

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Jim Zenner
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, January 18, 2023

Present:

Commissioners

Anthony Allman
Dennis Anderson
Joe Leal
Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Chi Szeto
John Gutierrez
Alfonso Noyola

Absent:

Commissioners

Jawana McFadden

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Jim Zenner, Director
Stephanie Guerrero, Executive Secretary

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Szeto at 1:31 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Allman, 3rd District.

Roll Call

Seven Commissioners were at the meeting during the roll call; a quorum was present.

Approval of Minutes

Motion made by Commissioner Alfonso Noyola to accept the Minutes of December 21, 2022, seconded by Commissioner Anderson; a roll call with unanimous votes, the motion passed.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Szeto stated that the delivery notice for this meeting went out last week. If you want to subscribe, please send your email to info@mva.lacounty.gov. Every meeting recording is posted on the YouTube channel under LA County Military and Veteran Affairs.

Public Comments

Diego Garcia a veteran of the 4th District is opposed to the artist selected to paint the mural for Metro's Purple Line Extension at the VA. Mr. Garcia believes that based on the selected artist's previous work, Metro did not do its due diligence by including the veteran community in this important matter. He is actively involved in veteran organizations at the VA, Marine Corps League, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), and American Legion. He believes that none of these organizations knew about the mural and artist.

Rob Reynolds, a veteran from the 3rd District suggested that guest speaker presentations could happen before public comments, so that way the public would have a chance to comment on them. Mr. Reynolds believes that Metro can do a better job of outreach moving forward and include veterans in the decision making process. He hopes that this Advisory Commission takes everyone's public comment into account and comes up with a good recommendation to correct this.

Jay Morales is a veteran who stated that Patriotic Hall has a significant historical value. There were plans initiated in the 1990s, to convert the building into a national landmark. At that time, the Director decided to wait until the building was renovated to declare it as a national treasure. Mr. Morales believes it is time to commence the process and to declare Patriotic Hall as a national historical monument, just in time for its 100th Centennial, in July 2024, as it takes a minimum of 15 to 18 months to acquire national landmark status.

Alfred Areyan, a veteran from the 3rd District does not agree with what's happening at Metro and agrees with his fellow veterans that their voices need to be heard.

Mr. Sennett is a member of the public who is questioning the authority of the Veterans Advisory Commission and its jurisdiction on the national land and whether Metro has chosen a veteran artist or not.

Dennis Tucker, Director of Human Resources (HR) at Metro, is a former Commissioner of this body from the 2nd District. Mr. Tucker joined the meeting to highlight that he is spearheading the Fair Chance and Justice Impacted Employment Opportunity program. He is working with communities and agencies that have fair chance employment candidates to make sure they are eligible for employment at Metro. It is important to create a hiring pipeline for justice impacted individuals, including veterans. The creation of a program involves taking unhoused individuals off the street and getting them into proper case management and employment with Metro.

Guest Speakers

Jennifer Fritzel, Program Analyst, Department of Labor (DOL) gave an overview of the Women's Bureau which is the only federal agency that champions policy change and standards to safeguard the interests of working women and their families. It is broken up into six different regions and covers the sixth region also known as the Western Region which consists of Alaska, Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Arizona, Nevada, California, Guam, and the American Samoa islands. Here are a few priorities this fiscal year: 1) Closing the gender and racial wage gap, 2) Eliminating the caregiving penalty that women face, and 3) Addressing discrimination in the workplace.

The Women's Bureau accomplishes its mission through a combination of research and policy analysis, grants, and stakeholder engagements. There are two grant programs. The first one is the Fostering Access Rights and Education (FARE) grant and the second grant is the Women in Apprenticeship and Non-traditional Occupations (WANTO).

Ms. Fritzel stated that there is a lot of room for partnerships to uplift available community resources to women veterans depending on program needs and offer the necessary support and educate them on how to access resources and know their workplace rights.

Marlon Walker, Community Relations Manager for Metro's Purple Line, provided an overview of Metro's Station Naming Policy which include four principles:

1. Transit system content - names will reflect the property's location, relative to the entire transit system, and not duplicate elsewhere.
2. Property area - provide specific information about the property's location relative to the surrounding area.
3. Neighborhood identity - acknowledge the communities and neighborhood's services by the station and stops.
4. Simplicity - names will be short, easily recognizable, and fit for signage and mapping.

Once a project is approved by the Metro Board, the preliminary engineering phase begins outreach in the community surveying people on what they think the station should be named. After that, it takes several months to form a focus group comprised of both transit system riders and nonriders from the general public. Then the group will submit the final set of potential names for the Metro Board to review before adopting the official station names. Metro will not begin that process until at least the spring of 2025. All (individuals, community groups, and veterans service organizations) are welcome to submit their thoughts and ideas on what the station should be named before the Metro Board makes its final decision.

Clare Haggarty, Metro Art and Design, Senior Manager, Transportation Planning shared that she was a former employee for the County of Los Angeles, Department of Arts and Culture and worked with artist Kent Twitchell who did the mural in the lobby at Patriotic Hall. Ms. Haggarty provided an overview of the artist selection for the Westwood/VA Hospital Metro Station which consists of a 10-person art panel of community stakeholders which included a veteran. This project is federally funded and open to eligible artists in the U.S., therefore, a national search was conducted where over 1500 artist submitted their qualifications. As for outreach, Metro worked with local partners such as the VA to share information with their contacts through workshops, postings, colleges, local and national publications, and through various social media platforms. The search was narrowed down to three artists: 1) Francesco Cemeti, 2) Sandow Birk, and 3) Eloy Torres.

In response to questions from the Commission, the presenters stated that they did not receive the list of questions from the Commission as promised. However, this project is still a work in progress and they will wait to receive the list and ask to have some time to do some research and get their responses back over to the Commission in a timely manner.

Chair Szeto gave a friendly reminder that the recently passed bylaws permit the Commission to consult, advise, and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. This Commission serves as a means of communication within LA County for veteran constituents to voice their concerns. Last, he mentioned that the station is on the VA property and that more veteran engagement would be beneficial. The Commission Chair thanked Metro for its extensive and informative presentation.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Jim Zenner, Director, provided the following updates:

- Metro Update - apologized for the mishap in Metro not receiving the questions in advance, however, will ensure that they receive the questions immediately after this meeting.
- Teams Restrictions/Controls - the functionality and controls will be changed in Teams will be changed for future meetings so that speakers are treated with respect and not interrupted.
- Commission Update – will return in person on a quarterly basis, committed to ensuring those meetings are streamed, and that we maintain public interaction virtually and keep posting videos online as designed.
- Training - the Commission has outstanding training to complete. MVA will work on getting online access.
- Town Halls - feedback from each SD Commission around the needs of constituents to start the planning of quarterly town halls out in the community.

In response to the questions from the Commission, Director Zenner stated that MVA would reach out to Commission Services and get that clarity about returning to in-person meetings.

Agenda Items that are Deferred to Next Month's Meeting

1. Commission Services; Cross Commission Cooperation – Chi Szeto
2. Animal Care and Control; Veteran Discount – Anthony Allman
3. CALVET; Pathway to Citizenship – Joe Leal

4. LA Community College District; Student Veteran Homelessness – Anthony Allman
5. VA; SSFV Rideshare Transportation – Joe Leal
6. LA County, Department of Public Social Services; In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) – Joe Leal
7. LA County Homeless Initiative; FY 22/23 Funding Strategies – Anthony Allman

Good of the Order

Commissioner Leal stated that this was an informative meeting.

Commissioner Allman believes that the Commission has illuminated some flaws in the Metro selection process. He urged his fellow Commissioners to consider moving forward with a recommendation.

Commissioner Jackson-Kelley thanked Metro for their informative presentation and requested additional information on the renaming of the station.

Commissioner Noyola and Gutierrez thanked everyone for the productive and informative meeting.

Commissioner Anderson stated that he is looking forward to continuing the discussion at the next meeting.

Chairman Szeto gave a friendly reminder that if considering a recommendation, it needs to be submitted to the Executive Committee at least two weeks before the next Commission meeting and hopes to have a robust discussion and forward to the Board of Supervisors.

The meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Stephanie Guerrero
Executive Secretary
January 18, 2023