



# Veterans' Affairs Committee

Wednesday, March 8, 2023 - 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 12, 2023

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

Virtual online meeting called to order by Henry Johnson at 6:00 p.m. Those present and absent were:

#### Present:

Gary Smith (arrived at 6:01 p.m.)  
James Louis  
Terry Byron  
Henry Johnson

Ann Hollis

Marlon Ruiz

Martin Belden  
Melvin Morgan  
Luke Johnson  
Jessie Allen

#### Absent:

Michael St. Ores  
Georgia Wise  
Rocio "Rosie" Kary

#### Staff Members Present:

Robert Hunter  
Delma Sanchez  
Yolanda Lozano

#### Representing:

American Legion Department of Arizona  
Arizona Department of Veterans Services  
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  
SAVAHCS, Non-voting Advisory  
TAA, Non-voting Advisory

#### Representing:

Esperanza En Escalante  
VFW Post 549  
Women in Military Service for America Memorial  
Foundation

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

### 2. Invocation

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The invocation was provided by Committee Member Johnson

**3. Introduction of Guests**

- a. Jennifer Wasielewski - (SAVAHCS)
- b. Keith Hamblin - Veteran's Center Presentation
- c. Will Wood – Veteran Outreach Coordinator with Pima Community College

**4. Approval of Legal Action Report for February 8, 2023**

It was moved by Committee Member Belden, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 8 to 0, (**Committee Members Kary, St. Ores and Wise absent**), to approve the Legal Action Report from the February 8, 2023, meeting.

**5. Treasurer's Report**

Committee Member Belden stated the beginning balance at the start of the month for February 2023 was \$2,663.28. He reported there was no income and the only expense was for the porta-potty for the Four Chaplains Ceremony, leaving a current balance of \$2,505.66.

It was moved by Committee Member Morgan, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 8 to 0, (**Committee Members Kary, St. Ores and Wise absent**), to approve the financial report as presented.

**6. Committee Finances: - Discussion**

- a. Second signer on checking account  
Discussion ensued. Yolanda Lozano the Chief Deputy City Clerk provided the Committee with options to consider regarding the maintenance of an account. This included exploring other financial institutions, providing the current and potential institutions with the Committee's substantive documents, including the creating Ordinance, By-Laws and Veteran's Affairs Committee (VAC) Data Page.

Ms. Lozano noted, should the Committee pursue non-profit status, they would need to handle the process on their own and they would need to seek approval from the Mayor and Council before proceeding.

Following further discussion, it was decided Committee Member Byron would arrange a meeting with their current bank, Wells Fargo, to discuss the matter.

- b. Approval from Mayor and Council for a 501c (non-profit)  
The Committee decided to table pursuing non-profit status until Committee Member Byron had reported on her meeting with Wells Fargo.
- c. Costco membership under a 501c  
Discussion ensued related to acquiring a Costco Membership for the Committee.

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It was moved by Committee Member Byron, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 8 to 0, (**Committee Members Kary, St. Ores and Wise absent**), to approve the acquisition of a Costco Membership.

d. **Review of Financial Institutions**

The Committee decided to table discussion on pursuing another financial institution until the next meeting and following Committee Member Byron's meeting with Wells Fargo.

**7. Outreach to Mayor and Council**

Discussion ensued on Committee Members reaching out to their respective Council Members to invite them to VAC meetings and to facilitate an avenue of communication with the Mayor and Council to bring matters of importance to veterans and related to the military to them.

The Committee agreed it was important a Secretary be appointed to produce and manage letters of invitation to the Mayor, Council Members and others, and with the exception of Members personally reaching out to their respective Ward's Council Member, would table the appointment of a Secretary and the production of any additional official invitations until the next meeting.

**8. Consideration/Approval of Member(s)**

a. **Appointment of Lorraine F. Obregon, as recommended by the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary (DAVA) Cactus Unit 2**

Discussion ensued on the appointment of Lorraine Obregon to the VAC.

It was moved by Committee Member Byron, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 8 to 0, (**Committee Members Kary, St. Ores and Wise absent**), to approve the appointment of Lorraine F. Obregon to the VAC.

**9. Committee Reports**

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

Jennifer Wasielewski, Assistant Director of SAVAHCS provided a report on behalf of SAVAHCS. She reported Congress had in addition to the PACT Act, passed multiple acts related to veterans, including emergent services for acute psychiatric issues associated with suicidality.

Ms. Wasielewski noted over twenty-thousand veterans have had initial screenings and of those about half have moved on to secondary screening. She also stated another recently passed act was the Service Act, which was specific to toxic exposure by women veterans and covered breast exams and mammograms.

Ms. Wasielewski stated SAVAHCS held their first in-person resource fair in over three years on Saturday, March 4, 2023 and the event saw over 200 people. She announced the Wreaths Across America Traveling Museum was to take place on Monday, March

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13, 2023 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on the campus at the RV parking lot, noting this was part of the Vietnam War commemoration.

Ms. Wasielewski reported they would be holding a PACT Act enrollment fair on campus in July of 2023, to get more veterans in and enrolled and they were planning the 95<sup>th</sup> anniversary for October 27<sup>th</sup> of this year.

Committee Member Byron requested flyers for the events be provided to the Committee when available. Ms. Wasielewski stated she would provide those.

**b. Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery**

Committee Member Louis reported there were 37 interments, they were in preparations for the Missing in America project scheduled for April 15, 2023, and were preparing for memorial observance. He informed the Committee the Missing in America flyer would be forthcoming.

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

Committee Member Louis reported they administered over 2200 direct services and 334 claims were petitioned to the Department of Veterans Affairs. He noted they were participating in the Tucson Stand Down next week and the job fair on March 16, 2023. He stated they also worked to open their itinerant site at the Kino Veteran's Workforce Center, which was similar to the ones currently open at the Tucson Vet Center and American Legion Post 66. He noted the itinerant site in Sierra Vista remains closed due to COVID 19 concerns.

**10. Veteran's Center Presentation – Keith Hamblin**

Keith Hamblin of the Tucson Vet Center provided the Committee with an overview of the services they administered. He stated they provided readjustment counseling for combat veterans and anyone who experienced military sexual trauma (MST). He noted, unlike the Veterans Affairs, meeting eligibility requirements to qualify for services, especially for MST, was not required.

Mr. Hamblin stated they could see honor guard, medical Department of Defense staff affected by the trauma of war, drone pilots, Coast Guard involved in drug interdiction, National Guard, and Border Patrol. He noted their Mobile Vet Center was part of the national natural disaster response team.

Mr. Hamblin invited the Committee to their quarterly open house barbeque, and was scheduled for June 2<sup>nd</sup> from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. He stated the Tucson Vet Center would be participating in the Stand Down 2023. He provided his contact information to the Committee and invited them to reach out to him should they have any questions or need assistance navigating Veterans Affairs healthcare benefits.

**11. Veteran's Outreach Presentation – Will Wood**

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Mr. William Wood, Outreach Coordinator for Military and Veteran Services with the Pima County Community College, provided an outline of the services they provided. He stated they have worked closely with Upward Bound Program under Trio.

Mr. Wood stated they now had the ability to prepare potential veteran students pursuing post-secondary education through a wide variety of financial aid programs. He noted they would also be participating in the Stand Down 2023 and invited the Committee to contact him with any questions or for a more detailed briefing of their programs.

**12. Military Lounge – Update/Discussion**

Ms. Jessie Allen, Director of Marketing, Communications and External Relations for the Tucson International Airport, noted the airport had its busiest March since 2008 and the military lounge was busy. She stated they saw a lot of military missions through the airport and they collaborated with Davis Monthan and Fort Huachuca to ensure adequate space for families.

Ms. Allen stated they utilized leftover snacks from the Exodus and expressed her appreciation to the Committee for these. She invited any of the Committee Members who have not seen the renovated military lounge to reach out so a tour could be arranged.

Ms. Allen noted they would be reaching out to other military non-profit partners in Southern Arizona to broaden their resources for maintenance and ensuring enough food and options for the military.

**13. Veteran's Day Parade 2023 – Update/Discussion**

Committee Member Byron noted the last update she had was the organizing committee was working on acquiring their 501(c)(3) non-profit status.

The Committee agreed to include the Veteran's Day Parade as an agenda item for the next meeting.

**14. Future Meetings – In-Person/Virtual – Update/Discussion**

Discussion ensued regarding future VAC meetings being in-person or virtual.

It was moved by Committee Member Ruiz, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 8 to 0, (**Committee Members Kary, St. Ores and Wise absent**), to continue holding future meetings of the VAC virtually.

**15. Functions and Purposes of the Committee – Update/Discussion**

Discussion was held.

The Committee agreed a line of communication needed to be created with the Mayor and Council, in order to bring issues that were important to veterans to their attention

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and requested from the City Clerk's Office a list of contacts for the Mayor, City Manager's Office and Ward Offices.

**16. VAC Future Events - Discussion**

Discussion was held.

Committee Member Byron stated the Committee consider working to realize additional memorials at Kino Veteran's Memorial Park for Vietnam and Desert Storm veterans. She also noted her support for the Committee's continued involvement in the Four Chaplains Ceremony and its inclusion as a monthly agenda item.

Committee Member Ruiz mentioned the possibility of recruiting a representative to the Committee from the local military installation. It was agreed by the Committee this was a good idea and it would be beneficial to reach out to expand their recruitment effort to a number of military organizations.

Committee Member Ruiz agreed to reach out to Davis Monthan Air Force Base to provide them with information about the VAC and seek the appointment of a representative or liaison.

Committee Member Byron agreed to reach out to the Marine Reserve Bulk Fuel Company.

The Committee agreed to also reach out to the Navy and Airforce Reserve, and the Coast Guard Association. Mr. Wood offered his assistance in reaching out to the Air Force Reserve and the Marine and Navy Unit Reserves and noted he would follow up with his Director, Mr. Rafael Rojas, on the Committee's invitation to him.

The Committee agreed to include future events for the purpose of follow-up on the recruitment effort in the next meeting agenda.

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

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

**18. Future Agenda Items**

VAC Checking Account – Update/Discussion  
501(c)(3) Non-Profit Status – Update/Discussion  
Veteran's Day Parade  
Four Chaplains Ceremony 2024  
VAC Future Events – Update/Discussion  
Outreach to Mayor and Council – Update/Discussion  
Appointment of VAC Secretary  
Summer Break

**19. Benediction**

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The benediction was provided by Committee Member Johnson

**20. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 7:11 p.m.**

Next Meeting: April 12, 2023