



Veterans' Affairs Committee

Wednesday, January 10, 2024 - 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 members 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 6:01 p.m. Those present and absent were:

Present:

William Burks
Lorraine Obregon

Terry Byron
Henry Johnson (**arrived 6:20 p.m.**)

Ann Hollis

Marlon Ruiz
Martin Belden
Melvin Morgan
Rocio "Rosie" Kary

Kassie Diaz
Minou De La Rosa
Orlando Ford

Absent:

Bruce Hayes
Gary Smith
James "Tub-Bee" Louis

Staff Members Present:

Robert Hunter

Representing:

Disabled American Veterans, Chapter 26
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
TAA, Non-voting Advisory
SAVAHCS, Non-voting Advisory

Representing:

American Legion McCulloch-Wagner, Post 109
American Legion Department of Arizona
Arizona Department of Veterans Services

City Clerk's Office, Recording Secretary

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2. Invocation

The invocation was provided by Committee Member Byron.

3. Introduction of Guests

- a. Jennifer Gutowski, Director, and Orlando Ford, Public Affairs Specialist - (SAVAHCS)
- b. Matthew Langseth, Veterans Affairs Coordinator, City of Tucson

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

It was moved by Committee Member Morgan, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0, (**Committee Members Hayes, Louis and Johnson absent**), to approve the Legal Action Report from the December 13, 2023 meeting.

5. Treasurer's Report

Committee Member Belden stated the beginning balance at the start of the month of December 1, 2023 was \$3,281.42. He reported they received no income and had expenses of \$2,250.84 for Operation Exodus and \$191.52 for the Military Lounge water, leaving a current balance of \$839.06.

It was moved by Committee Member Morgan, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 9 to 0, (**Committee Members Hayes, Louis and Johnson 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. Ms. Gutowski and Mr. Orlando Ford introduced themselves to the new VAC Members.

Ms. Gutowski said they sent out a stakeholder's report monthly and invited Members to send her any questions they had about the SAVAHCS.

Ms. Gutowski mentioned there were new eligibility guidelines for Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare for World War 2 (WW2) veterans. She stated the new guidelines were a product of the Cleland-Dole Act signed into law in 2022, which expanded eligibility for VA care for WW2 veterans. She encouraged previous applicants who were declined to reapply.

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Ms. Gutowski noted the accomplishments of the SAVAHCS and thanked the VAC and the community for supporting their organization. She mentioned their recent 95th celebration event and provided highlights of the activities and accomplishments of 2023. These included the opening of a long Covid clinic, telehealth access programs, visits by the Veterans Administration Secretary and Undersecretary of Health and the graduation of their first students in their dietetic internship program.

Ms Gutowski reported they continued their accreditation with the Joint Commission and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) and have seen their complexity level moved into the 1A complexity level, the highest level for a VA healthcare facility.

No discussion ensued.

b. Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery

Committee Member Hollis reported a few issues with the opening of the columbarium walls at the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery, specifically with the numbering. She also stated there was a break-in at the cemetery in November, which resulted in maintenance equipment being stolen.

No discussion ensued.

c. Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

No report was given.

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

Committee Member Beldon stated the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) were waiting for word from the parks staff on the memorial for Kino.

Committee Member Byron stated the design for the memorial plaque was provided to the Parks Department and she was waiting for their approval. She noted the tentative plan was to coordinate a ceremony to coincide with the Vietnam Veterans Day on the anniversary date of March 29, however, this depended on the timely response from Parks on the approval.

8. 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War – Update/Discussion

Committee Member Morgan stated he tried to get in contact with the Tucson Convention Center (TCC) for the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War event. He said he would report to the Committee when he has obtained information from the TCC.

9. Military Lounge – Update/Discussion

Committee Member Belden reported he had heard the Operation Exodus event went well and he had heard no complaints. He noted they were glad the VAC provided the pallet of water as they had used almost all of their water.

Ms. Minou De La Rosa of the Tucson Airport Authority (TAA) thanked the VAC for the donation of snacks and beverages for the Operation Exodus event. She summarized the activities and provided the Committee with photographs of the activity.

Committee Member Obregon suggested the photos be posted on the VAC Facebook page.

Chair Kary shared the VAC Facebook page with the Committee and encouraged the Operation Exodus photos and other VAC activities be featured on the page.

10. Four Chaplains Ceremony 2024

Committee Member Byron reported on the logistics of the Four Chaplains Ceremony. She stated the band was secured, the Tucson Detachment Marine Corp would be providing the rifle salute, the Scottish-American Military Society would post colors and Amanda Sinner, a Marine Corp veteran, would sing the National Anthem. She said they may need assistance getting additional Chaplains.

Committee Member Byron stated there would be expenses associated with the band and portable restrooms. She said Dignity Memorial would provide refreshments and chairs. She stated the event would be held on Sunday, February 4 at Kino Veteran Memorial Park.

11. VAC Social Media Presence

Committee Member Diaz invited Members to send her photos and information related to activities of the VAC. She noted the page was public and anyone could post. She inquired as to whether or not City Clerk's Office staff could assist with posting.

City Clerk's Office staff Hunter stated City Clerk's staff would not be able to post to the page but would forward information and photos received from members to her for posting.

12. Outreach to Mayor and Council – Update/Discussion

Discussion ensued.

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Committee Member Obregon stated she had sent letters to the Council Members and received communication from some various staff, however, she suggested there should be follow-up.

13. VAC Meeting of February 14, 2024 – Reschedule/Cancel - Discussion

Discussion ensued about rescheduling or canceling the VAC Meeting scheduled for February 14, 2024.

It was moved by Committee Member Byron, duly seconded, and passed by a roll call vote of 10 to 0, (**Committee Members Hayes and Louis absent**) to reschedule the VAC Meeting from February 14, 2024 to February 13, 2024.

14. VAC Future Events - Discussion

(Item 14 and Item 15 were consolidated)

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

(Item 14 and Item 15 were consolidated)

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

16. Future Agenda Items

- Presentation by Matthew Langseth, Veterans Affairs Coordinator, City of Tucson
- Fundraising
- Strategies to Encourage Military/Veterans Discounts
- VAC Participation/Display Table at Annual MOWW Convention in 2025

17. Benediction

Committee Member Johnson provided the Benediction.

18. Adjournment – Meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Next Meeting: February 13, 2024