



# Veterans' Affairs Committee

Wednesday, October 12, 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 Rocio (Rosie) Kary at 6:09 p.m. Those present and absent were:

#### **Present:**

James Louis

Gary Smith

Carol Rundell

Michael St. Ores

Gaeton Briseno

Terry Byron

Henry Johnson

Marlon Ruiz

Georgia Wise

Martin Belden

Melvin Morgan

Rocio "Rosie" Kary

Luke Johnson

#### **Absent:**

Mark Levine

Ann Hollis

Jessie Allen

#### **Staff Members Present:**

Robert Hunter

Delma Sanchez

#### **Representing:**

Arizona Department of Veterans Services

American Legion Department of Arizona

Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary, Cactus Chapter 2

Esperanza En Escalante

Korean War Veterans Association, Pima Chapter

Marine Corps League, Marana Night Hawk 72

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Post 81 Scottish American Military Society of Southern Arizona

Military Order of World Wars, Department of Arizona

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

#### **Representing:**

Tucson Jewish War Veterans Post 201

Military Officers Association of America, Tucson Chapter

TAA, Non-voting Advisory

City Clerk's Office, Recording Secretary

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**Legal Action Report  
Veterans' Affairs Committee  
October 12, 2022**

**2. Invocation**

Invocation was provided by Committee Member Johnson

**3. Introduction of Guests**

- a. Jennifer Gutowski - (SAVAHCS)
- b. Lisette Eckman - Guest

**4. Approval of Legal Action Report of September 14, 2022**

It was moved by Committee Member Rundell, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 12 to 0, (**Committee Members Hollis and Levine absent**), to approve the Legal Action Report from the September 14, 2022, meeting.

**5. Treasurer's Report**

Committee Member Belden stated the beginning balance at the start of the month of September 2022 was \$5,811.84. He said there was no income received and there were no expenses, leaving a beginning balance entering into October of \$5,811.84.

It was moved by Committee Member Morgan, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 12 to 0, (**Committee Members Hollis and Levine 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 provided a report on behalf of SAVAHCS. She noted that her Director's Report was sent out this month and encouraged the committee to share the information. She highlighted a couple of items from the report, which included encouraging getting flu shots and noting the COVID bivariant booster was available on a walk-in basis at the main facility and by appointment at some of the Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs).

Ms. Gutowski noted that she knew there were a lot of questions related to the PACT Act and while she did not have all of the answers at this time, she was committed to updating the VAC as the Veteran's Administration (VA) continued to share with SAVAHCS how this would unfold. She stated her understanding is there would be a requirement that all enrolled veterans be screened for toxic exposure and then have a process in place for those who screens positive, but this is as much as she had on the Veteran's Health Administration (VHA) side right now.

Ms. Gutowski reported they recently held a successful onboarding job fair at the facility. She stated she was very pleased at their efforts to recruit and retain well qualified staff and through this search event, they issued 130 tentative job offers for various positions including administrative and clinical. She noted she was hopeful they would be able to hold more of these types of events and that they were always hiring. She asked members who might know of someone looking for a job to refer them, as there were positions for veterans and non-veterans.

**Legal Action Report  
Veterans' Affairs Committee  
October 12, 2022**

Ms. Gutowski stated she was more than willing to identify and arrange for the participation of speakers on particular topics of interest to the committee and to contact her or Luke Johnson to make those arrangements. She thanked the committee and invited questions.

Discussion followed. No formal action taken.

**b. Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery**

No report was given.

Committee Member Ruiz stated that over the past weekend the Missing in America Project nonprofit hosted its 2<sup>nd</sup> Biannual Ceremony Burial, which was held from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. He noted that while there was participation by a lot of organizations, many folks were not there and this may have been possibly related to the publicity and a lack of representation on the VAC. He noted the Nam to Sand Jam also occurred at the same time and may have played a role.

No Formal action was taken.

**c. Arizona Department of Veterans' Services**

Committee Member Louis reported that in the Southern Region, over 6000 services were completed. He noted it included 300 submitted claims, including compensations, dependencies, and pensions. He stated that they are also entertaining claims for the PACT Act.

Committee Member Louis announced the changes in hours at the Tucson Vet Center, noting that it was strictly by appointment now as they were encountering difficulties with walk-ins.

No Formal action was taken.

**7. Military Lounge - Update/Discussion**

No report was given.

Committee Member Byron noted that they had not had a chance to visit with the Tucson Airport Authority.

Committee Member Belden noted that he received a call from the lounge supply staff, requesting the second pallet of water, and would meet with them next week to provide that.

Discussion followed. No formal action was taken.

**8. Operation Exodus - Update/Discussion**

No Report was given.

**Legal Action Report  
Veterans' Affairs Committee  
October 12, 2022**

**9. Veterans' Parade - Update/Discussion**

Committee Member Kary stated that former Committee Member Hamilton had sent an invitation to the Mayor to join the VAC in the parade.

Committee Member Rundell noted that the Mayor would not be able to participate in the parade. She stated former Committee Member Hamilton mentioned his car would be available and asked if there was anyone who wanted to ride in the parade. Committee Member Johnson stated he would.

Ms. Lisette Eckman, representing the American Legion, stated there was still time to sign up for the parade and that former Committee Member Hamilton had signed up the Tucson Veterans Serving Veterans organization and not for the VAC. She noted they had forty-one (41) entries currently and there was no limit on the number of participants, encouraging the VAC to submit an application by the deadline of October 31. She noted the Grand Marshall would be World War II veteran Don Sloan of Miller's Surplus.

Committee Member Rundell asked if there was any way the VAC could help with the Veteran's Parade. Ms. Eckman said VAC members could get involved, noting they were holding meetings at the American Legion Post 36 on 22nd Street between Wilmot and Craycroft, every Tuesday at 4:30 p.m., and anyone who wanted to help was welcomed. She stated that Mark Lacey had been working on getting sponsors, and their biggest sponsor was the CMA who had given \$2,500.00.

Ms. Eckman stated that the Veteran's Parade website was [veteransdayparade.org](http://veteransdayparade.org) and that the route map and application were available there.

Committee Member Rundell asked if it was possible to make a motion to have the VAC donate to the parade.

It was moved by Committee Member Rundell, duly seconded, to donate \$500.00 from the VAC to the Veteran's Parade. Following discussion, the original motion was rescinded. It was moved by Committee Member Rundell, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 12-0, **(Committee Members Hollis and Levine absent)** to donate \$1000.00 from the VAC to the Tucson Veteran's Parade 2022.

**10. Four Chaplains - Update/Discussion**

Committee Member Byron stated that the park was reserved for Sunday, February 5, 2023 for the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Four Chaplain Ceremony. She said they were seeking as much involvement as possible from the Tucson communities and older veterans. She noted they were hoping to hold the event at twilight so that it would be different being that it was the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary and they wanted to do a candlelight service. She stated there would be a static display of military vehicles, a regimental band from Chaplains Inc., and military personnel or veterans would be present to read the bios and participate in the ceremony.

Committee Member Byron stated that because open flames were not allowed in the city

**Legal Action Report  
Veterans' Affairs Committee  
October 12, 2022**

parks, they were looking for battery-operated candles that could be passed out. Ms. Bryon noted that the candles were approximately \$2.00 a piece on Amazon and that they would be acquiring one-hundred (100). She offered to make a motion for the VAC to purchase the candles, unless another member wanted to make that motion.

It was moved by Committee Member Byron, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 12 to 0, **(Committee Members Hollis and Levine absent)** to approve the purchase of 100 battery-operated candles for the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Four Chaplains Ceremony.

Discussion about the logistics of the ceremony and the condition of the park followed.

No further formal action was taken.

**11. Future meetings in person or virtual - Update/Discussion**

Committee Member Kary invited discussion about whether future meetings would be in-person or virtual. A discussion ensued among Committee Members with mixed opinions on both. It was generally agreed that hybrid meetings, allowing members to participate in-person or virtual, would be ideal. Further discussion was had on a meeting location, possibly the City Hall 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room, and the logistics related to accommodating future hybrid meetings. City Clerk's Office staff noted that they would be responsible for reserving the meeting space and accommodating as possible the logistical needs of the meeting. It was further discussed that some lead time to identify and reserve a space for future meetings and ensure that the space was equipped to handle hybrid meetings was necessary and that the VAC should consider January 2023 for the start of the hybrid meetings.

It was moved by Committee Member Johnson, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 12 to 0, **(Committee Members Hollis and Levine absent)** to approve that future meetings, beginning in January of 2023, be hybrid, allowing for in-person and virtual participation.

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

Reports on upcoming current events were provided by Committee Members Byron, Johnson, Kary, Ruiz, Rundell, Smith.

**15. Future Agenda Items:**

Nominations for VAC Officers  
Military Lounge  
Operation Exodus  
Veteran's Parade 2022  
80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Four Chaplains Ceremony

**16. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.**

Next Meeting: November 9, 2022