

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Jim Zenner
Director

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES Wednesday, March 18, 2026

Present:

Commissioners

John Oppenheim
John Gutierrez
Jawana McFadden
Rocio Palmero
Raul Barragan
Patricia Jackson-Kelley
John Follmer

Absent:

Commissioners

Hugh Crooks
Chi Szeto

County of Los Angeles
Department Military and Veterans Affairs
Jim Zenner, Director
Stephanie Guerrero, Executive Secretary

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Palmero at 1:31 p.m., who led the meeting in lieu of the Chairman.

SAFE Acknowledgement & Pledge of Allegiance

Vice Chair Palmero, announced the Salute Armed Forces Everyday S.A.F.E. acknowledgment and requested all active-duty service members and veterans to stand up during the flag salute. Commissioner John Gutierrez led The Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Seven (7) Commissioners were at the meeting during the roll; a quorum was present. Commissioner McFadden and Commissioner Oppenheim joined virtually.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Follmer to approve the Minutes for February 18, 2026, seconded by Commissioner Barragan. A roll call was conducted and the motion passed with unanimous votes.

Chairman's Report

Vice Chair Palmero stated that the notice of the meeting was sent out on March 12, 2026, at 6:16 p.m. via GovDelivery from MVA@subscriptions.lacounty.gov. To subscribe, please visit mva.lacounty.gov and click on the mail icon located at the top right of the webpage.

Public Comments on Agenda Items

No public comments.

Guest Speaker

Rodrigo Garibay, Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) Employment Development Department from the State of California provided a briefing about its Veteran Program- include housing, free business attire, job training, and job referrals and more.

Patrick V. Blanchfield-Gadut, Sergeant, Veteran Mental Evaluation Team (VMET) Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department shared with the committee the mission of VMET which includes but are not limited to: veteran crisis prevention and response, veteran alliance mission support, and veteran involved investigative services.

Commissioner Report

Commissioner Jawana McFadden, 2nd District, shared the ruling by the Veterans Administration to consider improvements from medication when evaluating a veteran's disability during a compensation and pension examination and their decision to rescind the action.

Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Report

Jim Zenner, Executive Director, LA County Department of Military and Veteran Affairs, informed the committee of the department's efforts to support justice involved veterans and unhoused veterans. The director also announced that the department is soliciting applications for the Chief Deputy position within MVA.

Future Agenda Items

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|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Military and Veterans Affairs | Property Tax SB 888 | Follmer |
| 2. LA County Aging and Disabilities | Department Overview and Services | Oppenheim |
| 3. Public Health Department | Contaminated Land WLA VA | Barragan |
| 4. Legislation | H.R.1956 BAH Restoration Act | Barragan |

Commissioner Announcements

Commissioner Barragan stated that he submitted a list of legislative initiatives to the commission that he would like the committee to review and consider during the next meeting.

General Public Comments

Patrice Springer, Executive Director of Your Image 20/20, informed the committee that her organization provides free business attire for veterans and mock interviews to help with employment opportunities.

John Houston, volunteer at Your Image 20/20 USMC veteran, expressed his support of Your Image 20/20 and its impact to the veteran community.

Sara Serrano, USMC veteran, advocated that the West LA VA campus model itself after the Presidio Branch Trust and National Park Service.

Kevin Varga, USMC veteran, informed the committee that he fully supports the Pacific Branch National Veterans Park.

Harold Stangle from Ednet Career Institute, informed the committee that his organization is actively searching for veterans in need of employment in the private security field.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:57 p.m.

Hayden Velasquez, Staff Assistant II
March 18, 2026