



Veterans' Affairs Committee

Wednesday, March 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 April 13, 2022

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

Virtual online meeting called to order by Bruce Hamilton at 6:01 p.m. Those present and absent were:

Present:

Steve W. Aguirre
(Arrived at 6:29 p.m.)

James Louis
Carol Rundell

Michael St. Ores
Terry Byron
Henry Johnson

Bruce Hamilton
Martin Belden
Melvin Morgan

Absent:

Gaeton Briseno
William Wojciechowski

Marlon Ruiz

Mark Levine
Rocio "Rosie" Kary

Luke Johnson
Jessie Allen

Representing:

American Legion Department of Arizona

Arizona Department of Veterans Services
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary, Cactus
Chapter 2

Esperanza En Escalante
Marine Corps League, Marana Night Hawk 72
Marine Corps League, Marana Night Hawk 72 and
Post 81 Scottish American Military Society of
Southern Arizona

Tucson Veterans Serving Veterans
Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 106
Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 106

Representing:

Korean War Veterans Association, Pima Chapter
Military Officers Association of America, Tucson
Chapter

Military Order of World Wars, Department of
Arizona

Tucson Jewish War Veterans Post 201
Women in Military Service for America Memorial
Foundation

Non-voting Advisory
Non-voting Advisory

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Staff Members Present:

Delma Sanchez
Jaime Corrales

City Clerk's Office, Recording Secretary
City Clerk's Office, Office Supervisor

2. Invocation

Invocation was provided by Committee Member Johnson

3. Introduction of Guests

- a. Jennifer Gutowski - (SAVAHCS)
- b. Cliff Baser - (SAVAHCS)

4. Approval of Legal Action Report of February 9, 2022

It was moved by Committee Member Belden, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 8-0, (Committee Members Aguirre, Briseno, Kary, Levine, Ruiz and Wojciechowski), to approve the Legal Action Report from the February 9, 2022, meeting.

5. Treasurer's Report

Committee Member Belden stated he had made an error on the March financial report, stating the beginning balance indicated the amount was \$4953.36, but the actual beginning balance was \$5453.36. He said there were no receivables or payables, so the ending balance remained \$5453.36.

It was moved by Committee Member Johnson, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 8-0, (Committee Members Aguirre, Briseno, Kary, Levine, Ruiz and Wojciechowski absent), to approve the financial report.

6. Committee Reports

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

Jennifer Gutowski, Director of SAVAHCS introduced and welcomed Cliff Baser, who was in attendance, as the new Public Affairs Officer. She also announced the hire of an Interim Associate Director as a permanent Associate Director for the facility.

Ms. Gutowski said she would defer the rest of her report to the presentation she would be making on Item 7.

b. Tucson Veterans Cemetery

Committee Member Louis reminded everyone about the Missing in America project scheduled for April 23, 2022.

Committee Member Byron reported on the number of interments for 2021.

c. Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Committee Member Louis stated they continued to assist veterans during the pandemic. He said last month they had 17,416 of direct services, which consisted of any type of communications with the public to where they provided services for them, which included emails, appointments, or outreach. He stated 187 claims were submitted to

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them that were anywhere from compensation; pension; burials; and including a variety of claims.

Mr. Louis said since the pandemic, they had closed various offices, but they now had eight itinerant sites throughout the state of Arizona from the southern, northern, and central regions and they had also hired four additional benefit counselors that would be joining the team and providing the same type of quality services to Arizona veterans.

Discussion followed.

No formal action was taken.

**7. Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Process Update/Discussion
Jennifer Gutowski**

Jennifer Gutowski, Director of SAVAHCS said she wanted to address and give a little background information on the Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR). She said under the Mission Act of 2018, the President of the United States was authorized to appoint an Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission to study the current and future health care needs of veterans and evaluate the VA's healthcare infrastructure to ensure that Veterans Affairs (VA) was ready and able to continue in providing world class access and outcomes for our veterans.

Ms. Gutowski said in informing the groups work, VA officials were given three years to perform Regional Medical assessments across the countries to determine areas where there were medical facilities shortages or challenges. She said the market assessment recommendations for each market in the countries would be released to the public on March 14, 2022.

Ms. Gutowski stated the AIR Commission was a bipartisan presidentially appointed and congressionally approved Commission and they would be reviewing the VA's recommendations and determining if they would be accepted. She continued that throughout 2022, the Commission would hold public hearings; visit VA facilities; meet with partners, and listening to veterans, and then those recommendations, along with any changes made by the AIR Commission, would be provided to the President and Congress for approval in 2023.

Ms. Gutowski spoke on the following topics relating to the Asset and Infrastructure Review: Recommendations – Tucson Market:

- Overview of the Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) process
- Key Points
- Confidential preview of the recommendations that will be submitted to the AIR Commission

Discussion followed.

No formal action was taken.

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

Chair Hamilton asked if a representative on the Military Lounge was present.

Committee Member Byron said Ms. Allen would not be able to attend but asked her to relay some information on her behalf that Operation Exodus went well, and Fort Huachuca was very pleased with how easy the process went. She also announced there would be an Honor Flight soon, but it would be very restricted.

9. Stand Down Update/Discussion

Chair Hamilton reported on the Stand Down event would be held on March 16, 2022, and he stated they were looking at having about 40 buyer tables; 152 volunteers for the event, which included setup and everything prior to that; and 82 volunteers on the day of the event. He said they were having to place some of the vendors out in the parking lot in pop-up tents and canopies. He said the weather was to be in 80's for the event, so it should relatively be a comfortable day.

10. Veterans' Parade Update/Discussion

Chair Hamilton said there may not be any information to report in reference to the Veterans' Parade, stating it may be a little soon for discussion. He said the item would be scheduled next month's meeting, April 2022.

11. Four Chaplains Update/Discussion

Committee Member Byron thanked everyone who came out and supported the event. Ms. Byron said next year's was the 80th Anniversary and so they were looking to make it be a larger celebration, so they were looking at bringing back the tables; chairs; restrooms, and a band like before. She stated Chaplains, Inc. had requested to be included and they were wanting the planning stages to begin sooner than later, and suggestions were welcomed. She said they were wanting to reach out to as many World War II Veterans as possible to have them present in providing them honor and recognition at the event.

Discussion followed regarding public events in reference to CDC guidance.

No formal action was taken.

12. By-laws Update/Discussion

Chair Hamilton asked if the discussion to take place was referencing to the Military Lounge.

Committee Member Byron stated it was and she was questioning whether it was named Military Lounge or Military Liaison Office.

Committee Member Belden stated the Bylaws were amended in 2018, with changes to the name, but the copies Committee Member Byron sent out to the committee did not show those changes.

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Delma Sanchez, City Clerk staff stated she believed Committee Member Byron was working from the 2016 copy and not the amended 2018 copy. The copies sent to the committee per Ms. Byron's request were from 2016. The amended 2018 bylaws did indicate the changes as the "Military Service Lounge and Tucson Airport Authority Representatives. Ms. Sanchez stated she would work with Ms. Byron to see if there were any other changes she would want presented to the committee and in the meantime, copies of the most current bylaws would be sent to the committee.

Ms. Byron stated she thought she was working off the 2018 amended bylaws.

Mr. Hamilton said the committee would review any changes at the next meeting in April 2022.

No formal action was taken.

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

Chair Hamilton stated his understanding was the City Clerk's office recommended the committee not become a member of the Unified Arizona Veterans organization.

Ms. Sanchez stated he was correct, and that the City Clerk's office recommended that if one of the committee members organizations had a membership with Unified Arizona Veterans, possibly they could provide monthly updates to the Veterans Affairs Committee.

Discussion followed and the committee decided they would receive updates from the committee members whose organizations were part of Unified Arizona Veterans and provide updates to the committee when needed.

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

Reports on upcoming current events were provided by Committee Members Byron, Johnson, and Morgan.

15. Future Agenda Items:

Bylaws
Stand Down
Veterans' Parade
Military Lounge/Operation Exodus
Four Chaplains
Unified Arizona Veterans

16. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Next Meeting: April 13, 2022