



Veterans' Affairs Committee

Wednesday, February 9, 2022 - 6:00 pm
Virtual Meeting via TEAMS

MEETING NOTE: Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which have prompted declarations of a public health emergency at the local, state and federal levels, this meeting will be conducted using measures to protect public health. This meeting will be held remotely through technological means, as permitted under Arizona law. In-person attendance by member of the public will be prohibited.

Summary Minutes

Approved on March 9, 2022

1. **Call to Order / Establish a Quorum**

Virtual online meeting called to order by Rocio Kary at 6:02 p.m. Those present and absent were:

Present:

Steve W. Aguirre
James Louis
Carol Rundell

Michael St. Ores
Gaeton Briseno
Terry Byron
Henry Johnson

William Wojciechowski

Marlon Ruiz

Martin Belden
Melvin Morgan
Rocio "Rosie" Kary

Luke Johnson

Absent:

Mark Levine
Bruce Hamilton

Staff Members Present:

Delma Sanchez
Ana Marrufo

Representing:

American Legion Department of Arizona
Arizona Department of Veterans Services
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary, Cactus
Chapter 2
Esperanza En Escalante
Korean War Veterans Association, Pima Chapter
Marine Corps League, Marana Night Hawk 72
Marine Corps League, Marana Night Hawk 72 and
Post 81 Scottish American Military Society of
Southern Arizona

Military Officers Association of America, Tucson
Chapter

Military Order of World Wars, Department of
Arizona

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 106

Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 106

Women in Military Service for America Memorial
Foundation

Non-voting Advisory

Representing:

Tucson Jewish War Veterans Post 201

Tucson Veterans Serving Veterans

City Clerk's Office, Recording Secretary
City Clerk's Office, Management Assistant

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2. Invocation

Invocation was provided by Committee Member Johnson

3. Introduction of Guests

- a. Jennifer Gutowski - (SAVAHCS)
- b. Craig Reck and Jessie Allen - TIA Military Lounge
- c. Cliff Wade - City of Tucson Housing & Community Development

4. Approval of Legal Action Report of January 12, 2022

It was moved by Committee Member Wojciechowski, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 12-0, (Committee Members Levine and Hamilton absent), to approve the Legal Action Report from the January 12, 2022, meeting.

5. Treasurer's Report

Committee Member Belden reported there was a beginning balance of \$4953.36 at the end of January 2022. They had received a donation from Finley Distributing in the amount of \$500.00, leaving a net balance on hand of \$5453.36.

It was moved by Committee Member Wojciechowski, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 12-0, (Committee Members Levine and Hamilton absent), to approve the financial report as presented.

6. Committee Reports

a. Southern Arizona Veteran's Affairs Health Care System (SAVAHCS)

Jennifer Gutowski, Director of SAVAHCS reported they were finally seeing the Covid-19 numbers going down and stated they would continue to watch those numbers closely due to the Gem Show and the upcoming Rodeo Parade. She said with seeing a downward trend, it has allowed them to move forward with those deferred elective surgeries.

Ms. Gutowski stated their Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program would begin at the end of the month and were anticipating being able to start admissions again for the Blind Rehabilitation Program, beginning on February 14.

Luke Johnson stated an invite had been sent to Veterans inviting them to the SAVAHCS Virtual Veteran Resource Fair and Town Hall to be held on Thursday, February 10 from noon to 1:00 pm. He said the Town Hall would cover information on the following items:

- SAVAHCS Suicide Prevention Program
- SAVAHCS Whole Health Program
- Tucson Vet Center
- SAVAHCS Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
- Woman Warriors

Discussion followed; no further action taken.

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b. Tucson Veterans Cemetery

Committee Member Louis stated he had not received anything to report on the Marana Cemetery.

c. Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Committee Member Louis stated as an agency, last month they saw right up under 5,000 Direct Services, which were considered anything from a telephone call; an appointment by email or fax; anything they would have had responded to. Mr. Louis said 182 claims were submitted from Veterans in Arizona and 82 of them were from within the Southern Region. They had been looking for itinerary sites, which would allow some of the veterans to have the in-person visits. He said currently they were only functioning out of the Green Valley American Legion Post 66 and hoping the same could take place at the Tucson Veterans Center. Mr. Louis stated they would be participating in the Stand Down event, so if anyone needed to file a claim or had any questions related to benefits, they would be there for support.

7. Military Lounge/Operation Exodus Update/Discussion – Jessie Allen

Jessie Allen, Director of Marketing Communications and External Relations for the Tucson Airport Authority (TAA). Ms. Allen stated they oversee the Tucson International Airport, Ryan Airfield and of course their great Military Lounge. She said Operation Exodus went extremely well, stating more than 3,000 soldiers had flown through over a 2-day period, both through the push and the pull. She said they were very fortunate to have their warm welcoming volunteers who were badged and able to go to post security, which is where everything was done from.

Ms. Allen stated they received great feedback from Fort Huachuca. There was more food and drinks than needed and very happy with the success. She said all of their airline partners were extremely helpful in the process of getting gate passes for the Fort Huachuca folks and were committed to continuing having Operation Exodus come through Tucson International Airport versus Phoenix Sky Harbor. She said it was a big win for them and the community to be able to send home and welcome those soldiers as they traveled for the holidays.

Ms. Allen stated they were in the process of hiring a full-time Community Relations Administrator to oversee the Military Lounge on a full-time basis. Since January of 2020, Craig Reck and herself had been switching off and on, as they were the only two people in the Department. She said they were needing the help since more military members were going through the airport recently and helping provide space for them to gather and helping with all their travel plans getting to and from the airport.

Ms. Allen said as for donations, they had seen a decrease of funding from the community, but as the Committee knew, the TAA fully funds the Military Lounge. She said the Military Lounge was good with food and drinks, which was left over from Operation Exodus, but they were going to do a little bit more of an active effort once they got the full-time person on board. She said they try to remind the community that they have a Military Lounge, which was in great condition, thanks to the Community

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and the Veterans Affairs Committee and have received the most positive comments. She said hopefully they would be a little more visible with their efforts on the Military Lounge once the position she spoke of earlier was filled.

Committee Member Byron said everything she touched on was what Chair Hamilton wanted to discuss with them, so they were looking forward to picking a date and time for a virtual meeting to discuss the Military Lounge because it was a big part of the Veterans Affairs Committee.

8. Four Chaplains Memorial Ceremony Update/Discussion

Committee Member Byron thanked everyone that participated at the Four Chaplains Memorial Ceremony, and she felt the service went smooth. They did have some internet connection issues with Facebook, so there were three separate posts of the ceremony. She said next year was the 80th Anniversary and Chaplains, Inc. expressed an interest to be heavily involved. They would like to have as many World War 2 Veterans to attend as possible so the planning will begin sooner for next year's event.

Discussion followed regarding younger Veteran's involvement.

No further action taken.

9. Pima County Information on the number of Homeless Veterans in the HMIS System Update/Discussion - Cliff Wade

No report was given. Item to be brought back March 2022.

10. Consideration for membership application to the "Unified Arizona Veterans" Organization Update/Discussion

Committee Member Wojciechowski stated he did not have any more information other than what he had presented at the last meeting. He said he sensed the committee was not really interested in joining the UAV since several other Committee Members were already a part of the organization. He felt it was essential that they at least stay in contact somehow and receive copies of the UAV minutes and some of the items that they deliberate on, in case something came up that provided meaningful input to the Veteran's and the Tucson areas.

Committee Member Byron said she was under the impression that the City Clerk's Office was investigating whether the VAC could become a member of the UAV.

Ana Marrufo, City Clerk's Office, Management Assistant, gave the Committee some information and feedback that she received from the City Clerk. She mentioned that because the UAV actively monitors proposes and endorses some other Veteran related legislation and the VAC had to confer with the Mayor and Council whether to support or oppose legislation, it was best the committee could not issue its own opinions on behalf of the City of Tucson.

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Ms. Marrufo said they noticed that Committee Member Aguirre was already a member of the UAV organization and as a Committee Member he could provide feedback regarding the UAV meetings, including meeting minutes and other pertinent information to the VAC as Committee Member Wojciechowski had mentioned earlier.

Ms. Marrufo stated the VAC, as a part of the Mayor and Council subcommittee, they could not pay the \$25.00 application fee to be part of the UAV organization.

Discussion took place, this item to be brought back to March 2022.

11. Election of Judge Advocate Update/Discussion

It was moved by Committee Member Rundell, duly seconded, to nominate and appoint Committee Member Byron as Judge Advocate.

Committee Member Byron accepted.

Motion passed with a roll call vote of 12-0 (Committee Members Levine and Hamilton absent), nominating and appointing Committee Member Byron as Judge Advocate.

12. Report on Current Events: For the Good of the Order

Reports on upcoming current events were provided by Committee Members Aguirre, Belden, Briseno, Byron, Kary, and Ruiz.

13. Future Agenda Items:

HMIS
Unified Arizona Veterans
Four Chaplains
Operation Exodus
Military Lounge
Veterans Parade
Stand Down
By-laws

14. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Next Meeting: March 9, 2022