

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Jim Zenner
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, December 21, 2022

Present:

Commissioners

Anthony Allman
Joe Leal
Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Jawana McFadden
Chi Szeto
John Gutierrez
Alfonso Noyola

Absent:

Commissioners

Dennis Anderson

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 Commissioner Patricia Jackson-Kelley, 2nd District.

Roll Call

Seven Commissioners were at the meeting during the roll call; a quorum was present. This was the first meeting where Commissioner Alfonso Noyola officially sat at the Commission table.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Commissioner John Gutierrez to accept the Minutes of November 21, 2022, seconded by Commissioner Patricia Jackson-Kelley; a roll call with unanimous votes, the motion passed.

Chairman's Report

Chair Allman stated that the notice of the Commission meeting was sent out on December 14, 2022, at 1:59 pm via GovDelivery from MVA@subscriptions.lacounty.gov. MVA is working on a request to add a subscription box to the website. In the meantime, please send an email to info@mva.lacounty.gov to request to be added to the distribution list.

MVA's YouTube channel has grown with a total of 50 subscribers. Each meeting recording and other departmental content can be found on YouTube by searching "LA County Military and Veterans Affairs. The social media branding of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube was slightly modified to @LACMVA to make it easier to find the Department. Chair Allman announced that there will be a Special Meeting on January 3rd at 1:30 pm to discuss the LA Metro Art Project at the Westwood VA Hospital Station. The notice of the meeting is scheduled to go out after the holiday.

Mr. Allman addressed the recent briefing from LAHSA regarding Veteran's Homelessness, noting that the data summary for the Continuum of Care for LA County does not include Long Beach, Pasadena, and Glendale. He provided a comparison between the 2020 and 2022 greater LA homeless count showing a decrease in the Continuum of Care and a 1% increase at the County level.

Public Comments

None.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Jim Zenner, Director, provided the following updates:

- Welcomed newly appointed 4th District Commissioner Alfonso Noyola, U.S. Air Force veteran
- New Supervisor Lindsey Horvath was sworn in to represent the 3rd District
- Newly elected Sheriff Robert Luna
- Los Angeles Trade Technical College (LATTC) has a new Culinary Arts Center and is still interested in the veteran culinary program but not interested in having the classes at Patriotic Hall; will continue the discussion to negotiate
- Army 311 Sustainment Command Dinner event on December 10th
- New City Mayor Karen Bass attended the Board Meeting and received unanimous support for the Declaration of Emergency around homelessness
- New VA Homeless Hotline provides same-day service at 310-268-3350
- Reconfiguring the lobby where staff will provide friendly concierge service
- George Dixon was promoted to CVSO for Orange County
- Marketing campaign began in May 2022
- CALVET California Veterans Health Initiative (CVHI) to address veteran suicide

Background – The Department of Military and Veteran Affairs (MVA) has forty-five budgeted positions and consists of three divisions: Building, Veteran Services, and Administration.

1. Bob Hope Patriotic Hall building is the last County veteran memorial building in the country and is run by our building manager and two additional staff. Custodial and security staff are contracted and are instrumental in the upkeep.
2. Veteran Services consist of California Department of Veteran Affairs (CALVET) accredited veteran benefit representatives. The division consists of two supervisors and twenty-two accredited representatives who are unique in the fact that they can process both state and federal benefits.
3. Administration consists of the Director, Chief Deputy Director, and various administrative support staff. The division is responsible for policy recommendations, human resources, finances/budget, and strategic collaboration with other County departments and various Chief Executive Office initiatives.

First 100-Days – He was appointed as the Director of Military and Veteran Affairs by the Board on August 29, 2022. Immediately, he met each individual staff throughout the first 100 days to gain insight into their professional goals, their needs, and ideas to improve our services. This helped to create action items to improve processes and ensure staff had what they needed from the department to succeed. Here were the Department's priorities:

- Need to hire all 13 current vacancies
- Conducted at least 10 events to engage the community and stakeholders
- Engaged and explored potential partnerships with County, State, and Federal partners to promote Board priorities
- Expanded access for homeless services countywide to reduce veteran isolation and suicide
- Created and invested in CEO Legislative Affairs to promote sound legislation and recommendations for Board consideration
- Strengthened communication and collaboration with tenants through monthly team-building events
- Participated and provided leadership as a member of the California Association of County Veteran Service Officers (CACVSO)
- Communicated expectations around performance and collaboration with staff

There has been significant progress in all priorities as the department moves into the calendar year 2023.

The Department's core mission focuses on improving customer service, access to benefits, and communication. Future priorities are to engage with various stakeholders including the LA County Veteran Advisory Commission to gather perspectives on the needs of the community. The Department will assess and revamp the mission/vision statement and Department Strategic Plan to align with the County's Strategic Plan and Board priorities. Here are the Department's future priorities:

- Build a parking structure with veteran housing at Bob Hope Patriotic Hall
- Establish veteran services at the Santa Clarita Art and Veteran Center
- Expand access to VA healthcare and benefits
- Specialize outreach to women, LGBTQ, and minority veteran subpopulations
- Explore and expand services to an aging veteran population with the Department of Aging and Disability
- Increase the use of the building and the number of visitors of Bob Hope Patriotic Hall by the military and veteran community
- Communication with CEO of Legislative Affairs to track and make recommendations on legislation
- Increase participation in homelessness initiatives with other County Departments, VA, and City
- Ongoing collaboration with the Department of Mental Health (DMH), Office of Violence Prevention (OVP), Department of Public Health (DPH), Department of Medical Examiner-Coroner, and VA VISN 22 through the Veteran Suicide Review Team (VSRT) to reduce veteran suicide in LA County.
- Rebuild the County's relationship with CALVET to expand collaboration through the California Veteran Health Initiative (CVHI) to address veteran suicide
- Work with the Department of Public Social Services to reach low-income veterans
- Continue streamlining services in partnership with DMH Veteran Peer Access Network (VPAN)
- Support County staff who are veterans, active reservists, or national guard, and their family members through collaboration with other County departments
- Work with the Department of Human Resources (DHR) and Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) to create more economic opportunities through employment and small business for veterans, transitioning service members, active reservists, national guard, and their spouses.
- Explore options to prevent hospitalization, justice involvement, homelessness, and suicide by investing in solutions that upstream and promote well-being and successful transition out of the military

The Department will reopen Bob Hope Patriotic Hall to 5 days a week beginning January 9th, 2023. This will allow many veterans and families to participate in events, play basketball, and receive services after normal business hours every Wednesday until 8 pm. The office hours will be Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday 8 am to 5 pm, and Wednesday 8 am to 8 pm.

MVA is currently working with the Board, CEO of Real Estate, and County Counsel about renting out Patriotic Hall to the public and using the revenue to offset building costs and bring more attention and awareness to the Department. Veterans and veteran-serving organizations would not have to pay for use of the space as, the Department wants to continue to be a place to support VSOs, community partners, and the well-being of those we serve.

This was not an easy decision, however, due to a decrease in productivity during telework, the Department will be fully back in-person as of January 23, 2023. Claims will continue to be filed virtually from various locations. After hearing from the community, they want more in-person availability.

Most importantly, the staff has been through a lot of change, ranging from stressful event coordination to sitting down with veterans and hearing their stories. Director Zenner and Chief Deputy Stone are committed to taking care of staff and looking for ways to better support them. The Director appreciates all the support from the Veterans' Advisory Commission, fellow County Departments, CEO, and the Board during the first 100 days. It has been a great start to the long journey to continually do better for the military and veteran community here in Los Angeles County.

Agenda Items that are Deferred for Future Meetings

Chairman Allman stated that this will be his last meeting as Chair.

Commissioner Jackson-Kelley expressed her gratitude to him for transforming the Commission and getting the recognition they deserve.

Commissioner Leal agreed with Ms. Jackson-Kelley and thanked Director Zenner for his humble service.

- LA Metro – Patricia Jackson-Kelley
- Commission Services; Commission structure, process upon entrance, and multiple Commissions working together to make a formal recommendation – Chi Szeto
- US Department of Labor (DOL), Women's Bureau – John Gutierrez
- Animal Care and Control; discounted registration fee for disabled veterans – Anthony Allman
- CALVET, Pathway to Citizenship – Joe Leal
- Community Colleges; veteran/student homelessness – Anthony Allman
- VA Uber Medical expanding – Joe Leal
- In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) – Joe Leal
- Homeless Initiative; benefits advocacy strategy – Anthony Allman
- LA City Mayor's Office – Joe Leal

Good of the Order

Commissioner Joe Leal attended the Army 311 Sustainment Command Dinner on December 10, 2022, and complimented Director Zenner and his staff for representing the Department, the Commission, and veterans very well. Mr. Leal admires the way that the Director takes the time to speak to people and listen to them no matter how busy he is.

Commissioner McFadden stated that it has been an adventurous year with lots of changes and more to come going into 2023. She thanked the Chair for his leadership, insight, and strong voice, which was helpful to navigate through making the Commission's presence known. She looks forward to doing more partnerships in the coming years.

Chairman Anthony Allman was excited to accomplish three big items:

1. Communication through the departmental mailing list called GovDelivery to broadcast the Commission meetings
2. Enacted the first set of bylaws
3. Adopted the first recommendation to the Board of Supervisors

These items prove that the Commission has the ability to come together, collaborate, and discuss to bring forth to the Board for their consideration. The process is working as it was intended to and that is something worth celebrating. He stated that he appreciates everyone's cooperation, input, and collaboration. He is thankful to be working with all Commissioners.

Commissioner Szeto is grateful for the leadership of both Chair Allman leadership and Director Zenner. He attended the Toys for Tots event in the City of Pico Rivera, where he met the Mayor and Sheriff Luna. He is excited to connect with Commissioner Noyola to discuss the 4th District goals with an emphasis on homelessness next year.

Commissioner Noyola stated that he is honored to serve on this Commission and is humbled by this opportunity to continue his public service addressing issues relating to veterans and families. Although he is still learning, he is ready to move forward together for the good of the community.

Commissioner John Gutierrez thanked Chair Allman and stated that it's been a pleasure to serve on the Commission under his leadership. He wished everyone a Happy Holiday.

Chairman Allman stated that it was a pleasure to serve as Chair of this Commission. He made a distinction between the difference between the upcoming Special Meeting on January 3, 2023, and the next regular meeting on January 18, 2023; he reminded everyone that the special meeting is intended to hear from Metro regarding the art project at West LA VA and the regular meetings are scheduled on the third Wednesdays every month. He adjourned the meeting at 2:39 p.m.

Stephanie Guerrero
Executive Secretary
December 21, 2022