

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION**

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



**Jim Zenner  
Director**

**MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
Wednesday, July 19, 2023**

**Present:**

**Commissioners**

Chi Szeto  
Alfonso Noyola  
Hugh E. Crooks Jr.  
Rocio Palmero  
Patricia Jackson-Kelley  
Jawana McFadden  
Anthony Allman  
John Gutierrez  
Dennis Anderson

**Absent:**

**Commissioners**

**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 1:38 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Vice Chair Noyola, 4<sup>th</sup> District.

**Roll Call**

Nine (9) Commissioners were at the meeting during the roll call and a quorum was present.

**Approval of Minutes**

Motion made by Commissioner Jackson-Kelley to accept the Minutes for May 17, 2023, and seconded by Commissioner Crooks Jr. A roll call with unanimous votes, the motion passed.

## **Chairman's Report**

Chair Chi Szeto stated:

### **1. GovDelivery Notice of Meeting**

- 7/14/23
- From: [MVA@subscriptions.lacounty.gov](mailto:MVA@subscriptions.lacounty.gov)
- To subscribe email: [info@mva.lacounty.gov](mailto:info@mva.lacounty.gov)

### **2. YouTube Channel**

- "LA County Military and Veterans Affairs"
- 63 Subscribers

### **3. Follow up from Metro**

- Cannot restrict procurements to veterans
- Looking at more workshops in 2024
- Securing space for the Meet the Artist event
  - Exhibiting art at Bob Hope to use for County
- Launching Call to Artists for Metro Artist Pool
  - The challenge is the moral injury for some artists and different activities for veterans to be included. The federal advisory committee sent recommendations to VA, secretary confirmed the written correspondence. Clearly, the selection process is problematic and Metro's response was inadequate.
- Further discussion regarding exhibiting art by veterans at Bob Hope Patriotic Hall

### **4. Use of County emails and training**

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

Jim Zenner, Director, provided the following updates:

- Hiring updates
  - Introduced the new staff, announced an internal promotion to Veterans Claims Assistant (VCA) III, and hired the third Veterans Claims Supervisor
  - 3 vacancies and 2 in-process
  - 14 new staff total including one contracted consultant and one volunteer
  - Target date of September 1st to get new staff out to gain exposure and experience in field offices, VPAN, and 1807 program
  - Use of the County's Emergency Hiring Authority to expedite candidate interviews without an examination
  - Looking into work studies and Temporary Subsidized Employment (TSE) program
- Quality and Improvement Commission
  - This will allow MVA to submit two grants per quarter and will enhance services for veterans' well-being and cost-saving; there is an \$8 million dollar budget.
- Lobby reconfiguration
  - The Department is trying to recruit veterans as volunteers to greet visitors at the concierge desk, instead of security.
- Exploring kitchen options
  - JVS/Veterans AJCC is scheduled to bring back LA Trade Tech for culinary training
- Veterans Townhall
  - Held in the 4<sup>th</sup> District in Whittier at the Liberty Community Plaza on August 13<sup>th</sup> with insightful information from VHA, VBA, CALVET, and MVA.
- CEO- Real Estate
  - Moving towards charging for events and tenant agreements is still in the planning process. Non-veteran events will generate revenue for weekend availability. Veteran Service Organizations will not be charged.
- DEO/DMH Share of Cost
  - Working with DEO and DMH on the shared cost of the building. There are agreements from both departments that they will pay the shared cost. That information will go to ISD and ISD will bill them and that will offset the costs.

- VetDayLA 23' event upcoming on November 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am
- Website
  - There is currently \$43,000 in the account with CIO and researching if the homeless emergency authority for contracting can leverage that money for the website.
- South Korean Allies Card and Ceremony
  - Representative Takano passed a bill allowing access for them to get a VA ID card and receive services from the VA. Looking into doing an event to honor them later in the year and engaging with Supervisor Mitchell's office to see if they can attend as well.
  - 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.

In response to the questions from the Commission, Director Zenner stated that the Department would do some research and get back to them.

### **Guest Speakers**

Jonathan Kraus and Mark Isidro, Legislative Affairs Intergovernmental Relations gave an overview of legislative affairs regarding veterans. Legislative Affairs is the focal point of coordination of State and Federal Legislative policy and strategy for the County. In consultation with the Board of Supervisors and County departments, CEO Legislative Affairs develops the County's legislative priorities and policies for consideration by the Board. Based on policies, and the Board's ongoing guidance, Legislative Affairs works with departments and other County stakeholders to identify, analyze, and take advocacy positions on State and Federal legislation and budget proposals.

Offices in Sacramento and Washington D.C. Sacramento office is comprised of five advocates and a few support staff Meet with elected officials to influence policy and budget discussions in a way that benefits the county. Advocates in Sacramento are tasked with monitoring and attending legislative hearings and working in support of the County's legislative and funding priorities.

Assembly Bill (AB) 1386 - Veteran's Housing and Tenant Referrals: Allow housing units funded by the Veteran's Housing and Homelessness Prevention Program (VHHP) to refer Veterans at higher income levels if units are unable to be filled by extremely low-income veterans with an income below 30% of the Area Median Income (AMI). If they can't find eligible tenants at the 30% AMI, after 28 days they will be able to open those units for up to 60% of the AMI. After that income threshold above 30% is derived due to disability benefits. After additional 14 days, if they're unable to find eligible tenants in that category, they can open up VHHP units to veterans experiencing homelessness up to 60% AMI regardless of where that additional income comes from. Once the unit becomes vacant it resets to 30%. The county is supporting the Bill and the Board of Supervisors approved the motion on May 16, 2023. AB 1386 has moved through the legislative process with unanimous support and is currently pending a hearing in Senate Appropriations Committee, which will happen until mid-August when members reconvene. The bill is supported by the California Association of County Veterans Service Officers (CACVSO), the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), and the California Apartment Association. Assemblymember Gabriel is a Los Angeles County delegation member who represents the region around Woodland Hills.

Senate Bill (SB) 783 by Senator Archuleta - Veterans Suicide: A bill that would authorize the Counties of Los Angeles and Nevada to create a Veteran suicide prevention training pilot program to offer individuals in each county specialized training and certifications in suicide prevention with military-connected populations. Senator Archuleta approached the county with interest in sponsoring originally \$100,000 in funding for this program. The funding was removed from the Bill when it was in the Senate Appropriations Committee, which would have helped Los Angeles and Nevada County, the Bill had been supported unanimously by members. The Bill is currently in the Assembly Military and Veterans Affairs Committee where Senator Archuleta and his staff have been working with the committee to identify a new potential revenue source. This bill is a two-year bill so no action can be taken until next year. The county takes position in the Bill if there are existing legislative policies that the Board has previously approved, and the Department provides us with recommendations after reviewing if there is an existing policy that can be issued what's known as the advocacy pursuit to notify the Board and take petitions to support. The County supports SB 783.

AB 718 by Assembly Member Ta - Veteran's Mental Health: Would require the California Department of Veterans Affairs to establish a program to fund upon authorization by the Legislature an academic study of mental health among women veterans in California. The County is on record in support of this bill. It has been moving through the legislative process

with unanimous support and will have to wait for further action until mid-August when it will be heard in the Appropriations Committee.

AB 46 by Assembly Member Ramos - Personal Income Taxes: Exclusion: Would exclude from gross income State tax income purposes retirement pay from the federal government for military service and annuity payments from the U.S. Department of Defense Survivor Benefit Plan. California is one of the few states that does not provide an exemption for military retirement pay or surviving benefits, this Bill would provide that exemption. The county is watching the bill and taking a position, as bills related to any tax-related matter are a matter of Board determination, Board motion but the County is monitoring the Bill. AB 46 has received zero/no votes thus far; the biggest hurdle will be in the Senate Appropriations Committee. When it was heard in the Assembly Appropriations Committee, it had an estimated price tag of \$85 million statewide. The verdict is to be determined when members meet again in August.

AB 684 by Assembly Member Ta - County Veterans Services Officers: Additional resources upon appropriation from Legislature, would provide a stipend to counties for the purposes of maintaining a county Veterans Services Officer, at least part-time, at each active U.S. military base in the county. The county is monitoring and will provide a status. With Bill no longer moving forward this session Assembly members can revisit the proposal next year and use fall recess to work out any issues and concerns that Legislature had this past year and come back with a newer version and better prospects. Members can introduce bills again.

### **Public Comments**

Ronald Martin: Not online

Mr. Jay Morales, Vietnam Veteran, supports endorsing the National landmark status for the Bob Hope Patriotic Hall building. He requests the LA County Veterans Advisory Commission, to formally file and notify elected officials, the Board of Supervisors, and the Chief Executive Office, to proceed with the process of requesting from the Secretary of the Department of Interior, National Landmark Commission, to initiate the process of making Bob Hope Patriotic Hall, a national landmark.

He talked to some staff at the Chief Executive Office but wants to go through the chain of command. The process was initiated in 1995 during a veteran celebration with a previous Director, Colonel Joseph Smith, who at that time said it could not be done because the building needed to be renovated and once the building becomes a national landmark you can't do anything else. This structure is the last remaining, original, Veteran's Memorial building governed under William McKinley active 1898 under the US Code Title 39, of the Veteran's Administration, which is also part of the State of California Constitution, Article 1562, 8<sup>th</sup> paragraph.

If the original tenants are gone, the Supervisors can move to not have a building. Post 8 was the original post, 1 of 5 original tenants, and Michael Antonovich was a member. Under that article, it was scheduled for demolition in the 1980s to build a parking structure. Through research, legal reasons were found for why the building existed. At this time, there were two remaining tenants and now there is only one and that is the justification for why the building is still here. Commissioners have a right to ask to begin the process of making Patriotic Hall a national landmark; the process takes a minimum of one year to one year and a half because it must be scheduled through Congress. Now, there is a good excuse because, on July 26, 1924, the building was dedicated to a groundbreaking 100 years ago. This is the last remaining building in the nation that is on active duty, and every city has a memorial hall.

### **Bylaws Amendment**

The Commission discussed the following revisions to the Bylaws:

1. ARTICLE VI: Regular Meetings, Quorum, and Public Comment
  - Item A: Strike "time" and keep the date the same. Can be arranged with the department and not have to go through an amendment.
  - Item B: Strike "simple majority" with review from the legal team and state that six (6) of the ten appointed members must be in attendance for a quorum.
  - Footnotes Update: Amended on July 19th

- Item D: Strike “at least” registration deadline for priority public comment will close one day (24 hours) prior to the Regular Meeting start time.
2. ARTICLE VII: Special Meeting
    - Item D: Strike “at least” registration deadline for priority public comment will close one day (24 hours) prior to the Special Meeting start time.
  3. ARTICLE VIII: Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors
    - Item F: Strike “Chairperson” and add Secretary to submit an electronic copy of the signed recommendation to the Director, Commission Services Division, and Board Deputies.

Commissioner Anderson made a motion to accept the recommended edits and seconded by Commissioner Noyola. With unanimous votes, the motion passed.

**Agenda Items that are Deferred to a Future Meeting**

1	LA County Homeless Initiatives	FY23 Funding Strategies	Allman
2	West LA VA Campus	Women Veteran Program	Jackson-Kelly
3	Veterans Healthcare Administration	Medical Devices Recall	Noyola
4	Department of Economic Opportunity	Modernization of AJCC	Allman
5	Commission Services	Cross Commission Cooperation	Szeto
6	Metro	Hiring and Veteran Initiatives	Zenner
7	Department of Public Social Services	Assistance for veterans	Palmero
8	Department of Mental Health	Programs overlapping with MVA	Anderson

**Good of the Order**

Commissioner Crooks had nothing to add.

Commissioner Palmero stated that she is working with Chief Deputy Stephanie Stone on Vet Day LA and she is the chair for fundraising. Supervisor Solis will be having a Veteran’s Day Ceremony and Resource Fair at Obregon Park in East Los Angeles.

Commissioner Jackson-Kelly stated that the Department of Labor is recognizing the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the U.S. Armed Forces and doing a panel discussion on African American veterans and jobs; she is one of the panelists. The American Legion baseball is being held at the Jackie Robinson Stadium on the VA grounds on Thursday, where the teams will be playing at the stadium, in Fairfield, California. If interested, please come out and support the kids. Jackie Robinson was one of the sponsors.

Commissioner McFadden had nothing to add.

Commissioner Allman stated that there has been a discussion with Veteran AMI and how that affects housing in the West LA campus and throughout the community. The VA gave a detailed analysis of how it looks in Los Angeles and what it means for homeless veterans. The VA deserves credit for hearing the media reports and looking into their database to see the number of veterans affected. There is an ongoing conversation between VA and HUD on what they will do. Beautiful buildings were built at the VA but there are issues filling them due to VA compensation. He noted that it is a good idea to professionalize the Commission by creating a logo, and he asked a friend to assist and bring it to the next meeting. All members agreed.

Commissioner Gutierrez congratulated VPAN, 5<sup>th</sup> District team as they opened a new space on July 14th. They outgrew their old space and added 1,000 sq ft and have provided space for other organizations to come in to have a one-stop shop for veterans seeking services.

Commissioner Anderson agreed with Commissioner Gutierrez on the VPAN, 5<sup>th</sup> District new space. He wanted to reframe the presentation from the Korean American Veterans of the Vietnam War. The presentation provided a simple request if the Commission can assist. He stated that he would like to look at their request, along with the Filipino American guerillas

who helped in WWII, they have claimed a veteran status having fought alongside the U.S. in that war. If there is anything that can be done, where a card can be shown at Denny's or LA County Parks on Memorial and Veteran's Day, he would offer his support. Last, follow the legislative thread if the county can back a position of support for that legislation.

Commissioner Noyola brought up a comment made by Mr. Morales about the National Landmark, vaguely familiar with the process but it will be good for the department to have a presentation/briefing on what the process is and what it does for the Commission. It is important and he appreciates the veteran for coming forward and bringing it to their attention. The building might qualify, and it may bring additional resources to the Department and to the County.

Commissioner Szeto agreed with Commissioner Noyola's comment. It will be great for all Commissioners to have a better understanding and be presented with the pros and cons.

The meeting adjourned at 3:12 p.m.

Stephanie Guerrero  
Executive Secretary  
July 19, 2023