolation and loneliness in every Supervisorial District (SD). The Mental Health Support Line received 766 calls from veterans and families in March with an increase of referrals for 65 years and older and the unhoused. DMH has an MOU with the VA to provide care to high risk veterans by the suicide prevention team in Loma Linda, Long Beach, and Greater Los Angeles. A demographic breakdown for each Supervisorial District was provided for gender, age, race, ethnicity, branch of service, military affiliation/family, and temporary or permanent housing placement. Lastly, the top three needs per Supervisorial District are income support, benefits navigation, and housing.

### **Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report**

Stephanie Stone is the now the Acting Director for MVA. Ms. Stone spent 20 years as a Navy sailor and later moved over to MVA as the Chief Deputy where she worked closely under the leadership of General Ruth Wong. She provided the following updates:

- Leadership Change – focus on mission, vision, and values to provide services that were already earned by our service members.
- Budget Process – approval of six positions; 5 counselors and 1 clerical staff. The mixed-used housing/parking project is currently on the budget as an unmet need, however, MVA will continue to advocate for that to SD1. Also working to improve phone and website communication to utilize Amazon communication with an increase of \$35,000.
- Building Operations – recent break in on March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 2am on Lebanon Street service road. There was water damage in the basement which led to mold on the mural in the Doolittle room. The reconstitution of Patriotic Hall is exciting as it is now open to both tenants and the public for a full day twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. MVA is looking at reopening five days a week in April or May, as COVID numbers decrease.
- Special Programs/Communication – Kathleen Piche is MVA's Communication Manager who handles the redesign of the website and pushing out information on Gov Delivery with an outreach of approximately 20,000 emails. The campaign of New Faces of Freedom is an outreach to transitioning veterans using multimedia- radio, TV, and social media. The information form on the website where the public can click for more information in which three staff are monitoring that email at this time. In honor of Women's History Month, MVA has partnered with the Wolf Connection and ran a resiliency program at the Angeles National Forest connecting the wolf pack with the women veterans. The Women Leadership Program will be held on September 1, 2022.
- Veteran Services – veterans service officers continue to take virtual appointments and walk-ins at Patriotic Hall headquarters. There were over 1,600 claims filed last month. There are four navigators that work at the rally points.

### **Agenda Items that are Deferred to Next Month's Meeting**

- Boeing Veterans Portfolio (April)
- Northrop Grumman Talent Acquisition (April)
- LA County Department of Children and Family Services (April)
- UCLA (May)
- City of LA Office of Veterans Affairs (May)
- NPower Technology Training (June)
- TELACU Veterans Upward Bound (June)

### **Good of the Order**

Commissioner Leal stated that there are veterans Wellness events coming up in LA County, it is important for all Commissioners to know about these events so that they are able to attend and support their Supervisorial District. The

First District was heavily involved in the homeless count that passed and it was a pleasure working with the elected officials and volunteers. There is a lot of passion behind it to include all the community events as well.

Commission Chair Allman stated the Federal Advisory Committee for West LA is a great opportunity to get more involved in the redevelopment effort and vast services to veterans. For anyone interested, please follow up with Chair Allman, Chi, or Stephanie in order to get you the solicitation to become a new member.

Commissioner Gutierrez stated the Welcome Home Ceremony for Vietnam veterans will be on Saturday, March 19, 2022 in Palmdale. He will ensure that Stephanie gets a copy of the information so she can send it out to everybody. He welcomed Commissioner Anderson and stated that it's great to finally have him on board.

Chair Allman adjourned the meeting at 2:48 p.m.

Stephanie Guerrero  
Executive Secretary  
March 09, 2022