

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Jim Zenner
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, September 14, 2022

Present:

Commissioners

Anthony Allman
Joe Leal
Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Jawana McFadden
Chi Szeto
John Gutierrez
Dennis Anderson

Absent:

Commissioners

Marcel Rodarte

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Jim Zenner, Director
Stephanie Guerrero, Executive Secretary

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Allman called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by newly appointed Commissioner Chi Szeto, 4th District.

Roll Call

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

Commissioner Jawana McFadden, 2nd District, later joined the meeting at 1:48 p.m., which changed the total to seven Commissioners at the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Commissioner Dennis Anderson to accept the Minutes for May 11, 2022 and July 13, 2022 and seconded by Commissioner Patricia Jackson-Kelley; a roll call with no objections and six yes votes, the motion passed.

Chairman's Report

The notice of the Commission meeting was sent out on September 8, 2022 at 10:21am. If anyone is interested to subscribe to the mailing list, please email info@mva.lacounty.gov.

Each meeting recording can be found on MVA's YouTube channel by searching "LA County Military and Veterans Affairs." There are currently 29 subscribers with a goal to reach 100 subscribers to claim a custom URL.

There was no public meeting last month due to the Commissioners' Retreat. The retreat was centered around discussion of the Commission Bylaws. The goal is to have them adopted by the next meeting.

Public Comments

None.

Guest Speaker(s)

John Mina, Human Resources Analyst, Department of Human Resources (DHR) thanked Director Jim Zenner and Chairman Allman for inviting him to talk about the Veterans Internship Program (VIP) that began in 2007 by former Board of Supervisor Mike Antonovich. It is a 12 to 24 months full-time, paid internship program with LA County, that is available to qualified veterans of the United States Armed Forces. With this program, veterans are given the opportunity to train on the job and get work experience that will enable them to compete for permanent positions in the County.

There is no experience required and those who have a DD214 or any official documentation by any branch of the Armed Forces are eligible to apply for the VIP. There are six specialties in the Veterans Intern Program; Administrative Support, Craft Support, Heavy Maintenance and Operational Support, IT Support, Office and Clerical Support, and Outreach and Advocacy., which is the latest or the newest of all the subspecialties that replaced.

Uh technology support. The VIP includes benefits, such as medical, dental, paid vacation and holidays, sick and bereavement leave at a very competitive salary with the technical training and guidance in the workplace. If there are any veterans looking for employment with LA County, please visit the website at www.hr.lacounty.gov or www.governmentjobs.com to create a profile. Anyone can apply for open competitive positions and fill out an interest card that sends email notifications prior to a job opening. It is very important to make sure that the contact information is current so that the applicant can be notified. To learn more, please email veteransinterns@hr.lacounty.gov or call (213) 974-2382.

Camille Mahlkecht, Director, Angel City Sports stated that they provide free adaptive sports programming for kids, adults and veterans with physical disabilities or visual impairments across LA County and beyond. They have been a nonprofit for about 8 years and have discovered that they don't have a high percentage of veterans that participate in their programming. Per general feedback, they found out that most veterans don't identify as having a disability and therefore, don't want to play adaptive sports, nor learn to play with children or civilians. Taking that into consideration, Angel City Sports wanted to create a special event where the veteran and first responder community could feel empowered and welcomed to try out some of these adaptive sports. There will be a two-day sports weekend held on November 19-20th at Cerritos College and Compton Hunting and Fishing Club, specifically for veterans and first responders with and without disabilities for the entire community to come together, to connect, and to better understand the resources that are available to them. They have partnered with Operation Rebound, which is a branch of the Challenged Athletes Foundation based in San Diego who is committed to provide accommodation support for anyone interested in attending, but either lives far away and needs to stay at a hotel or may need transportation support, such as gas or bus fare. Registration for the event will open next week, so feel free to come out to meet new people and enjoy something new in a different way. Again, the intent is to help those who need to play adaptive sports or want to stay active. This will be an annual event in which veterans and first responders are encouraged to participate.

Ms. Mahlkecht introduced Clayton Frech, Founder, Angel City Sports thanked the Commission for allowing them the opportunity to present and share their passion for what they do and about the power of sports to change lives and bring people together. With this event, he is excited to build relationships and partner with other Veterans Services Organizations, Government, Nonprofits, etc.

Anh Tran, VPAN was not present at the meeting. Commissioner Joe Leal gave a briefing on behalf of VPAN instead. He stated that one of the biggest areas of focus is ensuring that VPAN is developing and growing the Community Access Points (CAP). He attended a faith-based related Homeless Summit and represented Supervisorial District One. There are many faith-based organizations and churches that are producing their own housing with different government funding. Mr. Leal believes that we shouldn't wait for veterans to come find us, but rather, go out and collaborate so that resources can be multiplied. If we work together, we can entice them to come and take suicide courses/intervention called Assist Classes by JVS to different networks such as SoCal Grantmakers that offer opportunities that address homelessness, unemployment, and mental health. It can be done through a collaboration of partners, with DMH, VA, and/or MVA. There are still many issues and much work to be done to tackle food insecurities, housing, and disability claims. He is very glad to have Mr. Jim Zenner as the new Director of MVA because he understands and will step out to address any issues/concerns presented to MVA.

Veteran Achievement

Chairman Anthony Allman stated that the Commission was going to recognize a Veteran Achievement through a virtual setting, instead of the typical scroll being presented in person by the Board of Supervisors.

On behalf of Supervisor Hahn and the Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles, Commissioner Chi Szeto extends congratulations and well wishes on this momentous occasion for winning first place in the multimedia category and the National Veterans Creative Arts competition at the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs to retired Master Linda Hicks of the U.S. Air Force. Linda was given an opportunity to say a few words and she stated that the video would showcase the value of the Veterans Digital Photography Therapy Program and the benefits that veterans achieve.

Commissioner Szeto announced the other winner, retired Staff Sergeant Raine Jackson, who served in the Army and the Army National Guard. Raine was also given an opportunity to share a few words and she stated that she was reminded of how grateful she is for the people who care about and want to assist veterans through adaptive sports and digital photography. She herself, has participated in adaptive sports, specifically, sit down tennis, where she was selected to go to the Balboa Tennis Club Championship and won. She is excited to help get the word out and volunteer to assist other veterans alike. Mr. Szeto thanked Raine and stated that the Commission looks forward to having her help push out more information to fellow veterans. He congratulated the ladies once again on their achievement.

Bylaws Committee Update

Anthony Allman brought forth a discussion on the draft Bylaws. Following up after the retreat, he received feedback and guidance about modifications that he shared with the Commissioners. He believes that by next meeting, the Commission will have something solid to present to the public regarding the Commission Bylaws. The first edit consisted of the change of command. According to some valuable feedback during the retreat, instead of imposing a Senior/Junior model, the District Commissioners should be allowed to make their own decision on who wants to serve Chair or Vice Chair; that was incorporated that into the Bylaws.

The second edit consisted of a mechanism by which the Commission can recommend a particular action to the Board of Supervisors. For example, if the Commission wanted to recommend that the LA County safety departments participate in the Veteran Internship Program right now, there is no mechanism to initiate that action. However, when the Bylaws are ratified, hopefully there will be a formal process to do so. That's it for a brief update on the draft Bylaws.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Jim Zenner, Director, thanked the Board of Supervisors (BOS), Commissioners, and everyone for the support. He provided the following updates:

- Attended CalVet Leadership Summit in San Diego (October 11-14) – biggest take away was that veterans are not a federal problem
- Conducting one-on-one meetings with each staff – to learn more about MVA
- Goals and Vision
 - Improve customer service
 - Downsize field offices
 - Getting veterans benefits and changing lives

- Keeping veterans from falling into homelessness
- Connecting with CEO Legislative Affairs
- VPAN has proven that veterans should be assisted by veterans or family peers who understand the culture
- Filling the 12 vacancies (9-Veterans Claims Assistant, 2-Intermediate Typist Clerk, Administrative Services Manager II)
- Assess workflow and restructure the organizational chart
- Open line of communication with the community at Director@mva.lacounty.gov
- Workplace culture (fun environment where staff are proud of the work they do)
- Accountability (making sure expectations are met)
- Fairness
- Building Operations (open Tuesdays-Thursdays and open late on 3rd Wednesday until 9pm)
- Pursuing shared costs with DMH and DEO to offset some of the building operations costs

Agenda Items that are Deferred to Next Month's Meeting

- LA Metro
- Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA)
- LA County Department of Human Resources (DHR) – Veteran Hiring Preference

Good of the Order

Commissioner Leal stated that he was devastated to learn about the fire at the Tiny Homes in West LA Vet Village, but was he was glad that no one was hurt; it would be nice to get an update about this topic. He is planning to attend an event at LA Trade Tech in the next two weeks. If anyone is looking for similar events, he recommends contacting your local VPAN, join the email distribution list, follow MVA on Facebook, or visit the YouTube channel. There is a lot of great information that is shared about upcoming events.

Chairman Anthony Allman responded to Commissioner Leal that he will work on getting a briefing from West LA VA about Tiny Homes. He stated that the 2022 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count decreased by 6.1% within LA Continuum of Care. He pointed out that the count is not accurate because there are four Continuums of Care total in LA County. In terms of looking at LA County as a whole, the veteran family homelessness increased at an alarming 24% from 2020. This would be a great time to get LAHSA to come out and talk about veterans homelessness.

Commissioner Chi Szeto thanked the Chair. He is currently attending the Calvet Leadership Summit, along with other Commissioners as well. If anyone was able to attend, it is a great opportunity to connect with the State and many VA colleagues. Again, it was a really great opportunity to network and hear from other providers since about 30-40% of the people and service providers in attendance were from the Los Angeles area.

Commissioner Gutierrez welcomed Director Jim Zenner and stated that he was in attendance at the CalVet Leadership Summit as well. He is super excited to see what Mr. Zenner is going to do in his new role, especially with integrating MVA with other County Departments and seeing how they all collaborate together. LA had a large presence at the summit, from the Commissioners to MVA and DMH. It was nice to see the LA representatives here in San Diego.

Commissioner Anderson stated that Chinese American WW II veteran Mr. Lou Moore was awarded a Congressional Gold Medal last year along with other surviving members; Mr. Moore will be having his 100th birthday in about 6 weeks on October 30th. In regards to events in the 5th District, the Antelope Valley will have a mobile Vietnam Memorial (which is half of the scale of the Vietnam Memorial in Washington DC), it has been presented at sites and venues all over Southern and Eastern California. There will be an upcoming car show that will raise funds for veterans at Palmdale City Hall from 12pm to 4pm. Last, there is a VPAN outreach at the VFW coming up on Saturday.

Chairman Allman adjourned the meeting at 3:11 p.m.

Stephanie Guerrero
Executive Secretary
September 14, 2022