



Veterans' Affairs Committee

Wednesday, September 14, 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.

Legal Action Report

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:

James Louis
Carol Rundell

Michael St. Ores

(arrived at 6:30 pm and departed at 7:00 pm)

Terry Byron

Henry Johnson **(arrived at 6:06 pm)**

Marlon Ruiz

Bruce Hamilton

Georgia Wise

Martin Belden

Melvin Morgan

Rocio "Rosie" Kary

Luke Johnson

Jessie Allen

Absent:

Gaeton Briseno

Mark Levine

Staff Members Present:

Delma Sanchez

Robert Hunter

Representing:

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

Military Order of World Wars, Department of
Arizona

Tucson Veterans Serving Veterans

VFW Post 549

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:

Korean War Veterans Association, Pima Chapter

Tucson Jewish War Veterans Post 201

City Clerk's Office, Recording Secretary

City Clerk's Office

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2. Invocation

Invocation was provided by Committee Member Johnson

3. Introduction of Guests

- a. Jennifer Gutowski - (SAVAHCS)
- b. Abe Rodriguez - American Legion Post 7
- c. Ramon Encinas- Guest

4. Approval of Legal Action Report of May 11, 2022

It was moved by Committee Member Rundell, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 10 to 0, (**Committee Members Briseno, Levine and St. Ores absent**), to approve the Legal Action Report from the May 11, 2022, meeting.

5. Treasurer's Report

Committee Member Belden stated the beginning balance in May 2022 was \$5,953.36. He said since then, they had received donations totaling \$125.00 and expenses of \$266.52, leaving an ending balance of \$5,811.84.

It was moved by Committee Member Rundell, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 10 to 0, (**Committee Members Briseno, Levine and St. Ores absent**), to approve the financial report as presented.

6. Consideration/Approval of Member(s)

- a. Appointment of Ann Hollis, as recommended by the Tucson Chapter Military Officers Association of America
- b. Appointment of Gary Smith, as recommended by the American Legion Department of Arizona

It was moved by Committee Member Johnson, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 10 to 0, (**Committee Members Briseno, Levine and St. Ores absent**), to approve the recommendations of Ann Hollis and Gary Smith to the Veterans' Affairs Committee by their respective organizations.

7. Committee Reports

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

Jennifer Wasielewski, Assistant Director of SAVAHCS provided a report on behalf of Jennifer Gutowski, Director of SAVAHCS. She briefly highlighted some areas on the SAVAHCS Directors report which included The PACT Act, which was a new law that expanded VA health care and benefits for veterans and Patriot Pantry, which helped with food insecurities. It provides some food to any of the veterans and their families who have issues with food insecurities. She said they were looking for donations of some items and anyone interested could contact the center.

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Ms. Wasielewski stated another topic of interest was reproductive health and the services the VA would provide. She said the VA had come out to say they would provide support reproductive options for their women veterans in cases where the women's life could be in danger, as well as in cases of rape or incest. The VA, if possible, would perform abortions and counseling for any women who were interested in counseling about pregnancies. She said this was very new to them and were working through it locally and trying to get all the information they could nationally. She also announced SAVAHCS would be hosting a job fair at the Tucson VA Medical Center on Saturday, September 17 from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm., and with COVID still an issue, unfortunately, everyone still needed to mask.

Committee Member Johnson touched on the difficulties of reimbursement for travel pay and if there were any plans in the future on how this situation could be expedited.

Ms. Wasielewski said reimbursements could be filed through the MyhealthVet with step-by-step instructions on how to submit the paperwork and the link was provided on the SAVAHCS Director's Report.

Discussion followed. No formal action taken.

b. Tucson Veterans Memorial Cemetery

No report was given.

c. Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Committee Member Louis announced the Military and Veterans Women's Expo would be held at the Marana High School on Saturday, September 17. He said the Southern Region had itinerary sites in Green Valley and Tucson and they were looking at having one at City Hall in Yuma. Mr. Louis announced a current position for a Veterans Benefits Counselor was available in Tucson and one could go to az state jobs website to apply.

8. Military Lounge Update/Discussion

Jessie Allen, Director of Marketing, Tucson Airport Authority (TAA), stated they were experiencing a lot of theft of food and snacks at the Military Lounge, and as a result, they had since placed a lock on the area. She said they appreciated the palate of water provided by the VAC and probably would not need anymore until the fall when Operation Exodus approaches.

9. Operation Exodus Update/Discussion

Jessie Allen, Director of Marketing, Tucson Airport Authority, stated they would begin preliminary conversations with Fort Huachuca soon, since Tucson International Airport (TIA) had been used exclusively for Operation Exodus, with having anywhere from 3,000 to 5,000 soldiers flying in and out over a two-week period and so this year would be no different. She said last year, a two-day period spread over four days each way because there were so many airline cancellations and feels it may be the same this year due to pilot shortages and scheduling conflicts.

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Ms. Allen said they were working with their warm welcome volunteers, which was part of their volunteer program and allows them to get badged, helps with all the military shelving of all the food and whatnot in the military lounge and these volunteers are a huge component of Exodus. She said they would need donations of snacks in November so they would be reaching out to the VAC.

Committee Member Byron said if they sent them a shopping list, they should be able to help with that.

Ms. Allen stated TAA was very proud in continuing a partnership with the VAC and other community partners and really making it a community owned military lounge for veterans and active-duty military.

Chair Hamilton said they needed to meet with TAA representatives to talk about the structure of the VAC By-laws and the relationship between them and TAA. He said prior to COVID, the VAC was the first in providing donations for the military lounge on a year-to-year commitment with Operation Exodus and it seemed over the past three years it had been taken away from them.

Discussion followed.

Ms. Allen said they would be happy to meet with couple of members from VAC to discuss the Bylaws and the involvement with Operation Exodus.

Chair Hamilton stated he and Committee Member Byron would schedule day and time to meet with her.

No further action taken.

10. Veterans' Parade Update/Discussion

Committee Member Byron stated Abe Rodriguez, American Legion Post 7 was supposed to address the committee and provide information on the upcoming Veterans' Parade, but she did not see him sign into the meeting.

Chair Hamilton asked if they would be extending an invite to Mayor Romero to participate in the parade.

Committee Member Rundell stated she would send the invite letter to Mayor Romero's assistant who handles her calendar.

Discussion followed. No formal action taken.

11. Four Chaplains Update/Discussion

Committee Member Byron stated the park had been reserved for the event and she had also been in touch with Chaplain Zinc. Since it was the Four Chaplains 80th Anniversary, she wanted to make it special by having it later in the day where it could

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be a candlelight vigil. They were looking for donations to purchase battery operated candles, renting chairs and porta-potties and a donation to the band. She said having it later in the day would eliminate having to rent canopies for shade. She added that it was very dark at the park, and she needed to contact the City of Tucson Parks and Recreation Department as to why there was not any lighting in the area where the event would take place, as well as the flagpole.

Discussion followed. No formal action taken.

12. Approval of proposed By-laws Update/Discussion

Committee Member Byron asked if everyone had a chance to review the changes to the By-laws. She said it was mostly making changes to Section 6.5 - Military Lounge and Tucson Airport Authority Representatives, along with some formatting and spelling corrections, but other than that, it was ready to go.

It was moved by Committee Member Rundell, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 11 to 0, (**Committee Members Briseno and Levine absent**), to approve the By-laws as presented.

13. Future meetings in person or virtual - Update/Discussion

This item to be brought back in October 2022.

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

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

15. Future Agenda Items:

Future meetings in person or virtual
Veterans' Parade
Four Chaplains

16. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Next Meeting: October 12, 2022