



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, June 13, 2023 – 6:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME / President Mansori

Meeting called to order at 6:01PM.

President Mansori welcomed attendees and noted when public comment would be called during meeting. VAC secretary called roll.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: President Ikram Mansori, Commissioners William Barnickel, Douglas Bullard, Hanley Chan, Deborah Dacumos, Courtney Ellington, Stephen Martin-Pinto, Courtney Miller, Nicholas Rusanoff

ABSENT: VP Chittavong (excused), Commissioners Baba (absent), McDonald (absent), Sun (excused)

PRESENTER: Elena Kim, Director Veterans Service Office

STAFF: Mary Murphy, Commission Secretary

Quorum present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Mansori led attendees in reciting Pledge of Allegiance.

SET AGENDA

Motion called to set agenda.

Motion – Rusanoff / Second – Dacumos

All in Favor – Aye: 9, No: 0, Abstain: 0.

Absent: Chittavong, Baba, McDonald, Sun



PRESENTATION

Metropolitan Fresh Start House.

Due to a last-minute schedule conflict presenter unable to attend meeting. Presentation cancelled.

COMMUNICATIONS

Officers' Report:

President:

- Update re Veterans priority in BMR housing lottery. MOHCD recently informed Commission that technology upgrades are pending with Digital Services Department. Project's estimated completion date of summer/fall 2023 has been pushed out to unspecified time in 2024. Topic to be addressed in more detail during VAC August meeting.
- Thanked all commissioners who participated in Memorial Day celebrations at the Presidio National Cemetery.

Vice-President:

- Absent – no report.

Staff Secretary:

- Reminded about following meeting procedures as outlined in SF City Attorney Good Government Guide.
- Commission applications and re-applications for seats 3, 4, 5 and 8 pending with BOS Rules Committee. Secretary will keep track and notify commission when appointments are added to Rules Committee meeting agenda.

CVSO Report:

- Presentation by Elena Kim, Director Veterans Service Office, City & County of San Francisco. [CVSO May Report posted on VAC website and presented during meeting.]

Ms. Kim reviewed May report metrics including number of scheduled and walk-in appointments, claims filed, and program updates. Shared details about a new veterans transportation program that will help veterans secure yellow cab rides to claims-related appointments. Program funded for one year. Program flyer attached to CVSO report. Noted Governor Newsom recently appointed a new Cal-Vet Secretary, Navy veteran Lindsey Sin. Ms. Kim thanked women veterans serving on the



Commission and in the audience. She noted yesterday, June 12, was proclaimed Women Veterans Day by the CA governor. Concluded by noting CVSO continues to recruit for VA work studies. If anyone knows of student veterans interested in participating, please refer them to CVSO.

President Mansori called for questions or comments from commissioners:

- Commissioner Barnickel asked if number of walk-in appointments on report included Fort Miley. Ms. Kim said no because walk-in data comes from a system not operating at Fort Miley.
- Commissioner Rusanoff compared walk-in totals from March report to May. He noted number went up by about 200 and asked how Commission can help CVSO with increase. Ms. Kim replied CVSO is working within staff limitations and one way to maximize efficiency of appointments is to prep veterans beforehand to help them be more prepared with questions and documentation.
- Commissioner Chan commented he is working with CA State Senator Archuleta to increase funding for CVSOs. Ms. Kim commented there is potential for federal funding through the Commitment to Veteran Support and Outreach Act, legislation currently pending in United States Congress.

Supervisor Liaison Reports

District 1: Sup. Chan – Commissioner Bullard
No report.

District 2: Sup. Stefani – Commissioner Chan
No report – needed to reschedule meeting with Supervisor's staff.

District 3: Sup. Peskin – Commissioner McDonald
No report. (Absent)

District 4: Sup. Engardio – Commissioner Barnickel
No report.

District 5: Sup. Preston – Commissioner Chittavong
No report. (Absent)

District 6: Sup. Dorsey – Commissioner Rusanoff
No report.

District 7: Sup. Melgar – Commissioner Chan
Met with Supervisor Melgar and discussed Disabled Veterans Business Enterprise program. Next step is to meet with Katy Tang from San Francisco Small Business Commission. President Mansori



requested Commission Chan email Commission Executive Team to add topic as a separate agenda item to a future meeting.

District 8: Sup. Mandelman – Commissioner Dacumos

Supervisor Mandelman serves on new committee of Homelessness and Behavioral Health. Commissioner Dacumos is in touch with supervisor's legislative aide and will keep Supervisor informed of needs within veterans community.

District 9: Sup. Ronen – Commissioner Miller

In touch with Supervisor's office to set up a meeting in August. Supervisor interested in assisting VAC with female veteran issues, particularly under-employment in female veteran population. President Mansori recommended this as a topic for August meeting. She asked Commissioner Miller to update executive team by email with details for an agenda item.

District 10: Sup. Walton – Commissioner Ellington

Supervisor Walton will attend District 10's Juneteenth celebration, Thursday, 6/15, 6pm-9pm at Southeast Community Center. 150 people registered for event. A panel will talk about Black excellence and overcoming adversity. Commissioner Ellington also spoke with director of Southeast Community Center about holding veterans town hall meetings beginning next month. She will keep commission informed. Concluded by noting Supervisor Walton very supportive of veterans community.

District 11: Sup. Safai – Commissioner Bullard

No report.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

- Call for motion to approve April 11, 2023 regular meeting minutes.
- Motion – Rusanoff / Second - Ellington
- All in Favor – Aye: 9, No: 0, Abstain: 0.
- Motion passed April 11, 2023 Meeting Minutes approved.

Absent: Chittavong, Baba, McDonald, Sun

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Revisions to VAC Bylaws [Discussion / Possible Action]

- Commissioners requested additional time to review bylaw edits before vote to approve. Action postponed to August meeting.

NEW BUSINESS



AB 684: Proposed legislation to provide a stipend for county veterans service officers in counties with active military bases. A resolution drafted by Commissioner Chan will be reviewed for commission's approval. [Discussion / Action]

- Commissioners discussed legislation. President Mansori noted link to legislation and draft of resolution was emailed to commissioners prior to meeting. Secretary presented draft resolution for commissioners to review.
- Call for Public Comment:
 - Speaker Mitch Weller said the Center for New American Security found many veterans are unaware of the role CVSOs play and resources they provide. He gave as an example Travis Air Force Base, which put a Veterans Service Office on base and since then has served an average of 10 discharging veterans per day. That's a station serving 520 veterans per year. However, 33,000 people were discharged from active-duty military service in the state of CA in 2019. He commented on difference in numbers and concluded if this bill is passed it will create more equalization among discharging veterans and get federal funds into state of CA.
- No further public comment. Call for motion to support resolution for AB 684.
 - Motion – Rusanoff / Seconded – Mansori
 - All in Favor – Aye: 9, No: 0, Abstain: 0.
 - Motion passed. Resolution Draft approved.

Absent: Chittavong, Baba, McDonald, Sun

AB 718: Proposed legislation to conduct a study of mental health among female veterans in California. A resolution drafted by Commissioner Chan will be reviewed for commission's approval. [Discussion / Action]

- Draft of resolution and link to legislation was emailed to commissioners prior to meeting.
- Commissioner Ellington commented she reached out to the office of senator who sponsored this bill. She asked for clarity on what they are trying to accomplish. They could not provide details. Commissioner Ellington recommended they come up with an outcome of what research will accomplish.
- President Mansori read from legislation text posted on the CA Assembly website. Noted it was vague as to its goal. Only requirement is to summarize findings and recommendations by 2025.



- President Mansori noted bill is important and commission can provide guidance on where to focus funding.
- Call for Public Comment:
 - Speaker Mitch Weller noted it's important to recognize research conducted in this area was done in 2012 and terminated in 2013. Data is ten years old. He reviewed data available re CA female veterans and said VA disability claims for military sexual trauma related PTSD were rejected at 2 out of 3. Ratings for females for their service-connected disability ranged between 10 and 30 percent on average whereas for males it was between 70 and 100 percent on average.
 - Commissioner Ellington responded briefly to public comment. Noted research was done ten years ago and there is still no solution. She agreed with earlier recommendation from President Mansori for Commission to provide guidance on how to effectively spend funds. She further recommended guidance is from a female veteran because this is a female issue.
 - Commissioner Miller echoed support in adjusting legislation but added if choice is between supporting and not supporting it is better to move ahead with supporting current legislation.
 - President Mansori reminded vote today is for resolution drafted by Commissioner Chan. Any additional action on legislation can be added to a future meeting agenda. Motion called to approve resolution in support of AB 718:
 - Motion – Rusanoff / Second - Mansori
 - All in Favor – Aye: 9, No: 0, Abstain: 0.
 - Motion passed. VAC Resolution to support AB 718 approved.

Absent: Chittavong, Baba, McDonald, Sun

The Second Chance Program: Commissioner Courtney Ellington will share details about a bill currently being drafted to provide temporary relief and housing assistance to veterans with Other Than Honorable and Dishonorable discharge. The program will provide up to two years assistance as veterans work on a discharge upgrade. [Discussion]

- Commissioner Ellington reviewed goal of program and explained how it will assist veterans while they are in process of getting their discharge upgraded. She noted statistics provided by the Pentagon that approximately 51,400 veterans received less than honorable discharge since 2010. This bill will give relief for up to two years. Commissioner Ellington was in Washington DC last week and presented program to various members of congress and there was interest in



supporting. She said program is for veterans who have already been determined eligible for discharge upgrades.

- President Mansori noted this is in early stages and asked Commissioner Ellington to keep Commission informed on progress. Noted this could be an action item for a future meeting.

Veterans Justice Court Update

- Commissioner Rusanoff provided a brief overview of the court program. Court meets every Wednesday at approximately 1:30pm. It is a treatment court that partners with both the VA and City & County of San Francisco. Commissioner Rusanoff noted there is grant funding for a social worker and healthcare providers, however that grant is coming to an end. Commissioner Rusanoff said he is gathering information to present an update at the VAC August meeting. This will hopefully lead to Commission advising Board of Supervisors about funding needs of the Veterans Justice Court. President Mansori noted VJC funding needs can be brought to attention of BOS along with update about status of veterans priority in BMR housing lottery.

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 veteran community.

- No discussion.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

An opportunity for commission members to share information on veterans activities or briefly comment on San Francisco veterans related news.

- President Mansori reminded commissioners to email event information to commission secretary to post to VAC website. Events shared during meeting included:
 - Commissioner Ellington noted event on September 22 of Chinatown Rotary Club to pack up 20,000 meals to feed veteran families. If interested in volunteering contact Commissioner Ellington. Also working on a program to provide meals every Thursday at the War Memorial Veterans Building. Tentatively scheduled to start in August.
 - Commissioner Barnickel commented on successful Memorial Day ceremony. Acknowledged attendance of Commissioners Dacumos and Baba and participation of JROTC.
 - Commissioner Chan announced he is working with public affairs for the Navy to have the USNS Harvey Milk port in San Francisco. He will keep Commission updated.



- Commissioner Dacumos will be working with senior leadership on Fleet Week events and will keep commission updated.
- President Mansori recommended commission start planning for Veterans Day. Commissioner Bullard suggested contacting Nestor Tom.
- Vets-in-Tech will host a Veterans and Military Spouses event at Pebble Beach during the US Women's Open, June 30 – July 3.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Speaker Mitchell Weller voiced support for Other than Honorable (OTH) and Dishonorable discharge program.
- Speaker introduced himself as Christopher, a Navy veteran. He asked if there's a centralized place where veteran community events are posted.

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.

President Mansori dedicated the meeting in memory of Command Sergeant Major Raynard Lozada. CSM Lozada, a highly decorated combat veteran of WWII, Korea and Vietnam, passed away on April 27, 2023 at the age of 95.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 7:35pm.

Commission in recess for month of July.

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, August 8, 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



1-800-273-8255
PRESS 1

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.



24/7 Confidential
Support

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Crisis Line:
(415) 781-0500