



Veterans' Affairs Committee

Wednesday, October 11, 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.

Legal Action Report

1. Call to Order / Establish a Quorum

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

Present:

Gary Smith
Lorraine Obregon

Terry Byron
Henry Johnson

Ann Hollis

Marlon Ruiz
Martin Belden
Melvin Morgan
Rocio "Rosie" Kary

Kassie Diaz (Arrived at 6:17 p.m.)
Orlando Ford

Absent:

James "Tub-Bee" Louis
Georgia Wise
Minou De La Rosa

Staff Members Present:

Robert Hunter
Amari Leon

Representing:

American Legion Department of Arizona
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 the World Wars, Region XIII
Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 106
Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter 106
Women in Military Service for America Memorial
Foundation
Women Marine Association
SAVAHCS, Non-voting Advisory

Representing:

Arizona Department of Veterans Services
VFW Post 549
TAA, Non-voting Advisory

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

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2. Invocation

The invocation was provided by Committee Member Johnson.

3. Introduction of Guests

- a. Jennifer Gutowski, Director, and Orlando Ford, Public Affairs Specialist - (SAVAHCS)
- b. Craig Sawyer – Veterans for Child Rescue

4. Approval of Legal Action Report for September 13, 2023

It was moved by Committee Member Belden, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 7 to 0, **(Committee Members Diaz, Louis and Wise absent, Committee Members Hollis and Johnson unable to vote due to technical/audio issues)**, to approve the Legal Action Report from the September 13, 2023, meeting.

5. Treasurer's Report

Committee Member Belden stated the beginning balance at the start of the month of October 2023 was \$3,540.44. He reported no expenses, leaving a current balance of \$3,540.44.

It was moved by Committee Member Ruiz, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 7 to 0, **(Committee Members Diaz, Louis and Wise absent, Committee Member Hollis and Johnson unable to vote due to technical/audio issues)**, 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 mentioned they would be bringing their Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) teams together on October 18 and 19 for a 2-day intensive training to improve the delivery of primary care services.

Ms. Gutowski noted the Undersecretary for Health, Dr. Elnahal would be making a visit to the VA Medical Center on Friday, October 13. She stated the activities would include an all-employee townhall and a facility tour.

Discussion ensued amongst the members and Ms. Gutowski and Mr. Orlando Ford fielded responses related to the availability of Covid 19 vaccinations, PACT-Act toxic exposure screening and other matters.

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b. Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery

Committee Member Hollis reported 53 interments. She also noted the new columbarium was completed. She stated there would be an interment of 13 veterans by the Missing in America Project on October 28.

Committee Member Ruiz noted the City Clerk's Office forwarded information to all of the VAC Members on the Missing in America Project interment scheduled for October 28.

c. Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

No report was given.

7. Veterans for Child Rescue – Craig Sawyer

Committee Chair Kary said Craig Sawyer, who was to present on the Veterans for Child Rescue organization, was unable to attend. She stated she was a volunteer in the organization, whose mission was to stop child predators and child trafficking. She noted they worked in coordination with law enforcement and the partnership had resulted in a 100% conviction record for cases they've been involved with.

Ms. Kary noted they were involved in the upcoming Stop the War on Children event, along with many other sponsors.

8. Memorial for Vietnam Veteran Memorial Park – Update/Discussion

Committee Member Morgan stated the Memorial was in need of a plaque in remembrance of Vietnam Veterans and would need to be installed in time for the March 29, 2024 remembrance day ceremony.

Committee Member Byron noted one of the issues they needed help with was permission from the Department of Parks and Recreation for plaque placement.

Committee Chair Kary requested contact information for the Parks and Recreation Department from the City Clerk's Office staff, to facilitate their outreach.

9. Standing questions: COT assistance with printing and Operation Exodus, Eligibility for the VAC to apply for COT and other grants – Update/Discussion

City Clerk's Office staff noted the questions raised at the previous meeting were put to the City Clerk and responses would be provided to the Committee as soon as they were received.

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10. Military Lounge – Update/Discussion

No report was given.

11. Veteran's Day Parade

Committee Member Byron stated there was a new non-profit organization created, the Tucson Veteran's Day Parade Foundation, to coordinate the Veteran's Day Parade. She noted the parade would be on Friday, November 11 at 11:00 a.m. She stated fundraising was ongoing and there are many expenses related to the event. She said she would have the sponsorship form distributed.

Committee Chair Kary asked if members would like to consider a contribution to and participation in the parade, from the Committee. Discussion about participation and a Committee donation to the event ensued.

It was moved by Committee Member Belden, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0, **(Committee Members Louis and Wise absent, Committee Members Hollis unable to vote due to technical/audio issues)**, to approve a donation of \$200 for the Veterans Day Parade to the Tucson Veteran's Day Parade Foundation.

12. Four Chaplains Ceremony – 2024

Committee Member Byron stated a request for use of the park for the Four Chaplains Ceremony scheduled for February 4, 2024 at 1:00 p.m., was submitted. She noted they are working on getting a Certificate of Insurance from the City of Tucson Risk Management. She said they were seeking wreath-layers and will have a flyer out for distribution to the Committee.

13. Taxation for Veterans – Discussion

Committee Member Obregon stated the need to investigate avenues to assist veterans in the area of taxation and homelessness and engagement of the Mayor and Council on these issues.

Mr. Ford offered to have someone from the SAVAHCS' Housing and Urban Development – Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD VASH) program present to the Committee on what they were doing to address veteran homelessness and where their challenges were.

Discussion ensued related to avenues to collect information and data on these issues and on inviting Council Members to the VAC Meetings to engage in discussion.

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14. Outreach to Mayor and Council – Update/Discussion

Discussion ensued related to engaging with the Mayor and Council. It was decided the Committee would invite Council Members to VAC meetings to discuss issues that affect veterans.

15. VAC Future Events - Discussion

Committee Member Morgan said March 29, 2025 would be the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam war. He stated he would like to see the VAC join with other local veteran's organizations to organize an event to commemorate all Vietnam Veterans here in Tucson. He suggested utilizing the Convention Center or another substantial venue, noting the effort would require the participation of all of the areas veterans organizations.

Committee Member Smith stated the American Legion would like to see a district-wide event, which would include all of Pima County.

It was moved by Committee Member Obregon, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0, (**Committee Members Louis and Wise absent, Committee Member Hollis unable to vote due to technical/audio issues**), to the participation of the VAC in the 50th Anniversary Commemoration of the Vietnam War and recognition of Vietnam Veterans scheduled for March 29, 2025.

16. Report on Current Events – For the Good of the Order

Reports on upcoming current events were provided by Committee Members Belden, Byron, Johnson, Kary, Morgan, Ruiz, and Smith, and by Mr. Ford.

17. Future Agenda Items

a. Standing Items

Military Lounge – Update/Discussion

Veteran's Day Parade – Update/Discussion

Four Chaplains Ceremony – Update/Discussion

b. New Items

HUD-VASH Presentation

Esperanza en Escalante Presentation

Tucson Veterans Serving Veterans (TVSV) Presentation

18. Benediction

Committee Member Johnson provided the benediction.

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19. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 7:09 p.m.

Next Meeting: November 8, 2023