

# LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Stephanie Stone  
Acting Director

## MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, April 13, 2022

### Present:

#### Commissioners

Anthony Allman  
Joe Leal  
Brittanie Moore  
Patricia Jackson-Kelley  
Jawana McFadden  
John Gutierrez

### Absent:

#### Commissioners

Jennifer Campbell  
Marcel Rodarte

### 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 Commissioner Dennis Anderson, 5<sup>th</sup> District.

### Roll Call

There was a total of six Commissioners at the meeting during roll call; quorum present. Commissioner Jawana McFadden later joined the meeting by telephone at 1:48pm, bringing the total up to seven Commissioners.

### Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Commissioner Joe Leal to accept the Minutes for March 09, 2022 and seconded by Commissioner Dennis Anderson; a roll call with no objections, the motion passed.

Chair Allman noted that the minutes will be available on the website now that they are approved.

## **Chairman's Report**

Chair Anthony Allman stated that the notice of the Veterans Advisory Commission meeting went out through Gov Delivery on April 7, 2022 at 10:42 a.m. to 26,825 recipients. If you have not received the meeting notice via Gov Delivery, please visit the department website at [mva.lacounty.gov](http://mva.lacounty.gov) where there should be a pop up to join our mailing list.

As for Commissioner action items, the Strategic Plan has been outstanding for the past few months while waiting on Commissioner Anderson's confirmed appointment. He stated there are still a few vacancies for roles and responsibilities. Mr. Chairman will ask for a vote of the plan at the next meeting if there are no edits or suggestions from the others. Commissioners Anderson and Gutierrez stated that they believe it will be ready to vote for approval by the Commission meeting. Please note that a recording of each Commission meeting is readily available one week after each meeting on the Department's YouTube channel. Please go to YouTube and search LA County Military and Veterans Affairs and subscribe.

As for the leadership structure, the Commission currently has a Chair, however, the Vice Chair seat is vacant. A nomination would normally have been conducted in May, elections in June, and seats assumed for Chair and Vice Chair in July. Chair Allman suggested a restructuring on how the Chair and Vice Chair assume their positions. In theory, the election would coincide with the Board of Supervisor's (BOS) Chair for that term. He developed a concept that circulates through each Supervisorial District, in which each district has two Commissioners that would be given an opportunity to lead and rotate between senior and junior Commissioners. This will allow all districts to share in the leadership structure of the Commission. The Chair will work on developing language to be discussed at the next meeting.

## **Public Comments**

Jennifer Wicks is a County employee who joined the meeting as a public citizen who resides in the 4<sup>th</sup> District. She asked, "Did you know that people who have served honorably in the armed forces and have a service-connected disability are provided with veterans preference points in the hiring process in many other jurisdictions, including the federal government, the State of California, Orange County, the City of Los Angeles and many more?" However, the County of Los Angeles definition of a veteran as it relates to employment purposes is not inclusive of disabled veterans. The Department of Human Resources staff after consulting with the Chief Executive Office, County Counsel, and the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs have confirmed that to me. Ms. Wicks stated that the Los Angeles County Charter and Civil Service Rule do not currently provide veterans preference points for veterans who have a service-connected disability working for the County. She stated that she is confident that the current policies do not align with how the County values veterans. The topic of veterans preference points was addressed by the Board nearly 20 years ago in 2003, during a motion by former Supervisor Don Knabe. She is requesting for the Commission look into this issue and make the necessary recommendations to the Board of Supervisors to allow for disabled veterans to receive veterans preference points for County of Los Angeles employment.

Latia Suttle is a retired U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer, who has been speaking to the Commission for a few years about the issue of veterans not being properly identified in Family Court, open cases with DCFS, and the Children's Court. The Mil 100 form was addressed at last month's meeting, and it was noted that it worked for veterans in Family Court, however, Ms. Suttle disagrees and says it only works in Criminal Court. The Commission is requesting a representative from DCFS to come speak on this topic to the Commission. DCFS has been undergoing leadership changes, with the Director. Bobby Cagle resigns, Brandon Nichols is now the Acting Director. Ms. Suttle suggested that if the Commission is having difficulty connecting to DCFS, then another option is to communicate with the Commission for Children and Families whose next meeting will be held on April 18<sup>th</sup> from 10am to 12pm; this is an ongoing issue with veterans not having any type of support in Family and Children's Courts and having their children removed from their care.

James L. Smith is here on behalf of deported veterans and is looking for support for two veterans from the LA area that were deported and to bring them home. He is working to get their story out and to set up a transition plan to help them deal with physical and mental health issues upon their return. This plan can hopefully become a model for other cities to follow.

## **Guest Speaker(s)**

Kristie Hernandez is the Senior Government and Community Relations Specialist at Boeing, the leading aerospace company, with a workforce of over 140,000 employees across 65 different countries. During her 20 years of professional career, she worked in education, civil rights, and healthcare. Before Boeing, she worked at UCLA in their Veterans Affairs Relations Program. In her current role, she supports the national strategy and engagement team here in California. She works with the strategic partnerships employee engagement and also connects the company to the community, which she is able to do through three different areas; high school, workforce development, and veterans portfolios. There are four major sites in California: El Segundo, Long Beach, Seal Beach, and Huntington Beach with over 12,000 employees. She is excited to be a part of the three pillars: 1) Our future pillar- focuses on early education K through 12 stem programming and workforce, 2) Our heroes pillar- focuses on veterans and their families as it relates to the transition into the civilian workforce, rehabilitation, and recovery, 3) Our homes- focus on the environment and on racial equity and social justice.

Boeing has business resource groups which allows them to build on community; offer different sessions and resources to veterans with the latest trends. They are always looking for organizations that might be willing to share their resources to veteran colleagues. Ms. Hernandez shared a post from a recent visit by Congressman Cardenas at spectral lab, where he came to celebrate veterans and provided each of them with a challenge coin.

Boeing is hiring, and anyone interested in applying, please visit the website at [boeing.com/careers](http://boeing.com/careers) or [jobs.boeing.com](http://jobs.boeing.com). If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to me at [kristie.m.hernandez@boeing.com](mailto:kristie.m.hernandez@boeing.com). Boeing is wrapping up their grant season which is by invitation only. If invited to apply, there may be a sponsorship opportunity, if an employee nominates you or an opportunity to receive a grant through their Employee Community Fund. The grant season application period starts March through April. Kristie thanked Chairman Allman and the Commissioners for their time.

Commissioner Leal thanked Kristie because Boeing has done amazing things for veterans. He stated that Commissioner John Gutierrez is a huge advocate for Boeing, as he constantly talks about their benefits.

Commissioner Gutierrez agreed with Commissioner Leal stating that it is good to hear about all the partnerships that Boeing has and how they support the veteran community. He was impressed with how much veteran workforce was at Boeing. He thanked Kristie for her presentation.

Brian Bilski, Northrop Talent Acquisition, appreciates the opportunity to present at this meeting. Northrop Grumman is a major aerospace and defense that is 100,000 strong in 50 states and 28 different countries with many opportunities to grow. He works for Aerospace Sector headquarters located in Palmdale, California. Last year, 26 percent of their workforce in Palmdale were veterans. Across Northrop as a whole, the hiring rate for veterans is 22 percent. The NG6 Homeless Veteran Program was developed to collaborate with the government, other employers, and wraparound services to support these young adults throughout their journey to find rewarding career opportunities. If Northrop cannot hire, they want to coordinate with other companies to help employ those homeless veterans. They are working with JVS SoCal where over 250 people were hired in the last three years. In March 2022, there was a hiring event that resulted in over 100 job offers. Currently working on developing apprenticeship programs for entry level positions in Palmdale. The Northrop Grumman University is something that was started with Supervisor Kathryn Barger's office and with Antelope Valley Community College to provide no cost aircraft structure training to veterans of Los Angeles County. The deadline to register is May 23, 2022. Once training is complete, veterans will have an interview with Northrop Grumman. SkillBridge Internships is a program that provides opportunities for transitioning service members from all military branches and ranks, to come work and intern with Northrop Grumman at various locations, not just California, but across the enterprise of Northrop Grumman. Over 100 opportunities with about a 90% conversion rate to full time offers once they complete the apprenticeship program. Additional support for our veteran community, host virtual military hiring events are held the first Friday of each month.

Chair Allman asked, "Do you know if College of the Canyons and Antelope Valley College students are going through the program using their GI Bill, even though it's a no cost program?" Mr. Bilski responded that once go through the Northrop Grumman University, do not have to use their GI Bill if attending Antelope Valley Community. Many do not know that the GI Bill can also be applied during apprenticeship programs, such as attending a four year. The Department of Labor (DOL) has approved the GI Bill to offset some of the cost and expenses while going through those programs. It is kind a win, win for veterans on both sides.

Commissioner Gutierrez thanked Brian for his presentation. We are all familiar with the work that Ken Friend has done by housing the homeless, offer a training program that leads to a career that will continue on to establish a bachelor's

degree. It is a good model that is used at Northrop. Commissioner Gutierrez asked, "Do you have an idea of how many people are hired in the Antelope Valley right now?" Brian Bilski stated that right now there is a need for over 400 between now through August. Will be out working in the community with JVS to make sure that the information goes out to the Commission, so that it can be shared with your networks to hire as many veterans as possible. If there are any questions, feel free to contact Mr. Bilski at [Brian.Bilski@ngc.com](mailto:Brian.Bilski@ngc.com). He is always open to collaborate with new opportunities and education programs that may benefit veterans.

Jim Zenner, Veterans Peer Access Network (VPAN), joined the meeting to brief the Commission of upcoming VPAN events. He noticed that the PowerPoint slides were the wrong set and stated that he would send out the correct one digitally. VPAN's field services are only available Monday through Friday. The department authorized the hiring of 16 additional staff, which will allow for after hours and weekend coverage. The hiring process in the County does not happen quickly, therefore a projected timeline would be around summer to have all those additional staff onboarded and trained to provide services seven days a week. According to the feedback gathered from the community, there is a need for weekends and after hours.

Commissioner Joe Leal thanked Mr. Zenner for the efforts to expand service hours to seven days a week to meet the needs of our veteran community.

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

Stephanie Stone, Acting Director, reported that MVA counselors filed over 700 claims totaling nearly \$700,000 dollars in retroactive pay and over 90,000 a month of awards in the month of March. For the Continuum of Care, there are 75 vouchers, 51 secured and 8 in the pipeline. MVA staff is receiving three to five referrals per week and working hard to fill in those last few vouchers. Ms. Stone would like to keep the Commission apprised on partnerships and initiatives that the department is working on. This month, MVA has developed a partnership with the David Lynch Foundation (DLF), introduced by our communication manager, Kathleen Piche'. David Lynch is a Hollywood director who started a foundation that focuses on the practice of Transcendental Meditation (TM). It is not a religious practice, but rather a science-based practice and are now providing free training to veterans. A grant became available for first responder firefighters and she is connecting them with Chief Osby. The David Lynch Foundation is holding a national study on veterans with PTSD and are partnering with VA's across the nation. MVA is working with them as it relates to our partner agencies such as VPAN, DMH, and others. Will be working with the foundation directly to train MVA staff and the practice of TM. The Commissioners are invited as well. For those who are interested in receiving that training, the information will go out as soon as we confirm a date.

There is an upswing in the new COVID variant. The Department of Public Health (DPH) is encouraging masks indoors and receiving the second booster in the community. If you want to check on your eligibility for the booster shot and where to get one, you can go to [myturn.ca.gov](http://myturn.ca.gov).

In terms of initiatives this month, the Women and Girls Initiative is working on the Gender Impact Assessment. Ms. Stone plans to bring in a staff member to talk about the study which is tracking three points; employment, clients served, and veterans in the military diversion courts. Beginning this month, she has invited staff to tell you more about what they are doing within the department. Kathleen Piche' is here to speak on the departments new website.

Kathleen Piche', Public Information Officer provided a little background about reworking the OR Project to reboot and to redesign the MVA website about a year ago. The money came from the ITF from CIO in the County. The technology fund was granted to MVA so that the website can be redone to make it more interactive and user friendly from the public standpoint. She shared a few tips on how to navigate the website by accessing the general email, visiting the department's social media sites, learning about our partners, information about each Supervisorial District and the Veterans Advisory Commission. Most veterans are seeking information about various benefits (compensation, pension, education, and healthcare), MVA field office locations, and how to set up an appointment with a VSO.

Acting Director Stone thanked Kathleen publicly for doing such a great job and stating that this is really a Yeoman's job. Next, she invited Jorge Reynoso, Building Manager to talk about the reopening of Patriotic Hall and the reopening and holding our Commission meetings.

Jorge Reynoso, Building Manager greeted the Commissioners and guests. He was excited to announce that Patriotic Hall will be opening up for services Monday through Friday, beginning on May 2, 2022. He has met with our three tenants and

they're aware of the schedule. Requests for events are being considered at this time. We will not be open for late evenings as we were Pre-COVID, due to limited staffing. Patriotic Hall is a one stop Service Center and we want to ensure that our veterans are provided with these wide range of services that include benefits, housing, employment, and mental health. Mr. Reynoso thanked Director Stone for her assistance in making sure that he has what he needs to manage this wonderful building.

Acting Director Stone stated that in accordance with Los Angeles Supervisors Board Orders, the month of April recognizes Cambodian Genocide Remembrance Day (April 17), Black Maternal Health Week (April 11-17), DMV Donate Life Month, and Military Child Month. These matters are important not only important to our Supervisors, but to our community as well. She welcomes all to take a moment to celebrate these dates. She asked the Commissioners to help collect a list of events that are going on in the County, as MVA has a rather small staff, but is interested in supporting the community in the best way through social media or departmental representation. For example, last Friday, DMH held a Mental Health Recovery day at the USS Iowa with some great organizations out there for veterans to visit.

Moving on to next month's events, on May 10<sup>th</sup>, the Department will be hosting the Carry the Load event at Patriotic Hall. Carry the Load is a nonprofit organization that honors those who paid the ultimate sacrifice through their service either while in the military or as first responders. They take a flag and begin a relay on April 28<sup>th</sup> that goes down the central route of the nation to meet in Texas on Memorial Day. They will be passing through the National Cemetery; LA Dodger Stadium to Patriotic Hall at approximately 5pm where a press conference will be held. On May 28<sup>th</sup>, Supervisor Barger of the 5<sup>th</sup> District is hosting the 2022 Tribute to Veterans and Military Families at Arcadia Park. MVA will attend and have counselors filing claims on site. As a reminder, Memorial Day is quickly approaching and the Department has received invitations for Five Points East Los Angeles, the National Cemetery, and Woodlawn's Celestial Gardens.

In response to today's topics, Ms. Stone has requested a briefing by Dimitri de Silva, who has been working on the topic of employment the employment policy related to the disability points for veterans. Ms. Stone would be honored to reach out to Mister Smith next week to discuss his request. Ms. Stone is a fan of Boeing and wanted to thank Ms. Hernandez for their continued efforts.

Commissioner Leal thanked MVA when it comes to claims. He sometimes meets with veterans who do not live in LA County and they have an appointment booked in a different county as far out as July and August. Yet somehow, the Department's mighty team will figure out a way on how to service these veterans in real time. He is always impressed on how Ms. Stephanie Stone and George Dixon are dedicated to reach out to these service members that were referred through Unite Us so quickly.

Acting Director Stone appreciates Commissioner Leal's, comments and stated that all the credit goes to George Dixon, Chris Duarte, and staff. The VSO's are bombarded with phone calls and walk-ins, on top of appointments. She is grateful that their hard work does not go unnoticed.

Commissioner Gutierrez gave kudos to Kathleen for putting in a lot of work into a functional website. He is looking forward to the building opening up again and seeing everyone. He thanked the building staff for keeping up with the maintenance over that last two years.

Acting Director Stone stated that the credit should go specifically to Jorge and Chuck, both of whom are very passionate about the upkeep of the building.

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

- Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
- University of California Los Angeles (UCLA)
- City of LA Office of Veterans Affairs
- NPower Technology Training
- TELACU Veterans Upward Bound
- LA Metro
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)
- Veterans Intern Program (VIP)

## **Good of the Order**

Commissioner Leal appreciates the information from the presenters, so that he is able to share it with troops during activities in Supervisorial District One. He will be attending an upcoming Wellness event through a partnership with Laidlaw's Harley-Davidson in the San Gabriel Valley with resources for veterans and family members. There will be another Wellness day, which will be a golfing event at the end of this month. He was excited to announce his favorite event called the Heroes Corner at the Fairplex in Pomona on May 6, 2022. There will be about 20 providers, to include MVA claims representatives and CalVet. There is an approximate of 60,000 projected participants to attend this event. Commissioner Leal thanked Mr. Jim Zenner and Director Stone for providing and supporting each Supervisorial District's upcoming events.

Commissioner Jackson-Kelley stated that last month was Women 's History Month and she attended Heroes Home at the Fairgrounds in Orange County; she recommends going out to check out their veteran display. There was also a tribute to the Six Triple Eight celebrating the Gold Congressional Medal that was signed by the President. She traveled to Dubai and was able to participate in the Women's History Celebration that they had in honor of Women's History Month.

Commissioner Gutierrez announced the 24th Annual Tribute to Veterans and Military Families in person event hosted by the 5th District, Supervisor Barger. This was one of the events that he attended when he left the military and he looks forward to it every year. Last year, it was done virtually, so it is nice to have everybody back out at Arcadia Park. He hopes to see everybody there. To register, please visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/24th-annual-tribute-to-veterans-military-families-registration-300986347267>.

Commissioner Anderson announced that on Saturday, April 23, 2022, at 9am, there will be an outreach event at Grace Chapel in Lancaster (Antelope Valley). It began 18 years ago as the Stand Down and evolved into a one-day outreach that has resources available from the VA, Mental Health, VA Veteran Center, up to 20 nonprofit organizations and volunteer groups. Veterans are welcomed and serviced with haircuts, dental work, and VA registrations. VPAN is coming in with a Wellness day.

Chair Allman stated he has been tracking the development of West LA VA for about seven years now. Two weeks ago, there was a federal advisory committee meeting in which the VA briefed out significant investment in the North campus. In Fiscal Year 2021 was approximately \$20,000,000 committed and there is approximately \$40,000,000 committed for Fiscal Year 2022. Half of the funds will go toward the installation of new utilities which was a significant barrier to the development of permanent supportive housing on campus. The American Rescue Plan contributed a large portion of the funds for this project. It is good to hear that the VA senior leadership is making the necessary investments on campus to get permanent supportive housing built. Roughly \$60,000,000 in 2 years, went towards this project and the project will need future funding to execute the vision of the draft Master Plan.

Moving on to Agenda Item 13, if there are no objections from the Commissioners, let's adjourn the meeting. Thank you very much to the Department and staff for enabling this meeting and we will see everyone next month.

Chair Allman adjourned the meeting at 3:21 p.m.

Stephanie Guerrero  
Executive Secretary  
April 13, 2022