



Veterans' Affairs Committee

Wednesday, December 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.

Summary Minutes

Approved on January 11, 2023

1. Call to Order / Establish a Quorum

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

Present:

James Louis
Gary Smith
Carol Rundell (**arrived at 6:27 pm**)

Michael St. Ores
(**arrived at 6:16 pm**)

Terry Byron
Henry Johnson

Ann Hollis

Marlon Ruiz

Martin Belden
Melvin Morgan
Rocio "Rosie" Kary

Luke Johnson
Jessie Allen

Absent:

Gaeton Briseno
Mark Levine
Georgia Wise

Representing:

Arizona Department of Veterans Services
American Legion Department of Arizona
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 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

SAVAHCS, Non-voting Advisory
TAA, Non-voting Advisory

Representing:

Korean War Veterans Association, Pima Chapter
Tucson Jewish War Veterans Post 201
VFW Post 549

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Staff Members Present:

Robert Hunter
Delma Sanchez

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

2. Invocation

Invocation was provided by Committee Member Johnson

3. Introduction of Guests

- a. Jennifer Gutowski - (SAVAHCS)
- b. Kama Garcia - Center for Life Skills Development
- c. Abel Moreno - AZ Complete Health
- d. Ayla Linder - Arizona Coalition for Military Families
- e. Brian Arrington - Vets2Industry

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

It was moved by Committee Member Belden, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0, (**Committee Members Briseno, Levine, St. Ores, Rundell and Wise absent**), to approve the Legal Action Report from the October 12, 2022, meeting.

5. Treasurer's Report

Committee Member Belden stated the beginning balance at the start of the month for October 2022 was \$4,785.72. Expenses of \$26.12 for water for the military lounge and \$195.59 for 4 Chaplains candles, left a balance at the end of November and entering December of \$4,590.13. He said there was no income received.

It was moved by Committee Member Byron, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0, (**Committee Members Briseno, Levine, St. Ores, Rundell and Wise 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 provided an update on the Yuma Community Clinic, noting operations were paused for a week had resumed on November 21, following contract negotiations and they utilized the Mobile Vet Center Units to see veterans during the week of closure.

Ms. Gutowski informed the Committee that flu and COVID vaccinations were being offered and they had seen an uptick in COVID in their inpatient units. She also shared on pharmacogenomic testing, a blood test aiding in individualizing prescriptions was now available through the Phaser Program at SAVAHCS. She noted the testings provided information on the effectiveness of medications for specific patients and encouraged reaching out to primary care teams and helping spread the information on availability.

Ms. Gutowski noted SAVAHCS had a float in the Veteran's Day Parade, which won

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the Commander's Choice Award and acknowledged the Veteran's Affairs employees and volunteers who rode and walked with their float.

Ms. Gutowski discussed the PACT Act, a promise to comprehensively address toxic exposure, which would see all patients coming in for primary care appointments, screened for toxic exposures. She noted additional information could be found in her monthly report, that members had all received.

Discussion followed. No formal action taken.

b. Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery

No report was given.

Committee Member Hollis noted Wreaths Across America was scheduled for Saturday morning at the Marana Cemetery and the time and additional details were available on their website. She also stated the Cemetery Foundation would be hosting a golf tournament on Saturday, May 13, 2023, at the Tucson Omni and the flyer would be forwarded to the VAC when it was available.

c. Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Committee Member Louis reported they had 1,953 direct services, which included disability claims, questions related to pensions, education and burial benefits. He noted they had seen an uptick in claims due to the PACT Act and were in the process of hiring four employees.

7. Center for Life Skill Development Update/Discussion – Kama Garcia

No report was given.

8. AZ Complete Health Update/Discussion – Abel Moreno

Mr. Abel Moreno noted he was awaiting approval on the disclosure of details from senior management and could only provide a general synopsis. He stated they were the Regional Behavioral Health Authority (RBHA) for southern Arizona, providing ACCCHS Medicare, through a myriad of providers including COPE, CODAC and Terros. He invited the Committee to email him with any questions they may have.

9. Arizona Coalition for Military Families Update/Discussion – Ayla Linder

Ms. Ayla Linder, the Assistant Director of the Arizona Coalition for Military Families, outlined the support services they provided and areas of focus within the military communities. Those areas, she stated, were employment, family, social supports, finances and benefits, higher education, housing, homelessness, legal, mental health and substance abuse, physical health, and spirituality. She noted they were woven into the State and VA systems to help fill the gaps in different areas, including assistance navigating processes between military personnel and the community.

Ms. Linder provided examples of partnerships, including the creation of a military internship program, a skill-bridge program, and participation with the base on career and resource fairs, with the City of Tucson.

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Ms. Linder noted, through the support of military installation partners and their support line they had successfully helped individuals with the housing assistance application process. She apprised members of their annual Spring symposium on April 19th and 20th, 2023, at the Desert Willow Conference Center in Phoenix, and there would be continuing education credits (CEUs) offered, as well as scholarships to assist with the registration fees and meals. She stated everyone was welcome, but veterans, military, military affiliated family members, military government community representatives, healthcare professionals, mental health providers, social workers, first responders, Veterans Service Organization (VSO) members, employers, educators, and faith community representatives were especially encouraged to attend.

Ms. Linder stated registration would open in January and invited anyone with questions to reach out to her or anyone on her leadership team.

Discussion followed. No formal action was taken.

10. Vets2Industry Update/Discussion – Brian Arrington and Matthew Langseth

Mr. Brian Arrington described the onus behind the development of Vets2Industry, which was the vetting and consolidation to one location of the many veterans' services and service organizations nationwide. He noted the efforts of the organization was to connect service members to hiring managers, recruiters and veteran advocates to assist with assistance to military transitioning to civilian employment.

Mr. Arrington stated recruiters, including Amazon, Google, Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin, Activision, Blizzard, Spectrum, Hyundai, and FEMA, participated in monthly events that see 300 to 500 attendees, with the goal being to connect veterans with employers.

Mr. Arrington also described the efforts to promote veterans and military-spouse owned businesses, facilitate events for colleges and universities to talk about their degree programs, and work with companies in providing professional development and teaching soft-skills to transitioning military personnel and veterans. He walked the Committee through their website and described their vetting process for services.

11. Military Lounge – Update/Discussion

Ms. Jessie Allen updated the Committee on the military lounge, noting they signed an agreement with San Miguel High School which provided interns to help with the military lounge.

Ms. Allen noted Operation Exodus would take place on Sunday, December 18, 2022, and there was an expectation of 3,000 soldiers from Fort Huachuca flying out of Tucson International Airport. She stated staff would report at 3:00 a.m. and remain through 5:00 p.m. that day, to provide water and snacks to the soldiers.

Ms. Allen noted there would be no media and outgoing information was purposefully limited due to security concerns. She stated a large group from Fort Huachuca would

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be coming out to assist. She advised anyone on the Committee who was interested in helping to email her, noting it was open to two persons on a first come-first served basis, so arrangements could be made for an escort, post security.

Discussion about the donation of water and food from the VAC ensued.

It was moved by Committee Member Byron, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 10 to 0, (**Committee Member Briseno, Levine and Wise absent**) to approve an expenditure of \$2500 for Operation Exodus.

Further discussion ensued about arrangements for the pickup and delivery of the water and food items. No further action was taken.

12. Operation Exodus – Update/Discussion

Addressed during the previous Agenda Item.

13. Veterans' Parade – Update/Discussion

Discussion ensued about the parade. Committee Member Byron noted the parade video was available on YouTube.

14. Four Chaplains – Update/Discussion

Committee Member Byron reported the candlelight service planned for February 5, 2023, at Kino Park, would begin at 4:30 p.m., and the ceremony flyer was provided to the City Clerk's Office staff to share with members and asked members to also share the information as they were looking for participation from veteran's organizations that would like to place a wreath during the ceremony.

Committee Member Byron also noted there would be a military vehicle display and the Regimental Brass Band would be playing. She stated she has reserved the park and was working on the certificate of insurance from the City, and Dignity Memorial was providing the sound system, chairs, and canopies if needed. She noted the expense of the porta-potty needed for the ceremony was previously discussed by the VAC.

Following discussion, it was decided that following the acquisition and review of price quotations, the expense of the porta-potty would be placed on the agenda for the January 11, 2023 meeting for a vote.

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

Reports on upcoming current events were provided by Committee Members Byron, Hollis, Johnson, Kary, Louis, and St. Ores.

(Committee Member Byron departed at 7:18 pm)

16. Upcoming Nominations and Elections of Officers – Update/Discussion

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Discussion was held. Nominations were made for and accepted by Committee Member Kary for Chair, Committee Member Johnson for Senior Vice Chair, Committee Member Hollis for Junior Vice Chair, and Committee Member Belden for Treasurer.

It was moved by Committee Member Rundell, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 10 to 0, **(Committee Member Briseno, Byron (departed at 7:18 pm), Levine and Wise absent)** to approve the election of Committee Member Kary for Chair, Committee Member Johnson for Senior Vice Chair, Committee Member Hollis for Junior Vice Chair, and Committee Member Belden for Treasurer, and to hold the nomination and election for the position of Judge Advocate at the January 11, 2023 meeting.

17. Chair's Appointments in January – Update/Discussion

Committee Chair Kary nominated Committee Member Johnson for Chaplain and Committee Member Rundell for Secretary.

It was moved by Committee Member Hollis, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 10 to 0, **(Committee Member Briseno, Byron, Levine and Wise absent)** to approve the appointments of Committee Member Johnson for Chaplain and Committee Member Rundell for Secretary.

18. Future Agenda Items:

Nomination and election for position of Judge Advocate
Veteran's Center Presentation – Keith Hamlet
Four Chaplains – VAC contributions

19. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

Next Meeting: January 11, 2023