

LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Jim Zenner
Director

MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, July 17, 2024

Present:

Commissioners

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

Absent:

Commissioners

Patricia Jackson-Kelley
Ashley Chavez

County Department

Military and Veterans Affairs

James Zenner, Director
Stephanie Guerrero, Executive Secretary

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Allman at 1:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Vice Chair, John Follmer, 3rd District, led the pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Follmer 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. Commissioner Follmer proceeded to lead The Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Follmer proceeded to lead The Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Eight (8) Commissioners were at the meeting during roll call; a quorum was present. Commissioners Patricia Jackson-Kelley and Ashley Chavez were absent from the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner McFadden to accept the Minutes for May 15, 2024, seconded by Commissioner Crooks. A roll call was conducted to accept the Minutes and the motion passed with unanimous votes.

Chairman's Report

Chair Allman stated that the notice of meeting was sent out on July 11th at 2:51pm 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 webpage.

The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (MVA) YouTube channel (@LACMVA) currently has 100 subscribers. All past Commission meetings are posted there and it's highly recommended to subscribe. Chair Allman stated that previously he mentioned some videos were missing. After cleaning up the playlist it was discovered that only 2 videos were missing. All the videos now have standard naming, and the most recent meeting will be at the top of the list.

Chair Allman stated that the VAC logo that was recently adopted will not be used until the County adopts guidelines for the use of the County seal.

Chair Allman reminded the commission that mandatory commissioner training is on September 10th.

Guest Speakers

Lalena Vellanoweth, Conservation Manager, LA County Arts & Culture, National Veterans Mural Project

Gracy Ramirez-Gaston, Director Civic Art Division, LA County Division of Arts and Culture stated that she was joined here with Lalena Vellanoweth, Collection and Conservation Manager for the Division, as well as Deborah May from May and Birch Conservation. We oversee acquisitions and the county's civil art collection. Lalena stated Military and Veterans Affairs asked Arts and Culture asked us to do an assessment of the VA mural that's located at the VA hospital.

Lalena Vellanoweth thanked the commission for inviting and having Arts and Culture share the report findings. She stated Navy veteran Peter Stewart, and assistants, painted the 23,000 square foot mural. Ms. Vellanoweth explained the history and schematics of the mural's artwork. She also explained the deterioration of the mural in several areas, which include from natural elements and from past graffiti.

Lalena Vellanoweth detailed the treatment plan for the mural. She suggested several treatment and stabilization methods and presented the total estimated cost of \$307,736. She stated that this estimate did not include structural concrete repairs or repairs to the structure of the bridge itself.

Chair Allman thanked Lalena. He asked about the structural assessment.

Ms. Ramirez Gaston explained the details of the funding of conservation projects for the county.

Chair Allman asked if there was a platform where they received public comments or input on certain items.

Ms. Ramirez Gaston said they refer to the board offices and with the artists. Arts and Culture makes recommendations for departments to act when restoration is needed. Ms. Vellanoweth said they sometimes get notifications that staff of departments see county art in need of repair.

Director Zenner explained Arts and Culture and their communication regarding the mural. Director Zenner said he wanted to respond and to find out what the price of the repair of the mural would be.

Vice Chair Follmer stated we need to do the structural evaluation before we do restoration, and the public should get a good idea how their money is spent.

Ms. Ramirez Gaston stated the difference between the conservation and restoration. The refreshing and overpainting are significantly less cost for that type of treatment.

Commissioner McFadden thanked the guests for the information. Asked about the difference between mural and artworks?

Deborah May explained the restoration process to the commission, the paint stabilization, and the anti-graffiti coating.

Commissioner Palmero stated her concern that it may not be updated looking when completed.

Deborah May responded that the point is to preserve the artist's hand. Conservation will preserve for the future the original material.

Commissioner Crooks asked how long the conservation treatment last.

Deborah May said the mural will continue to degrade over time but the conservation treatment will slow this process. There will be maintenance involved in the future.

Ms. Ramirez Gaston said that she agreed with Vice Chair Follmer that the structural component needs to be evaluated before the restoration or conservation. If that was not feasible, I would recommend something less aggressive such as restoration which can bring out aesthetic quality.

Lalena Vellanoweth stated that the original creators of the mural are probably out there so community outreach at the site to bring in the people who worked on the mural originally.

Chair Allman responded that yes, he has heard from them. He said they are his constituents and they're one of the reasons why we called the briefing. Thank you.

2nd Guest Speaker

Zoe Taleporos, Senior Manager, LA Metro, Metro Art Update

Ms. Taleporos returns to provide an update on the art program for the future station serving the West LA VA. Ms. Taleporos She explained the strategy to engage veterans and veterans' organizations and to gather feedback and incorporate it into the artworks. She said the project is now focused on the history of the West LA VA campus with references to materials from the Bandini Foundation Archives and the West LA VA Archives.

Ms. Taleporos detailed the different areas around the D Line metro station at the West LA VA, where the artworks will be located, and what they will look like. First, Ms. Taleporos explained the station artworks at the North Plaza, and how this location would affect the mural but only 5% of the mural will be lost. Ms. Taleporos explained the mitigation steps taken to prepare to assess the mural by connecting with the veteran community and LA County. She showed the new artwork that would replace the impacted section of the mural.

Ms Taleporos went on to explain the artworks and their intentions for the Entry Pavilion, Ticketing area, Concourse and the Platform. She showed where the artworks would be located and explained the artworks themselves. She detailed the feedback received from the veteran community through Artwork Design Feedback Meetings and how the recommendations received at those meetings were incorporated. She showed the Concourse artworks 100% updated design.

Ms. Taleporos said that more than 150 Veterans and more than 25 organizations were involved and engaged with suggestions and feedback on the station artworks. She explained that upcoming events include paying respects to the National Veterans Legacy Art Project, Ongoing Meet the Artist events, engagement, and recognition opportunities. To receive additional updates or information on Metro Art projects please visit metro.net/art.

Chair Allman asked if the artwork is 100% complete.

Ms. Taleporos said they consider it complete artwork, but they are still happy to hear feedback or suggestions.

Commissioner McFadden acknowledged the artwork and the people involved in the work. She asked about references to one branch and not other branches. She suggested either having the shirt say just “Veteran” or having the diversity of all the service branches represented.

Commissioner Palmero commented that a campaign or slogan could be “this is what a Veteran looks like” to put on a shirt.

Chair Allman wanted to clarify that is was changing the shirt to “Veteran.”

Commissioner McFadden replied that “this is what a Veteran looks like” or “Veteran” would be a good substitute for what is currently on there. And then the blimp is the only other place that shows a branch, and it is only Navy.

Commissioner Follmer asked about a structural survey done on the bridge where the National Veterans Mural is located.

Commissioner McFadden asked about the 5% loss of the mural and what will happen to it.

Ms. Taleporos said that there was an evaluation done and 5% of the mural will not be able to be preserved because of the nature of the wall composition.

Chair Allman asked if we could have large copies of the artworks to display in the lobby. He thanked Ms. Taleporos for her presentation.

Public Comments

Chair Allman announced that we had two public comments registered. He reminded that commissioners are not able to respond to public comments.

Jerry Orlemann – public comment

Mr. Orlemann stated that, regarding eligibility for appointment to the Veterans Advisory Commission, he believes, family care givers of Veterans should be considered to be eligible for appointment to the VAC.

Kyle Orlemann – public comment

Ms. Orlemann stated that on the big, long artwork, she sees vultures depicted. She suggested to change those birds to the American Bald Eagle.

Chair Allman thanked them for the public comments.

VAC Bylaws Amendments

Chair Allman said they will go over, for discussion, the potential changes. The first question is what constitutes quorum. Article 6, b, It used to say LACVAC shall have satisfied a quorum with a simple majority of the appointed members in attendance, and Commissioner Noyola, I think you astutely pointed out that that's not how things work. Uh LACVAC shall have satisfied a quorum with six (6) of ten (10) commissioners in attendance. The other item is the way we request speakers. This lays out a formal sort of guideline that if Commissioners want to request speakers and they are not affiliated with the county, that they provide the contact information to the Secretary to assist with scheduling. Are there any questions about those two (2) edits?

Chair Allman also mentioned that Article 2, in the county ordinance, says, persons appointed shall be Veterans. We don't have any say in eligibility for the Veterans Advisory Commission. We have the ability to recommend it to the Board of Supervisors, but we cannot make that change ourselves. Currently it is Veterans only.

Chair Allman also mentioned that we added opening the meetings with the SAFE protocol and the pledge of allegiance.

Commissioner Noyola commented that we don't have representation from Active-Duty military members. It may be a possible recommendation to entertain.

Chair Allman suggested that we have County Council give us clarification on the question of a quorum or the simple majority question.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Jim Zenner – Director, Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

We had our first Women's Veterans' Summit here at Patriotic Hall with Secretary of CDVA, Lindsey Sin, and Supervisor Solis who commented that we need to do more for women Veterans. So, this is the first step in delivering improved service to our women Vets. The event had support from 2 supervisors, so we really appreciate the support from Supervisorial districts 1 and 3.

Director Zenner said we hired a new supervisor for our homeless services division, Nareh Alexani, with 14 years' experience in the public sector. We also hired a public information associate who comes from the assessor's office and is a welcome addition.

July 22nd a town hall being attended by American Legion Post 280 and Supervisor Katherine Barger from 6:30 to 8:00.

Director Zenner stated we went from 140 Veterans to last month housing 213 Veterans. Through tenant-based vouchers we are looking at bulk leasing and another intervention called RPSS. This is a more streamlined way of getting Veterans housed. The units are furnished, and the Veterans can get a unit right away. We had 38 units in Burbank that is almost full. We had 13 units in West Hollywood that are completely full. Master leasing and bulk leasing identify areas where Veterans want to live. We are exploring more ways to get Veterans off the street quicker.

Los Angeles City joined the One Team and now it is a VA, County, City, and Community partnership. Director Zenner thanked Mayor Bass for joining.

Director Zenner said some of the work on One Team is directed at underserved populations. Through the CEOs office Dr Scorza agreed to be a cochair of the workgroup with the VA and to examine the data to see who we may be leaving behind and making sure we have equity. What we find is black Veterans are more than 3 times overrepresented in the homeless population. Our state association of VSO's are working with the VA to do a same day claims clinic. We are working with Supervisor Mitchell's office to do an event in her district to focus on homeless Vets to that event.

Director Zenner said we are working on the website and there is some drone footage of Patriotic Hall that is nice. We will bring that to the commission to provide feedback.

Director Zenner stated we are looking to revamp the way we do town halls. Commissioners in the SD along with the MVA Deputy are going to be involved in the district town halls. We are going to talk about targeting Saturdays so that we can get a lot more public feedback.

Lastly, Director Zenner said the next town hall is at Norwalk Library on August 14th from 5:30 to 8. Also, the pit count from LASA the 28th of last month, in the LA continuum of care, the homeless Veterans dropped from 3878 to 2991. I've been doing this for a while, and I haven't seen a drop like that in many years so there is a lot of good work being done by the VA in partnership with the local government and community. He thanked the commission.

Chair Allman stated that the vultures were not in the original photo.

Ms. Talaporos responded that they are California Condors.

Chair Allman recognized Ms. Orlemann's suggestion and recommended changing the species of the birds to avoid confusion.

Chair Allman also mentioned that the town halls are great because they bring the discussion to the community. The partnership with LA County library is great logistically for the department but also because it brings people into the library. The model to hold these on the weekend is great for the ability to have a family friendly atmosphere. The objective is to create opportunities for the community to present their concerns to the department and the town hall series perform that function. He thanked the department for taking the time to do this. He asked if the commissioners had any thoughts for the Director's consideration?

Commissioner Follmer commented that LA County is the veteran capital of the United States because we have more Veterans here than anywhere else. He said he is excited about what we are doing because they are trend setting activities that make individuals in our community feel heard. He said he was looking forward to the evolution and how we get this information out to the public.

Commissioner Palmero commented regarding town halls that people need something that is easy. To be family friendly we should have something for kids and perhaps music to keep it from being static. She thanked the commission for the work and dedication that they share and how the impact they have.

Commissioner Follmer spoke about the Cohen clinic where they are focusing on creating family friendly environments. He said the town halls will help set the trend of what we provide at job fairs and resource fairs. He commented that Veterans parents may not be attending the events because of child-care issues. They are likely struggling with homelessness as well as food insecurities. We need to familiarize ourselves with the larger issues that effect families by supporting our young Veterans.

Chair Allman asked again if the commissioners had any other thoughts for the Director's consideration?

Agenda Items for Future Meetings

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Women's Program | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs | Commissioner Jackson-Kelley |
| 2. OTH VA Healthcare Eligibility | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs | Vice Chair Follmer |
| 3. Voucher Allocation at West LA | LA County Development Authority | Chair Allman |

Commissioner Palmero stated that it would be helpful to get someone with an early child development background to describe for us the economic challenges affecting young families. What are some of their findings? It would be helpful to have someone with that background.

Commissioner Palmero said she would share the point of contact and the agency with Stephanie after the meeting.

Good of the Order

Commissioner Crooks, SD 1 – Nothing.

Commissioner Palmero, SD 1 – Nothing.

Commissioner McFadden, SD2 – Nothing.

Chair Allman, SD3 – Said it had been an active news week due to Judge Carter making a ruling on Sunday in the Powers v McDonough case. He would suggest that you look it up. He said Long Lead, which is a multimedia company published a seven-part series on the history of the West LA VA campus. Search for Long lead, Home of the Brave you should be able to find it.

Commissioner Follmer, SD 3 – nothing.

Commissioner Noyola, SD4 – nothing.

Commissioner Szeto, SD4 – nothing.

Commissioner Gutierrez, SD5 – nothing.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:16 p.m.

Todd Tortorici, Management Analyst
Administrative Services Division
July 17, 2024