



Veterans' Affairs Committee

Wednesday, May 11, 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 September 14, 2022

1. Call to Order / Establish a Quorum

Virtual online meeting called to order by Rocio Kary at 6:03 p.m. Those present and absent were:

Present:

James Louis
Carol Rundell

Terry Byron
Henry Johnson

William Wojciechowski

Marlon Ruiz (arrived at 6:10 pm)

Mark Levine
Martin Belden
Melvin Morgan
Rocio "Rosie" Kary

Luke Johnson
Jessie Allen

Absent:

Steve W. Aguirre
Michael St. Ores
Gaeton Briseno
Bruce Hamilton

Staff Members Present:

Delma Sanchez

Representing:

Arizona Department of Veterans Services
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary, Cactus Chapter 2
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
Tucson Jewish War Veterans Post 201
Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 106
Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 106
Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation
SAVAHCS, Non-voting Advisory
TAA, Non-voting Advisory

Representing:

American Legion Department of Arizona
Esperanza En Escalante
Korean War Veterans Association, Pima Chapter
Tucson Veterans Serving Veterans

City Clerk's Office, Recording Secretary

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2. Invocation

Invocation was provided by Committee Member Johnson

3. Introduction of Guests

- a. Jennifer Gutowski - (SAVAHCS)

4. Approval of Legal Action Report of April 13, 2022

It was moved by Committee Member Belden, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0, (**Committee Member Levine had audio issues and Committee Members Aguirre, Briseno, Hamilton and St. Ores absent**), to approve the Legal Action Report from the April 13, 2022, meeting.

5. Treasurer's Report

Committee Member Belden stated they had received a \$400.00 donation from the Vietnam Veterans of America Chapter 106; there were no expenses for the month, so the ending balance was now \$5953.36.

It was moved by Committee Member Morgan, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0, (**Committee Member Levine had audio issues and Committee Members Aguirre, Briseno, Hamilton and St. Ores 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 announced at the end of May, the facility would be hosting leadership teams from the other VA facilities within their network for leadership meetings and said this would allow them a chance to highlight all the good work being done on campuses. She said they were also celebrating Nurses Week and every year Tucson celebrates the Tucson Fab 50 and announced that 7 out of those 50 nurses were VA nurses.

Ms. Gutowski also stated their laboratory was going to be accredited by Joint Commission and were being scheduled for the first time to be reviewed, which would be happening at the end of May. She said patients would now be able to check in for appointments via their smartphone and the technology was being rolled out across the VA and believed their facility was scheduled for later in the summer. She also announced they would be providing free gun locks at various locations which would hopefully intervene for delay of suicide and work as a prevention method.

Luke Johnson, Assistant Public Affairs Officer, SAVAHCS stated they had a Resource Fair and Town Hall virtual and had the most attendees ever, so it was a very successful event.

Committee Member Johnson said on the new check in with the smart phone would help in cutting down on things but asked if there had been any consideration on travel pay for the veterans that would have to turn around and go down there to sign paperwork.

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Ms. Gutowski replied saying it was a very good question, because she knew the beneficiary travel pay was done through the kiosk but did not know how that would work with travel. She said she would investigate and get back to the committee.

b. Tucson Veterans Memorial Cemetery

No report was given.

c. Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Committee Member Louis stated they were continuing looking for itinerary sites, including the underserved areas. He said for the month of April in the Southern region, they had over 370 petitions submitted to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Discussion followed. No formal action taken.

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

Jessie Allen, Director of Marketing, Tucson Airport Authority, stated they were waiting to work with Fort Huachuca later this summer, which is when they start the planning for Operation Exodus. She said it would likely be like last year where 2,000 to 3,000 soldiers would be flying in and out over a two-week period.

Ms. Allen mentioned how Tucson International Airport (TIA) was being used exclusively, which was good for them. In preparation, they had begun to stock up on items and in terms of the VAC and their potential outreach to other military oriented organizations was for donations of water. She said they had been seeing an unprecedented numbers of military service members coming through the military lounge at this time.

Ms. Allen said a lot of them did not sign-in because they did not want their names listed on the sign-in sheet, which they fully understood, but on average, they were getting 200 to 250 military service members a week, so they were going through food far more quickly than anticipated. They had to increase their internal budget, but water was the majority of what was being taken. She said they finished the last palette of water, so with the VAC and/or other recommendations on who they could potentially reach out too would be appreciated

Discussion followed.

It was moved by Committee Member Johnson, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0, (**Committee Member Levine had audio issues and Committee Members Aguirre, Briseno, Hamilton and St. Ores absent**), to approve the purchase of two palettes of drinking water for the military lounge in care of the Tucson Airport Authority.

8. Veterans' Parade Update/Discussion

Committee Member Byron stated she had not received any updates but would share with the committee any information provided to her.

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9. Four Chaplains Update/Discussion

Committee Member Byron stated she had not made much progress but would share with the committee any information provided to her. She reminded everyone again that it was the 80th Four Chaplains ceremony and wanting it to be over the top this year.

Committee Member Rundell stated she had spoken to her unit, and they would be forwarding a check in support of the Four Chaplains and Operation Exodus.

10. Approval of proposed By-laws Update/Discussion

Committee Member Byron stated in speaking with Jessie Allen in rekindling the committee's relationship with TIA, she was made aware that in 2009 Fort Huachuca had terminated the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) and in 2013 they were looking into doing another IGA, which really didn't go anywhere and so in September when the committee returns from the summer recess, it was something they needed to look at and possible resolve.

Ms. Byron said since it referenced Fort Huachuca in one section, that was the reason for the strike through, because the agreement was null and void, the 1998 contract no longer existed, so it would be referred as the "military lounge", which was what Tucson International Airport (TIA) refers to it and she felt it was appropriate for the committee to call it the same.

Discussion followed and the item would be brought back to the September meeting for further discussion.

11. Summer Recess (June, July & August) Update/Discussion

It was moved by Committee Member Johnson, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0, (**Committee Member Levin had audio issues and Committee Members Aguirre, Briseno, Hamilton and St. Ores absent**), to approve the months of June, July, and August as summer recess months.

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

Reports on upcoming current events were provided by Committee Members Belden, Byron, Johnson, Kary, Morgan, Ruiz, Rundell and Wojciechowski.

13. Future Agenda Items:

Bylaws
Veterans' Parade
Four Chaplains

14. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Next Meeting: September 14, 2022