

# LOS ANGELES COUNTY VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION

1816 S. FIGUEROA STREET  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015



Jim Zenner  
Director

## MINUTES REGULAR MEETING Wednesday, January 15, 2025

### Present:

#### Commissioners

Ashley Chavez  
Hugh Crooks, Jr.  
John Follmer  
John Gutierrez  
Jawana McFadden  
Alfonso Noyola  
Rocio Palmero  
Chi Szeto

### Absent:

#### Commissioners

Patricia Jackson-Kelley

### County Department

#### Military and Veterans Affairs

Jim Zenner, Director

Stephanie Guerrero, Executive Secretary

### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Gutierrez at 1:33 p.m.

### Pledge of Allegiance

Vice Chair, Ashley Chavez, 5<sup>th</sup> District, 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 and proceed to lead The Pledge of Allegiance.

### Roll Call

Eight (8) Commissioners were at the meeting; a quorum was present. All commissioners attended the meeting virtually.

Commissioner McFadden motions that the commissioners meeting be held in a virtual setting. Commissioner Palmero seconded the motion. A roll call was conducted, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Noyola motions to have the meeting proceed as a teleconference due to the LA wildfires, and the risk of meeting in person to the health and safety of the attendees. Commissioner Follmer seconded the motion. A roll call was conducted, and the motion was approved unanimously.

### **Approval of Minutes**

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

### **Chairman's Report**

Chair Gutierrez stated that the notice of meeting was sent out on January 10, 2025 @ 12:38pm via GovDelivery from [MVA@subscriptions.lacounty.gov](mailto:MVA@subscriptions.lacounty.gov). To subscribe, please visit [mva.lacounty.gov](http://mva.lacounty.gov) and click on the mail icon located on the top right of the webpage. He mentioned how to make public comments virtually and in person. Chair Gutierrez said the 2025 Veterans Advisory Commission meeting dates will be released soon. Chairman Gutierrez recognized the organizations and first responders assisting with the LA County wildfires. Chair Gutierrez mentioned recommendation nine (9) and the bylaws were submitted to Commission services.

### **Guest Speaker – Justin Garza, Warrior Heritage Foundation**

Justin Garza presented the mission, vision, and strategic plans of the Warrior Heritage Foundation to the commission. He outlined how Patriotic Hall generates revenue to support the veteran community and discussed the foundation's role in effectively utilizing these funds to benefit veterans. Additionally, he highlighted the foundation's collaborative efforts with partner organizations to address specific areas of need within the veteran community.

### **General Public Comments**

Jack Wong is a veteran who lives in West LA VA and was commenting on the CTRS program.

Krystal Rains made comments about a PTSD acupuncture clinic at West LA.

Tess Banko with Veterans Collective thanked MVA and community partners for supplies, care, and concern they have provided to assist.

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

Director Jim Zenner provided the following updates:

- Operations at Patriotic Hall: Efforts to assist in sheltering veterans displaced from the West LA VA.
- Acknowledgments: Expressed gratitude for community support, response to the LA County fires, and MVA assistance.
- Warrior Heritage Foundation Support: Recognized the foundation's contributions during the crisis.
- Day-to-Day operations
  - Transition of CTRS and Bridge Home veterans back to the VA.

- Cleaning and reopening of Patriotic Hall.
- Ongoing collaboration with the VA and CALVET to support the recovery process in the coming months.
- Enthusiasm for the partnership with the Warrior Heritage Foundation and its potential impact.
- Proposal to the Productivity Investment Fund Commission on veteran mental health and well-being initiatives.
- Noted funding opportunities being pursued by Chief Deputy Santana.

Commissioner Noyola thanked Director Zenner for his leadership.

Commissioner Palmero commented on the disaster response at Patriotic Hall and everyone who provided support.

Commissioner Follmer thanked everyone who supported the disaster response.

Commissioner Crooks thanked Director Zenner, MVA and all the staff for their support during the disaster.

Chair Gutierrez commented on the announcement from the Mayor of LA regarding ending veteran homelessness.

### **Agenda Items for Future Meetings**

- |    |     |  |                      |
|----|-----|--|----------------------|
| 1. | TBD | Update on West LA VA Housing           | Commissioner Noyola  |
| 2. | TBD | Moral Injury Survey for Women Veterans | Commissioner Palmero |

### **Commissioner Announcements**

Commissioner Crooks had nothing to add.

Commissioner Palmero had nothing to add.

Commissioner McFadden highlighted the SD2 Veteran Town Hall, scheduled for Saturday, January 25th, at Lawndale Library. She also expressed her gratitude to attendees and emphasized the importance of mindfulness during the ongoing LA fire disasters.

Commissioner John Follmer addressed the impact of disaster response on the community, emphasizing the significant strain it has placed on mental health. He also reminded attendees of the weekly Bunker Social, held every Monday at Building 306 on the West LA Campus.

Commissioner Noyola had nothing to add.

Commissioner Chavez thanked everyone for the disaster response.

Commissioner Szeto thanked everyone for the disaster response.

Chair Gutierrez acknowledged the role of Patriotic Hall in providing shelter for veterans during the disaster. He expressed gratitude to the MVA staff for their dedicated efforts in supporting veterans throughout the crisis.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:52 p.m.

Todd Tortorici, Management Analyst  
Administrative Services Division  
January 15, 2025