

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Jim Zenner
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Present:

Commissioners

Anthony Allman
Alfonso Noyola
Rocio Palmero
Chi Szeto
John Gutierrez
Hugh Crooks
John Follmer

Absent:

Commissioners

Jawana McFadden
Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Dennis Anderson

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

Jim Zenner, Director
Stephanie Guerrero, Executive Secretary

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Allman at 1:31 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Allman announced the Salute Armed Forces Everyday S.A.F.E. acknowledgment, requesting all active-duty service members and veterans to stand up during the flag salute. Newly appointed Commissioner John Follmer, 3rd District, proceeded to lead The Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Seven (7) Commissioners were at the meeting during roll call; a quorum was present. Commissioners McFadden, Jackson-Kelley, and Anderson were absent from the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Noyola to accept the Minutes for February 21, 2024, seconded by Commissioner Palmero. A roll call was conducted to approve the Minutes and the motion passed with unanimous votes.

Chairman's Report

Chair Allman stated that the notice of meeting was sent out on March 14th at 3:52 pm via GovDelivery from MVA@subscriptions.lacounty.gov. To subscribe, please visit mva.lacounty.gov and click on the mail icon located on the top right of the webpage.

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (MVA) YouTube channel (@LACMVA) currently has 83 subscribers. All past Commission meetings are posted there and it's highly recommended to subscribe.

The previous meeting addressed the Veteran's Advisory Commission reporting schedule based on a fiscal year versus a calendar year. Commission services guided that the Board could change its reporting cycle to a calendar year which would make it consistent with the bylaws. Commissioner Crooks moved to modify the annual reporting requirement from a fiscal year to a calendar year. Commissioner Guitierrez seconded the motion. A roll call vote was conducted, and the motion passed with unanimous votes.

Due to time constraints the Veterans Advisory Commission logo discussion, By-laws review, and the ongoing conversation regarding the department's organization structure will be picked up next meeting.

Guest Speakers

Claire Haggarty, Director of Public Arts and Design, LA Metro, spoke about the artworks for the future Metro station, directly across the parking lot from the main hospital, Building 500, of the West Los Angeles Veterans Affairs (West LA VA). The D line subway, purple line, extension project will extend to the West LA VA Hospital Metro station, which is currently under construction. Riders of the subway will experience 5 artworks including portraits of veterans, artworks by veterans, and the history of the national soldier's home. Ms. Haggarty showed slides of the artwork to be displayed at the new Metro station's North Plaza entrance, entry pavilion, concourse, pedestrian bridge, and ticketing area. The artwork is meant to be welcoming and healing since people are coming to the hospital for care and recovery.

There have been numerous meetings in the last few months to get comments and feedback. The feedback provided was to reconsider Westwood and UCLA references, focus on VA campus history and plans, keep the panorama concept, include more veteran imagery, and less military hardware, work with Bandini family archives, keep history, focus on campus, reconsider the dinosaurs, and consider including the National Cemetery. Ms. Haggarty then displayed the updated designs to the in-progress artwork after feedback was considered. After the redesign, Metro has received positive responses and appreciative comments supporting the redesign. Ms. Haggarty showed images of the updated artwork and explained the updates.

To receive information on Metro Art projects, programming, and art opportunities, subscribe to email updates at metro.net/art.

Chair Allman commented he thought the addition of the principal donors and bringing in the National Cemetery while removing the UCLA element was good. He mentioned some buildings where the artwork could be a little bit larger. He also mentioned Building 13 being a prominent building built in 1929 and feels it should be part of the panorama. He also suggested removing the newspaper stand and removing the golf course to scale up Building 33 and suggested the trolley station could be a little bigger. If there are suggestions, please email Zoey at taleporosz@metro.net.

Commissioner Follmer commented on the flower shop, near the butterfly sanctuary, that used to be on the VA campus, which allowed veterans to work.

Commissioner Palmero thanked Ms. Haggarty for taking the time to take the veteran community and all the opinions into account when making progress on these artworks. She emphasized the people depicted and what they represent are important. Veterans and their families likely will see these artworks numerous times as they visit the VA Hospital to recover and heal. Commissioner Palmero also mentioned the upcoming Olympics in Los Angeles and that people from around the world will see these artworks. The artwork will reflect, to those visitors, how we feel about our veteran community.

Commissioner Noyola thanked the Metro staff for listening to the community and the veterans. He asked for consideration for a capture of what all the symbolisms in the artworks mean so that in the future people can see the artwork and understand what the intentions were.

Commissioner Guitierrez extended thanks for taking into consideration all the suggestions and for the changes that were made.

Public Comments

Deon Plummer, Marine Corps veteran commented that as an unhoused veteran who lives on the VA Campus, he would like to see more oversight on private contracts. He wants more oversight on how veterans are treated by privately operated, contracted, service providers. As a person who put his life on the line for this country, he would like to see people who would like to help us as veterans. Lastly, he said, as a person who has served, it doesn't make any difference if we feel we don't belong.

Krystal Rains, a veteran commented that she works at the Veteran's Garden, behind the UCLA ballfield, which is open again from 9-11 am on Wednesdays and there is a produce giveaway at noon. We would like anyone to visit the garden but if you would like to help that's great. The garden is very veteran directed and is run by the whole health department out of Building 220.

Chair Allman thanked the public for their comments.

Recommendation #7 LA County HUD-VASH Reporting

We received great news that the Board of Supervisors has provided this department with 1.9 million dollars of Measure H money which is for creating the homeless services division for the first time. One of the functions will be matching housing vouchers to vacant units. This recommendation provides more data and more information about housing availability. LA County has 20 public housing authorities. Since the county has a Department of Military and Veterans Affairs it is appropriate to ask these public housing authorities, "What's going on with Vets? Do you have vacancies? Can we fill them?"

Commissioner Allman read Los Angeles County Veterans Advisory Commission Recommendation #7 into the record. He had one edit, "Whereas, according to the HCV Data Dashboard, there are currently 10 Public Housing Authorities in Los Angeles County participating in HUD-VASH," that should be 11.

Commissioner Crooks motioned to accept Recommendation #7 to include the modification by Commissioner Allman, seconded by Commissioner Follmer. A roll call was conducted, and the motion passed with unanimous votes.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Director Zenner first thanked Metro for making a personal visit to the department to show the artwork and for including the feedback from public comments on the paintings. The department will post slides a week in advance. There is staff at the front desk in the lobby.

- Discussions with VA for a Peer Resource Center at Building 306 as the potential location.
- Acknowledged the 21st anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom.
- The department is working closely with NACVSO to address predatory companies that are charging veterans and their families to submit claims.
- Senate Bill 1124 would put criminal penalties on that type of behavior and House Resolution 1139 "The Guard Act" is very similar that also protects veterans from predatory claim agents.
- March is Women's Veterans Month.
- Data is a major focus of our department. Six other county departments have 25,000 veterans who are being served through those six departments. Working to get on the state Info-hub to match our data with the state data so we can see who we served.
- Data sharing agreement with Long Beach and West LA VA to streamline getting veterans connected to healthcare.

- On March 29th, MVA will be honoring the Vietnam veterans at the Welcome Home Event. Also recognizing South Korean sisters and brothers, allies, from the Vietnam War.
- Currently a board motion is in the works. A consultant is doing historical research to get the building recognized as a historical landmark. Working on various items to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Patriotic Hall.

Chair Allman thanked Director Zenner for the update. He commented that anyone who has a recommendation can submit it to the Secretary 2 weeks in advance and that tables the item on the agenda for the upcoming meeting.

Agenda Items for Future Meetings

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| 1. | Cohen Clinic | Youth resources for Veteran parents | John Follmer |
| 2. | CALVET | Veterans who are not U.S. citizens | Hugh Crooks |

Good of the Order

Commissioner Crooks and Commissioner Palmero, SD 1, had nothing to share for the good of the order.

Commissioner John Follmer, SD 3, stated that building 306 proposals have a community partner meeting to voice what we want a peer resource center for building 306.

Chair Allman, SD3, had nothing to add for the good of the order.

Commissioner Szeto, SD4, is hoping to connect with the VA to address the thoughts and concerns for Building 306.

Commissioner Noyola, SD4, has encouraged veterans to take a walking tour of the West LA VA Campus.

Commissioner Gutierrez, SD5, had nothing to add for the good of the order.

The meeting adjourned at 2:53 p.m.

Todd Tortorici, Management Analyst
 Administrative Services Division
 March 20, 2024