



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 14, 2023 – 6:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME / President Ikram Mansori

Meeting called to order at 6:05PM.

President Mansori welcomed commissioners and members of the public. Stated meeting was being recorded through Microsoft TEAMS.

ROLL CALL

The VAC Secretary called the roll:

PRESENT: President Ikram Mansori, Vice-President Jason Chittavong, Commissioners Joseph Baba, William Barnickel, Hanley Chan, Deborah Dacumos, Courtney Ellington, Stephen Martin-Pinto, Nicholas Rusanoff, Jordan Sun

ABSENT: Commissioners Bullard (excused) McDonald (absent), Miller (excused)

Quorum present.

AGENDA CHANGES

President Mansori called for motion to set agenda.

Motion – Barnickel / Second – Martin-Pinto

Agenda set.

COMMUNICATIONS

Officers' Report:

President:

- Amended VAC Administrative Code
 - President Mansori noted amended Administrative Code of Veterans Affairs Commission was approved by the BOS at their January 31 meeting. After final approval by the Mayor, there is a 30 day waiting



period before ordinance takes effect. Expectation is VAC will officially become a 13 member commission by March 17, 2023.

- Committees
 - President Mansori noted impending return to mandatory in-person meetings and added in-person requirement extends to commission sub-committees. Further, she noted commissions cannot meet with less than a quorum of the full body. An alternative to committees, recommended by the City Attorney, is to have the commission president, during a regular (public) commission meeting, approve or assign a commissioner to take the lead on an item and report back to the commission at the next regular meeting. She concluded by saying a discussion about this topic will be added to next month's meeting agenda.
- Commissioner Liaison for District 2
 - Commissioner Wong's resignation left an open spot for a commission liaison to Supervisor Stefani, District 2. If a commissioner is interested in serving as liaison for District 2, please let commission secretary know.

Vice-President:

- Mental Health Services at VA Medical Center.
 - Follow up to John Dubpernell's presentation at the January 10 VAC meeting. VP Chittavong spoke recently to Mr. Dubpernell and will have more information to share during next month's meeting.

Staff Secretary:

- Return to In-Person Meetings for VAC will begin with March 14, 2023 meeting.
 - Commission secretary noted City requires all policy body members return to in-person meetings effective March 1, 2023. The March 14, 2023 VAC meeting will be held in Room 416 at City Hall. Commissioners are required to attend in person. Accommodation for qualifying disability is available to commissioners through SF City and County Department of Human Resources (DHR). Commissioners must contact DHR directly and follow process to apply for accommodation. Secretary will email DHR contact information to commissioners.

CVSO Report:

- Report presented by Elena Kim, Director Veterans Service Office, City & County of San Francisco. [PDF of report available on VAC website.]
 - Elena Kim reviewed report and answered questions from commissioners. Discussion points included:
 - Ways to contact CVSO: walk-in clients, appointments through CVSO website (virtual or on-site), group email inbox, phone



inquiries. Ms. Kim noted walk-ins as most popular method, and cited that as one reason office is open every day of the week.

- Question asked about appointment timelines, especially at Fort Miley. Ms. Kim responded VA Fort Miley is most popular location outside main office. She noted CVSO is looking to hire a fifth claims representative. Once that is completed, a second representative will be added to Fort Miley for “Walk-in Wednesdays” to help expedite appointment timelines.
- Ms. Kim presented and walked through steps of CVSO online appointment booking system.
- Question asked if CVSO plans to do outreach to CCSF and SF State University. Regular outreach is a challenge given short staffing level. Once staff is increased regular outreach to student veterans will become much more viable option.
- President Mansori asked how VAC can best support CVSO. Ms. Kim responded Commission can help by directing veterans to CVSO office and explaining process to veterans.
- Commissioner Chan encouraged advocating for more VSOs. With data from CVSO, Commission can advocate for more staffing.

Supervisor Liaison Reports

- District 1: Sup. Chan – Commissioner Bullard
 - Absent - No report.
- District 2: Sup. Stefani – Vacant due to resignation of Commissioner Wong
 - Commission secretary asked commissioners interested in serving as District 2 liaison to submit request by email.
- District 3: Sup. Peskin – Commissioner McDonald
 - Absent – no report.
- District 4: Sup. Engardio – Commissioner Barnickel
 - Met with Supervisor Engardio last week. Supervisor will do his best to support veterans. Commissioner Barnickel stated he looks forward to working with him over next four years.
- District 5: Sup. Preston – Commissioner Chittavong
 - Spoke with legislative aide with Supervisor Preston’s office. Office reached out about amended VAC Administrative Code and was very supportive. Additionally, working on a report of number of veterans in District 5.
- District 6: Sup. Dorsey – Commissioner Rusanoff



- Commissioner discussed veterans issues when he met with Supervisor Dorsey at New Supervisor Chamber of Commerce Welcome Reception on February 8.
- District 7: Sup. Melgar – Commissioner Chan
 - LBE legislation passed and disparate impact study being done by City Administrator. Commissioner will keep commission updated. When time is right, he recommended getting veterans registered as LBE to be included in statistic.
- District 8: Sup. Mandelman – Commissioner Dacumos
 - Talked with Supervisor Mandelman and re-iterated mental health services continue to be major challenge for veterans. Will work with UC and with the supervisor on this issue.
- District 9: Sup. Ronen – Commissioner Miller
 - Absent – no report.
- District 10: Sup. Walton – Commissioner Ellington
 - No report.
- District 11: Sup. Safai – Commissioner Bullard
 - Absent – no report.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

- Call for motion to approve January 10, 2023 regular meeting minutes.
- Motion - Barnickel/Second - Rusanoff
- All in Favor – Aye: 10, No: 0, Abstain: 0.
- Motion passed. January 10, 2023 Meeting Minutes approved.

Absent: Bullard, McDonald, Miller

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- Commission Badges – Discuss need for ID badges, next steps, and potential funding source. [Discussion / Possible Action]
 - Commissioner Rusanoff opened discussion by stating benefits of commission badges. He called for a motion for a commission vote to allow him to move forward to investigate next steps to have badges approved and issued.
 - President Mansori responded that VAC previously tried to get badges and asked Commissioner Martin-Pinto to comment.
 - Commissioner Martin-Pinto said commission looked into getting badges about three years ago. At that time Mayor’s Office questioned need, noting only a few commissions have badges, such as Police and Fire Commission.



- Commissioner Chan responded to Commissioner Martin-Pinto by listing additional commissions with badges – Rec and Park, Entertainment, Civil Service. He further noted there is nothing in the Administrative Code to preclude VAC from having badges.
- President Mansori mentioned challenge of finding funding source.
- Commissioner Martin-Pinto recommended checking with one of the commissions named by Commissioner Chan to find out what their justification was to get badges. Justification might be similar for VAC.
- President Mansori concluded discussion by noting vote was not necessary since commission previously voted on this item. She approved Commissioner Rusanoff looking into next steps and reporting back to commission. Commissioner Rusanoff agreed, but clarified he will report back when he has an update, which may not be by next month's meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

- Property Tax Exemption for Disabled Veteran Homeowners [Discussion]
 - A copy of amended bill was emailed to commissioners prior to meeting. Commissioner Chan said amended bill will be re-introduced possibly by next week and given a new SB number. He asked for support from fellow commissioners.
- California Bill to Exempt Military Retirees' Service Pension from State Income Taxes [Discussion]
 - Commissioner Chan led discussion. He stated it's a relatively new bill and noted its important benefit to veterans, adding passage of bill will help retirees stay in California. Discussion followed.
 - President Mansori concluded discussion by encouraging support for both bills. She requested Commissioner Chan keep commission informed of progress and, when time is right, both bills will be added to a meeting agenda as actionable items for commission to draft letters of support.

GOOD WELFARE

This is the opportunity for members of the Veterans Affairs Commission to share special thanks and congratulatory remarks for the good welfare taking place in the veterans community.

- Good Welfare Comments included:



- Commissioner Barnickel thanked Commissioners Hanley Chan and Courtney Ellington for speaking to BOS committee in support of Veterans LBE legislation. He further thanked President Mansori for speaking to BOS committee to support amending the VAC Administrative Code.
- Commissioner Chan acknowledged and thanked CA Assembly Member Alex Lee for championing a new law that became effective on January 1, 2023 that allows for CA bridge toll exemptions for qualifying disabled veterans.
- Commissioner Rusanoff acknowledged good work of Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD). MOHCD is working to purchase a 62 unit-building at 629 Post Street that will provide housing to unhoused and formerly unhoused Veterans. Commissioner Rusanoff extended good welfare to MOHCD on this important effort.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Public Comments included:
 - CVSO Elena Kim commented on new bridge toll exemption law. To request a disabled license plate, she reminded veterans to stop by CVSO first to get required form prior to going to DMV.
 - Commissioner Martin-Pinto cited new bridge toll exemption law and recommended commission explore possibility of expanding benefit to include toll roads.
 - Commissioner Chan shared he recently won CA delegate election and will be advocating for veterans issues.
 - Commissioner Rusanoff updated commission that letter was sent to SFMTA to request re-start of Muni Line 76X Marin Headlands Express. Additionally, MOHCD recently notified commission that project is on track to implement veterans preference in affordable housing lottery.

HONORS REPORT AND MOMENT OF SILENCE

In memory of American service members in all wars and conflicts who made the ultimate sacrifice. We also remember the passing of homeless veterans, veterans who died while awaiting approval of benefits, and suicides within the veteran and armed service communities.



ADJOURNMENT

President Mansori adjourned the meeting at 7:17pm.

The next regular meeting of the Veterans Affairs Commission will be held in-person at 6:00pm in Room 416 at San Francisco City Hall on Tuesday, March 14, 2023.

Links and meeting documents can be found on the Veterans Affairs Commission website.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Murphy
Commission Secretary
Veterans Affairs Commission

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Veterans Affairs Commission Meetings:

General meetings of the SFVAC are scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of every month, with the exception for the month of July, when there is no scheduled SF VAC meeting, and are held in Room 416 in City Hall.

Meeting confirmation, and specific announcement of general meetings are made via public posting of the Meeting Agenda as required by law, at least 72 hours prior to scheduled meetings. Agendas for SFVAC meetings (and archived meeting minutes) are available on the SFVAC



Pages of the City of San Francisco website, and are also available for public view and inspection at the 5th Floor Government Information Center at the San Francisco Public Library, at 100 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102. The documents librarian telephone number is (415) 554-4472.

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**Veterans
Crisis Line**



If you or a Veteran, you know is in immediate danger to themselves or others, please call 911 or visit your local emergency room.

The Veterans Crisis Line is also available by texting 838255 or by going to their website and chatting with a mental health professional.



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