

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Stephanie Stone
Acting Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, July 13, 2022

Present:

Commissioners

Dennis Anderson
Joe Leal
Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Jawana McFadden
Jennifer Campbell
John Gutierrez

Absent:

Commissioners

Anthony Allman
Brittanie Moore
Marcel Rodarte

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Stephanie Stone, Acting Director
Stephanie Guerrero, Executive Secretary

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

In the absence of Chair Allman, Commissioner Dennis Anderson (Acting Chair) called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Jawana McFadden, 2nd District.

Roll Call

There was a total of five Commissioners at the meeting during roll call – there was no quorum.

Acting Chair Anderson announced that the approval of the minutes would be held until there is a quorum of Commissioners at the meeting.

Chairman's Report

The notice of the Commission meeting was sent out on July 7, 2022 at 10:20 AM to about 28,000 recipients. If anyone is interested in being added to the mailing list, please email info@mva.lacounty.gov.

Each meeting recording can be found on MVA's YouTube channel. You will find it by searching LA County Military and Veterans Affairs. There are currently 23 subscribers with a goal to reach 100 subscribers to claim a custom URL.

The formation of the Bylaws Subcommittee is made up of the following Commissioners: Jennifer Campbell, Patricia Jackson-Kelley, Commissioner Dennis Anderson, and Chair Anthony Allman.

There will not be a regular meeting in August, due to the Commissioners' Retreat. Due to the rise in COVID cases, it is suggested that the retreat be held virtually. Therefore, the next public meeting will be held on September 14, 2022.

Public Comments

Latia Suttle is a retired Army veteran. Ms. Suttle would like to inquire if there will be monthly updates on changes with assistance to veterans in Family Court and Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). She wrote a bill proposal that is in the process of identifying veterans in Family Court and DCFS. The journey has been successful, but there is still another step before it reaches the Governor's desk. She would like to know if the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs will be providing any support. Commissioner Anderson stated that there will be a briefing later during the meeting from DCFS and perhaps the Department can provide clarification of this issue.

Ryan Thompson is a civil rights advocate for disabled and homeless veterans. He stated that the West LA VA developed housing which is approximately 916 acres of federal public land under the US Department of Veterans Affairs Management that is maintained for disabled, unemployed, and homeless veterans. There was a Federal Advisory Committee meeting for the Veterans and Community Oversight and Engagement Board (VCOEB) held on June 22, 2022; Anthony Allman, James Zenner, and Chi Szeto all sit on that Board. He believes that the veteran residents of the West LA Soldiers Home were segregated from the meeting by the Board due to a VA Police Officer who guarded the door and did not allow them into the public meeting. He stated that he signed up and provided a public comment, but then was ordered to be arrested, removed from the meeting, and then cited. He believes that Mr. Allman and Mr. Zenner are unfit to serve on the VCOEB and should be removed from their positions immediately.

Guest Speaker(s)

Anthony Rodriguez, CalVet gave an overview of the California Department of Veterans Affairs, which is the States version of the Federal VA. There are three pillars that make up the VA: Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), Veterans Healthcare Administration (VHA), and National Cemetery Administration (NCA). Veterans can apply for benefits at any of the following agencies; Federal- U.S. Department of VA, State- CalVet, County- Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, and National VSO's include DAV and Am Vets. Veterans and families are eligible to benefits such as College Fee Waivers, Home Loan, CalTAP, CA Vet Homes, etc. The Local Interagency Network Coordinator (LINC) covers eight regions which provide outreach to service members, veterans and families. Common LINC requests/questions are about VA/CA veteran education funding, which is why the most popular program is the College Fee Waiver Program for dependents; in order to be eligible, a veteran must have at least a 0% disability rating or higher. Dependents who live in California, their tuition is waived at any of the following state funded schools: UCs, CSUs, and Community Colleges. The CalVet Home Loan Program offers financing for veterans at below market rates and low or no down payment requirements. Please visit the website and watch video lessons to learn more about each benefit. LA County has the largest VSO staff than any other County where more claims have been filed with disability rated from 10-100% at MVA than any other office.

Caleb Beyah, Assistant Regional Administrator, Social Worker and Parent Advocate assigned to the Palmdale Regional Office. Mr. Beyah is a father of three, served in the Military for 24 years and worked in DCFS for 24 years. As a former veteran, he believes that the County should be handling families who fall under specialized categories with specialized care. Men and women who served this country, especially those who are struggling with mental health needs or unmet medical care should have staff assigned that are sensitive to their unique challenges, preferably other service members. This consideration and accommodations are made for other populations and veterans should be offered the same service and respect. He looks forward to continuing to support this group and other efforts to support veterans and their families.

Commissioner Jennifer Campbell later joined the meeting at 2:19pm. At this point, there was a total of six Commissioners present for the duration of the meeting; quorum present. No one made a motion to accept and approve the Minutes for May once a quorum was present.

Tina Luke, DCFS stated that the Department collaborates with the El Segundo base, who are the liaison in which DCFS makes contact when receiving referrals for child abuse and/or neglect at any of the military installations. Most offices are familiar in working with veterans and how to connect them with services in the community, however, there is no formal specialized unit that handles veteran/military cases. Nevertheless, DCFS does collaborate with veteran organizations. It would be helpful to work with a liaison within the Department, to assist with those cases due to the sensitive nature regarding disabilities that some veterans are experiencing in partnering with the VA. Having a point of contact at the VA would be useful in expediting services for veterans and families, such as TRICARE. Another helpful resource would be having connection with a local VSO to assist in helping our veteran community connect with services.

Commissioner Leal stated that he was honored to serve with Company Commander Caleb Beyah and he is happy that this discussion is taking place because it is long overdue.

Acting Chair Anderson went on record and made note that it is on the table to identify a liaison between MVA and DCFS/

Jim Zenner, VPAN stated that the first annual report went out last month in June 2022. VPAN has served 2,555 veterans and families in the field and has received over 7,000 calls on the support line. He congratulated all 70 peers working in each of the Supervisorial District (SD) teams. The support line has taken over 1,000 calls each month and the goal is to reach 2,000 calls every month; this is the main access point for VPAN. Anyone who needs assistance should call this line 7 days a week from 9am to 8pm including holidays to get another veteran or a family member peer on the line to provide support and information about resources and linkage. Mr. Zenner is most excited about moving toward creating a true QRF model here in Los Angeles where we can deploy a peer team 7 days a week out to veterans and families in need. Peers should be able to respond in real time, including weekends by the end of this year. The number of unduplicated veteran and family members both in Community Based Organizations (CBO) and DMH broken down for each SD. High risk veterans are tracked for suicide through a partnership and an MOU with Vision 22 in the local VAs Suicide Prevention Program. A Suicide Prevention Coordinator reaches out to follow up within three months to ensure that these veterans are getting what they need. High risk referrals are sent to VPAN from the mental evaluation team from LASD and VA or discharges from a hospitalization. A breakdown of each SD in terms of gender and age; peers are doing a great job in reaching out to the younger veterans, working to execute a plan to reach out to the older veterans also. In looking at male versus female, just close to 30% in the recent 2020 census with the women veteran population at about 9%. There is a large focus on recruiting women veterans to join the teams to support women veterans who prefer to speak with a female veteran when receiving services. Some veterans that were housed from January-May 2022 were placed in emergency housings like a hotel or CTRS on the West LA VA campus in interim housing. Healthcare for homeless veterans are then linked to higher level of care, such as CalVet Home, assisted living, or skilled nursing facility matched to permanent housing. There is Rally Point (RP) in each of the SDs and another focus is to host more events to increase engagement as well as the number of foot traffic. Community Access Point (CAP) is where teams visit spaces where veterans and family members already are, for example: at a Reserve Unit, National Guard Unit, Veteran Resource Center at a Community College. There has been an increase to the number of visits to the DMH VPAN landing page. In closing, Mr. Zenner is very excited to share that VPAN is working with the VA directly on the branching out the Veterans Coordinated Entry System. This VA is really going to take the lead, whereas LAHSA has been the lead in the past. In conversations, many constituents across LA County do not want to travel to West LA to get housing services. Working on a negotiation to have VA HUD VASH and SSVF grant providers at each RP to make it easier for veterans. The VA is open to increasing access and VPAN is capitalizing on it.

Bylaws Committee

Acting Chair Anderson stated that the construction of the Bylaws will be generated by members who volunteer to be on the Bylaws Subcommittee. The members will submit a draft for review and input on any amendments. As a reminder, Chairman Allman offered to serve on the subcommittee, but not as the Chair; other Commissioners who made themselves available were Jennifer Campbell, Patricia Jackson-Kelly, as well as Dennis Anderson.

Commissioner Leal made a motion to approve members of Bylaws Subcommittee and Commissioner McFadden seconded. Stephanie Guerrero went down the roll call and all received 6 yes votes. Motion carries.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Stephanie Stone, Acting Director, provided the following updates:

- CACVSO Conference in San Luis Obispo (June 20-24) – rec of tribal lands (NAVA), CalVet processes, VetPro database updates legislative updates, and best practices for food and clothing resources
- Congressman Lieu's Virtual Elected Officials Council – overview of Master Plan at West LA
- Veterans Claims – continues working remotely, semi-annual report 07/2021-07/2022
- Building Operations – facility cost analysis challenge; reduction in operation hours from M-F, five days a week down to Tu-Th, 3 days a week and will be open late on first and third Wednesdays until 8:30pm for Am. Legion and County Council.
- Communications – MVA can be reached via email, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Linked In

Agenda Items that are Deferred to Next Month's Meeting

- LA Metro
- LA County Dept. of Human Resources - Veterans Intern Program (VIP)
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)

Good of the Order

Commissioner Anderson stated that Chairman Allman invited him to serve as Acting Chair during his absence. Last month, he went to Normandy for the 78th Anniversary of the D-Day landings. He is a part of a nonprofit group, called The Liberty Jump Team, which is mostly airborne veterans rangers who make mass parachute jumps from C47 WWII vintage aircraft. He had a wonderful time in support of about 16 surviving WWII veterans, as well as participating in the ceremonies around Normandy. It was such a moving experience.

Commissioner Leal congratulated MVA, as they are the number one recipient of referrals in regards filing disability claims. Taking place in SD 1, are job fairs, food distributions and outreach to the reserve units to educate on the resources available. He is very appreciative to all veteran advocates, such as Anthony Rodriguez from Calvet, who's very active in our support system. There are many reservists and guardsmen facing hardship, who are dependent on the community. The Commission's role is to connect service members and their families to community resources. Mr. Leal stated that senior veterans are having a hard time financially, as the economy is increasing, but their paychecks are not. Last, he stated that there's a lot of to be done and he thanked everyone for their advocacy.

Commissioner Jackson-Kelley made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner McFadden seconded. With no objections, motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:07 p.m. was approved.

Stephanie Guerrero
Executive Secretary
July 13, 2022