



# Veterans' Affairs Committee

Wednesday, April 12, 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.**

## Revised Legal Action Report

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

Virtual online meeting called to order by Rocio Kary at 6:01 p.m. Those present and absent were:

#### **Present:**

Gary Smith  
James Louis  
Lorraine Obregon

Terry Byron  
Henry Johnson

Ann Hollis

Marlon Ruiz

Martin Belden  
Melvin Morgan  
Rocio "Rosie" Kary

Luke Johnson  
Jessie Allen

#### **Absent:**

Michael St. Ores  
Georgia Wise

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

Robert Hunter  
Delma Sanchez

#### **Representing:**

American Legion Department of Arizona  
Arizona Department of Veterans Services  
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary  
Cactus Unit 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  
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:**

Esperanza En Escalante  
VFW Post 549

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

### 2. Invocation

The invocation was provided by Committee Member Johnson

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**3. Introduction of Guests**

- a. Jennifer Gutowski - (SAVAHCS)
- b. Dominica Christian – Team Red, White and Blue

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

It was moved by Committee Member Melvin Morgan, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 10 to 0, (**Committee Members St. Ores and Wise absent**), to approve the Legal Action Report from the March 8, 2023, meeting.

**5. Treasurer's Report**

Committee Member Belden stated the beginning balance at the start of the month for April 2023 was \$2,505.56. He reported there was no income and the only expense was \$65.00 for a Costco one-year membership, leaving a current balance of \$2,440.44.

It was moved by Committee Member Johnson, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 10 to 0, (**Committee Members St. Ores 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 reported their Veterans Affairs facility was selected as one of ten medical centers across the nation for implementation of Megabus Section 5304, a pilot program to address the Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program. She noted it was a two-year pilot program intended to assist the feasibility and advisability of assisting veterans who've experienced intimate partner violence and sexual assault specifically.

Ms. Gutowski also mentioned they had been visited by Dr. Jennifer Strong, the Acting Executive Director for the Veterans Health Administration's Office of Nursing Services. She noted they were able to showcase a lot of the good work of their staff and Dr. Strong recognized ten of the nursing staff for their outstanding work.

Ms. Gutowski stated they were also visited by the Joint Commission, who carried out a four-day onsite survey as part of an unannounced accreditation visit. She noted they also visited the main medical center and all their Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOBs), except for Safford's.

Ms. Gutowski said they concluded the month with a Women's Veteran Town Hall which was held virtually. She extended appreciation to participants.

Ms. Gutowski additionally noted they recently received formal approval for the lung cancer screening program and their team was working with clinicians to ensure the best processes were in place. She noted they would be holding a quarterly veteran resource town hall and fair in June and were also coordinating a PACT Act outreach event for July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023.

**b. Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery**

Committee Member Louis stated he would forward the Committee information as soon as he received it from the Administrator of the Cemetery.

Committee Member Hollis noted the Missing in America Project was scheduled for April 22, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. and they were looking for volunteers. She said there would be 19 remains interred. She also stated the construction of the Phase 2 and the columbarium was delayed, but they have started the groundwork and the projected completion date of late October to November 2023, remains.

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

Committee Member Louis reported they administered over 2313 direct services and 376 claims were petitioned to the Department of Veterans Affairs. He noted they didn't have a breakout specific to the PACT Act, but they did see an increase in claims related to the PACT Act.

Mr. Louis noted the itinerant site at the Kino Veterans' Workforce Center starts tomorrow. He stated notifications went out over the last week and appointments were already booked for the next two weeks. He said because of this, they would likely add another slot and an additional day per week.

Mr. Louis reported their participation in the Tucson Veteran Stand Down. He noted they were working on filling positions for the Tohono O'odham and Pasqua Yaqui Nations.

**7. Team Red, White and Blue – Presentation by Dominica Christian**

Dominica Christian, Member of Team Red, White and Blue Tucson Chapter and Outreach Coordinator nationally, provided a synopsis of Team Red, White and Blue. She stated they were a non-profit veteran organization focused on the health and well-being of veterans through physical exercise. She noted they believe physical exercise helps promote mental well-being. She said they organize meet-ups and promote and encourage veterans to get out to run, hike, cycle, yoga and engage in other physical activities.

Ms. Christian provided details on "Old Glory Relay" which would take place in Tucson on April 26, 2023. She explained the event, which kicked off on April 1, 2023 in Seattle, Washington, would see an American flag carried by foot and bicycle 4000 miles to Atlanta, Georgia. She said the flag was scheduled to pass through Tucson on April 26 and this one-day leg would begin at Picacho Peak State Park and end at Sonoita. She noted a stop would be made at the Veterans Cemetery in Marana for a moment of silence, with Taps played in honor of two of fallen soldiers who this leg of the relay was dedicated to. She noted stops would also be made at Oro Valley's Ironwood Ridge High School, Oro Valley Public Library, Flowing Wells High School, American Legion Post 59 and then to Armory Park where a welcome ceremony will be held. She said the ceremony would include a presentation by Ward 6 of a Proclamation

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from the City of Tucson to Team Red, White and Blue designating April 26 as Old Glory Relay Day. She invited everyone to join them for this celebration.

Ms. Christian stated, following the ceremony at Armory Park, the flag would be passed to Gold Star Mom Marsha Begay Moon who along with the Tucson High School Baseball Team, would cycle the flag to Cherry Hill in honor of her son, Specialist Christopher Moon and from there to the Veterans Affairs Hospital where they would be presented with Challenge Coins by Ward 5. She noted the next stops would be the Memorial at the Kino Sports Complex, Pima Air and Space Museum, Southern Arizona Law Enforcement Training Center, American Legion Post 109 and along a short portion of the Arizona Trail, before finishing the leg at Sonoita at the crossroads of Highway 82.

Discussion was held and Ms. Christian responded to questions.

**8. Committee Finances - Discussion**

- a. VAC Checking Account – Update/Discussion  
Committee Member Byron reported she visited Wells Fargo and in speaking with the Manager was provided guidance on documents needed for the VAC checking account. She noted they would need to provide Wells Fargo with the LAR listing the new VAC Officers and a confirmation of the address utilized and this would be sufficient to keep the account active and accessible.
- b. 501(c)(3) Non-profit Status – Update/Discussion  
Committee Member Belden suggested for the benefit of fundraising, they consider pursuing non-profit status.

Discussion ensued.

The Committee agreed the first step should be to produce a letter for the Mayor and Council to seek a determination on approval for non-profit status, before proceeding with further discussion and consideration.

- c. Review of Financial Institutions.  
The Committee decided the clarification provided by Wells Fargo on the maintenance of the current VAC checking account made looking into other financial institutions unnecessary.

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

Jessie Allen, Director of Marketing and External Relations for the Tucson Airport Authority, stated she did not have anything new to report as they were in the planning stages for the next fiscal year. She did ask for planning purposes, if the VAC would continue to support the Operation Exodus activity, noting this would allow them to direct their resources to keeping the Military Lounge stocked for military members coming through on various missions.

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Committee Member Byron noted the VAC Bylaws included support for the Operation Exodus, including a representative on the VAC from the Tucson Airport Authority.

**10. Veteran's Day Parade**

Committee Member Byron said she hasn't received any updates on the status of the parade organizing committee's 501(c)(3) status.

Committee Member Smith confirmed Ms. Byron's statement and noted he had offered his assistance to organizing staff in meeting the application requirements for 501(c)(3) status.

**11. Four Chaplains Ceremony 2024**

Committee Member Byron stated this item was being kept on the agenda so it would remain in discussion and they would not lose track of it. She noted planning would move forward after Memorial Day and continue following their summer break.

**12. VAC Future Events - Discussion**

Committee Member Byron inquired as to whether the VAC needed to have their fundraising letters approved by the Committee before being sent out. City Clerk's staff noted the Committee's process for approval of the language in the letter was up to the Committee to determine.

Committee Member Hollis asked what the VAC had with logos on them. It was noted the magnets and candles were the only things they had with the logo.

Committee Chair Kary asked if the City Clerk's Office could furnish a copy of the new City of Tucson logo to the Committee and noted one of the items to consider was a tablecloth with the logo that could be used at events and presentations.

Discussion ensued about the use of the City of Tucson Logo with Veterans Affairs Committee and any restrictions on the creation of a specific VAC logo. It was agreed to continue discussion after they received clarity on these.

**13. Outreach to Mayor and Council – Update/Discussion**

Committee Member Louis asked if there were any issues affecting veterans that would benefit from bringing these to the attention of the Mayor and Council. He noted issues related to the improvement of the quality of life of veterans like property tax and veterans who were waived 100% but were over-income, and similar issues affecting their daily livelihoods.

Committee Member Byron suggested memorials at the Kino Veterans Memorial Cemetery for Pima County Vietnam Veterans killed in action, prisoners of war and missing in action, would be something to consider bringing to the Mayor and Council. She said it would be fitting to have this at the park to remember the 107 Pima County residents who were killed in action.

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Members agreed to continue these discussions in future meetings.

**14. Appointment of VAC Secretary**

Committee Chair Kary appointed Committee Member Obregon for Secretary.

It was moved by Committee Member Belden, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 10 to 0, (**Committee Members St. Ores and Wise absent**), to approve the appointment of Committee Member Obregon for Secretary.

**15. Summer Break**

It was moved by Committee Member Johnson, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 10 to 0, (**Committee Members St. Ores and Wise absent**), to approve a break in VAC meetings from June through September, 2023.

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

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

**17. Future Agenda Items**

City of Tucson Logo use and VAC logo  
501(c)(3) Non-Profit Status - Discussion  
Taxation for veterans - Discussion

**18. Benediction**

The benediction was provided by Committee Member Johnson

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

Next Meeting: May 10, 2023