



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 12, 2023 – 6:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME / Vice-President Jason Chittavong

Meeting called to order at 6:03PM.

VP Chittavong welcomed attendees and noted time allotted during meeting for public comment. VAC secretary called roll.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: VP Jason Chittavong, Commissioners William Barnickel, Douglas Bullard (6:10pm), Hanley Chan, Deborah Dacumos, Courtney Ellington, Courtney Miller, Nicholas Rusanoff

ABSENT: President Mansori (excused), Commissioners Baba (excused), Martin-Pinto (excused), Sun (excused)

Quorum present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

VP Chittavong led attendees in Pledge of Allegiance.

SET AGENDA

Motion called to set agenda.

Motion – Rusanoff / Second – Dacumos

All in Favor – Yes: 8, No: 0.

Absent: Mansori, Baba, Martin-Pinto, Sun



PRESENTATIONS

Affordable Housing for Veterans

Presenter: Manson Leung, Housing Community Organizer with Self Help for the Elderly

- Mr. Leung reviewed current and upcoming housing opportunities for veterans. He encouraged commissioners to raise awareness of opportunities within veterans community. Mr. Leung provided the commission secretary with his contact information and is happy to follow up with commissioners to answer questions and give further details.

Veterans Justice Court (VJC)

Presenter: Laura Moran, Attorney, SF Public Defenders Office

- Ms. Moran shared a flyer that provided an overview of VJC activities and breakdown of participation numbers per year from 2019 – 2022. (Flyer posted to VAC website.) After summarizing VJC activities, Ms. Moran shared her opinion, based on her experience working in the Court, about the benefits of staffing JVC with a permanent public defender.
- Following the presentation, it was determined the commission secretary will follow up with Ms. Moran and Commissioner Rusanoff about a draft letter of support on behalf of VJC to the Mayor and BOS. Draft letter will be added to VAC October meeting agenda.

COMMUNICATIONS

Officers' Report:

President: (absent)

Vice-President:

- Shared brief update about delayed implementation of veterans priority in BMR housing lottery. A letter from Supervisor Melgar's office was shared with commissioners prior to the meeting. VP noted topic was on agenda for discussion later in meeting.
- Reminded commissioners to email upcoming event details to commission secretary. Noted importance of providing advanced notice for Fleet Week and Veterans Day events so invited city officials have time to adjust schedules.
- Updated about meeting procedures: While commission president is out on maternity leave VP will lead meetings. If VP is absent there must be a pre-designated commissioner – approved by a majority vote of commission – to fill in as lead for meeting. Otherwise a meeting cannot be held.



VP asked commissioners interested in volunteering to email commission secretary. A vote to approve designated lead will be added to next month's meeting agenda.

- Reminded commissioners of the importance of reading agenda and supporting documents before meetings begin. This preparation will result in much better use of meeting time.

Staff Secretary:

- Reminded VAC follows meeting procedure of SF City Attorney Good Government Guide. Secretary noted guide is a public document available online. The secretary stated she will continue to provide instruction reminders as needed during meetings.
- Advised that commission appointments / re-appointments still pending with BOS Rules Committee. No update to share. Commission secretary will continue to monitor.

CVSO Report:

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

Ms. Kim started by thanking commissioners who have reached out individually to learn more about the operations of CVSO office. Noted she is always available to communicate offline to answer questions.

Ms Kim reviewed August report metrics, including number of scheduled appointments and walk-in clients. She commented on the especially high number of walk-in clients and attributed it to news shared throughout veterans community about an August PACT ACT filing deadline. Noted this caused some confusion and clarified that CVSO can still process claims even after PACT ACT deadline. Ms. Kim then directed attention to CVSO's new flyer, which is available online and includes a QR code for booking appointments with claims representatives. Encouraged offices displaying old CVSO flyers to update to new flyer. Ms. Kim next highlighted a new feature of CVSO report – a “success story” of work being accomplished at CVSO. She reviewed August report success story about assistance provided to a veteran's surviving spouse. Ms. Kim concluded by reviewing upcoming events and then engaged in brief discussion with commissioners.

Supervisor Liaison Reports

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

District 2: Sup. Stefani – Commissioner Chan
No report.



District 3: Sup. Peskin – VACANT

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

District 5: Sup. Preston – Commissioner Chittavong
No report.

District 6: Sup. Dorsey – Commissioner Rusanoff
Met with Supervisor Dorsey last month and his office produced certificates honoring work of VJC.

District 7: Sup. Melgar – Commissioner Chan
No report. Will meet in two weeks.

District 8: Sup. Mandelman – Commissioner Dacumos
Met Supervisor Mandelman at event last night. Will follow up with him about mental health clinic building being proposed by the mayor.

District 9: Sup. Ronen – Commissioner Miller
Was scheduled to meet with Supervisor Ronen on September 15 to discuss issues of female veterans. Meeting was canceled, new date is TBD. Commissioner Miller reminded information commissioners have to share on topic can be emailed to commission secretary.

District 10: Sup. Walton – Commissioner Ellington
Spoke with Supervisor Walton's office about veteran town hall meetings that were to start the first week of October. Due to Fleet Week, this was changed to first week of November.

District 11: Sup. Safai – Commissioner Bullard
No report.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

- Call for motion to approve August 8, 2023 regular meeting minutes.
- Motion – Rusanoff / Second - Chittavong
- All in Favor – Yes: 8, No: 0.
- Motion passed. August 8, 2023 Meeting Minutes approved.

Absent: Mansori, Baba, Martin-Pinto, Sun



UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Draft Resolution supporting CA SB 58, a bill that recognizes the therapeutic potential of certain hallucinogenic substances for the treatment of veteran mental health issues. (Note: Draft resolution was reviewed and voted on by VAC during August 8 meeting and did not receive majority support. Because Commissioner Chan drafted resolution and was absent from August 8 meeting, as a courtesy resolution was re-submitted to allow him to speak on its behalf. [Discussion / Possible Action])

- Commissioner Chan introduced his draft resolution and shared comments on his strong support of CA SB 58. He urged fellow commissioners to support resolution.
- Following commissioners' discussion, VP Chittavong called for public comment. Public commenters included:
 - Speaker introduced himself as staff psychologist at SF VA where he is a clinician investigator. Noted he was not speaking in a formal capacity representing VA. He shared statistics about depression, PTSD and suicide rates affecting veterans. Noted available treatments work to some extent but there is a public health imperative to develop new treatments. He asked commission to consider the science and need to develop new and effective treatment for veterans and to support resolution.
 - Speaker James noted from now until 2025 an exploratory group will be put forward for programs listed in CA SB 58. He encouraged commission to support resolution in support of CA SB 58.
 - Speaker Mitch Weller introduced himself as an attorney and shared information regarding various drug toxicity terms and improvements achieved through psychedelic treatment programs.
- Call for motion to approve resolution: Motion – Rusanoff / Second - Chan.
- Roll Call Vote:
 - Miller: Yes
 - Ellington: Yes
 - Rusanoff: Yes
 - Chittavong: No
 - Bullard: Yes
 - Dacumos: No
 - Chan: Yes



Barnickel: Yes

Vote: 6 – Yes / 2 - No

- Motion did not pass.

Absent: Mansori, Baba, Martin-Pinto, Sun

Following vote, question was raised if required majority is of members present at meeting or of full commission. Motion failed to reach majority of full commission. The commission secretary stated she will check with city attorney and update commission.

Update on Implementation of Veterans Priority in BMR Housing Lottery [Discussion]

- VP Chittavong mentioned Supervisor Melgar's letter seeking urge action on implementation. Supervisor's office has contacted Digital Services Department and MOHCD. VAC will be kept updated on progress.
- Commissioner Rusanoff commented further on Supervisor Melgar's letter. Noted letter raised suggestion that veteran applications be processed manually instead of waiting for technology upgrades. He asked about next steps. VP repeated commission will be updated by Supervisor's staff.

NEW BUSINESS

Fleet Week Activities [Discussion]

- Commissioner shared various Fleet Week activities being planned:
 - Fleet Week Art Show at War Memorial Building showcasing veterans' art. Commissioner Ellington asked if anyone is aware of veterans who would like to contribute art for display please contact her.
 - October 2 - Navy Band will play at 18th Avenue in front of public library. October 4 – Navy Band will play at VA Hospital by cafeteria.
 - Commissioner Dacumos will check on Fleet Week Senior Leadership seminars, Fallen Heros Concert and Blessing of the Fleet. She will be sure commissioners get information.



- Commissioner Bullard mentioned the Humanitarian Assistance Village (HAV) display on the Marina Greens during Fleet Week. Display highlights military and civilian agencies disaster response plans.

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.

- Commissioner Rusanoff extended good welfare to CVSO claims representative Elvie Flaviano for outstanding assistance to surviving spouse of a veteran. And to Elena Kim for the great work of CVSO in supporting veterans.
- Commissioner Chittavong recognized the excellent work of Commissioner Dacumos on behalf of veterans' mental health issues. And thanked Elena Kim for work of CVSO office.
- Commissioner Bullard recognized Gil Sanburn, Civilian Aide to Secretary of the Army, for his tireless efforts to support first responders and veterans.
- Commissioner Chan thanked the first responders who came to aid of Maui fires.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

- Commissioner Dacumos shared that Ms. Brooks of Westside Health Clinic will offer orientation for clinic's project. Noted commissioners are invited to go individually or as a group to visit clinic.
- Commissioner Ellington said a housing seminar will be held on September 21 at War Memorial Building. She will send flyer. Also noted the Veterans Community Award Gala is coming up on November 9. If commissioners know of a veteran they would like to submit for an award please contact Commissioner Ellington.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Speaker Mitch Weller read text related to rules of policy body majority vote. He cited SF City Attorney Good Government Guide and Robert's Rules of Order Revised Edition. Shared his opinion that it appears motion to approve resolution in support of CA SB 58 should have been passed.
- Speaker Kathleen Mink from San Francisco VA. Noted she will give a presentation to VAC during next month's meeting. She shared PACT ACT details and upcoming event information. Noted a flyer is being put together that she will email to VAC commission secretary to share with commissioners.



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

Prior to adjournment, commission secretary directed attention to display of “Code of Conduct” included in VAC bylaws. Reminded code of conduct should be followed during all commission meetings.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45pm.

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, October 10, 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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Veterans Affairs Commission



City and County of San Francisco

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