



## **REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, April 9, 2024 – 6:00 pm

### CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME / President Jason Chittavong

Meeting called to order at 6:00PM.

### ROLL CALL

#### PRESENT:

President Jason Chittavong, Vice-President Nicholas Rusanoff, Commissioners Joseph Baba, James Boatman, Hanley Chan (departed 6:40pm), Deborah Dacumos, Prince Jordan Kelly, Darya Kutovaya, Jenny Perez, John Reissenweber

ABSENT: Commissioners Bill Barnickel (excused), Courtney Ellington (absent), Ikram Mansori (excused)

Quorum present.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Chittavong led attendees in reciting Pledge of Allegiance.

### SET AGENDA

Commissioner Chan had to leave the meeting early and requested his discussion item under, “New Business” be moved up to immediately follow the first presentation.

Motion called to set agenda with requested adjustment.

Motion / Second / All in Favor / None Opposed

Motion passed. Agenda set.

Absent: Barnickel, Ellington, Mansori



## PRESENTATIONS

- Introduction to the Bayanihan Equity Center (a San Francisco based non-profit formerly known as Veterans Equity Center). Included in PPT presentation was an overview of HRC 6121 – The Filipino Veterans Fairness Act of 2023. [PPT slides posted to VAC website.]

Presenters: Luisa M. Antonio, Executive Director & Mary Roque, Operations Manager, Bayanihan Equity Center.

At the conclusion of the presentation, commissioners thanked Ms. Antonio and Ms. Roque for the work the Center is doing to support veterans. Especially noted were their current efforts, on behalf of WWII Filipino veterans, to gather support for HR 6121. Actionable comments included:

- Commissioner Rusanoff asked how VAC can support H.R. 6121. Ms. Antonio replied that presently there are 43 co-sponsors for the bill. A letter from the Commission to the chair and to the ranking member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee would be very helpful.
- Commissioner Chan commented he can reach out to Congressman Mark Takano. He said he would follow up with Ms. Antonio after the meeting.

President Chittavong thanked presenters. The commission secretary noted an action item for HR6121 would be addressed later in the meeting under, “New Business.”

As requested, Commissioner Chan’s discussion topic was the next agenda item:

- California State Commanders Veterans Council Legislative Report. [Discussion]

Commissioner Chan shared a brief overview of CA State Commanders Veterans Council. He noted he serves as the Council’s elected secretary, and recommended the VAC meetings include a report from the Council. President Chittavong asked how reports would continue if Commissioner Chan’s role with the Council ended. Commissioner Chan responded that even if he gave up his position with the state, he could request members of the Council speak at VAC meetings. President Chittavong commented it sounded like a great idea. The commission secretary will follow up with Commissioner Chan.

(Meeting returned to second item under Presentations.)



- Memorial Day Planning Update

Speaker: Ronnie Campbell, Administrative Officer Golden Gate National Cemetery

Mr. Campbell gave an update about planning details for the Memorial Day ceremony that will be held at the San Francisco Presidio on Monday, May 27. He noted several commissioners are already participating in the event. He said there are still opportunities for others to participate and shared his contact information. If commissioners would like further information, they can also contact the commission secretary.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### **Officers' Report:**

President:

- Nothing significant to report.

Staff Secretary:

- Noted the Department of Technology has created VAC email accounts for new commissioners. An email was sent with instructions on how to complete the set-up process. Please contact the commission secretary with any questions.

### **CVSO Report:**

Interim director for CVSO was unable to attend the meeting.

CVSO monthly report is posted to VAC website.

### **Supervisor Reports:**

- District 4, Supervisor Engardio: In Commissioner Barnickel's absence, the commission secretary shared an update on his behalf: The commissioner met with Supervisor Engardio and the Supervisor will plan to include a veteran interview (Hanley Chan) in the May newsletter. Along with the interview will be an article about how veterans in the Sunset can qualify for VA benefits.



## **APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

(Commission secretary noted one correction: March 12 meeting minutes were edited to list Commissioner Rusanoff as absent.)

Call for motion to approve March 12, 2024 regular meeting minutes.

Motion / Second / All in Favor.

Motion passed. Minutes approved.

Absent: Barnickel, Chan, Ellington, Mansori

## **NEW BUSINESS**

Commission Support of HRC 6121 (link to text emailed to commissioners prior to meeting) and recommendation to BOS to support legislation. [Action]

- Motion called to draft a letter of support for HRC 6121.

Motion / Second / All in Favor.

Motion passed. Draft letter of support will be reviewed/finalized during next month's meeting.

Absent: Barnickel, Chan, Ellington, Mansori

Commission support of CA SB 1012: The Regulated Psychedelic Facilitators Act and the Regulated Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy Act. Bill introduced by Senator Wiener on January 24, 2024. A link to legislative summary was emailed to commissioners prior to this meeting. A draft resolution submitted by Commissioners Chan and Kutovaya was also emailed to commissioners for their review. [Discussion / Action]

- It was noted text of CA SB 1012 was amended on March 20. The draft resolution does not reflect the amended bill. It was recommended that the resolution be updated and re-submitted during next month's meeting. After discussion, public comment was called for:

Speaker 1: Mitch Weller spoke in support of CA SB 1012. Comments included that delay of passage of bill until it is in perfect order will delay help to veterans in need. Acknowledged members of the commission do not have medical expertise, but doctors were involved in



drafting this legislation. Further noted individual personal experience does not override statistics.

Speaker 2: Christopher said when dealing with drugs or psychedelics, HSA uses surveillance systems. That, in combination with surveillance used by police department and Sheriff's department, he said, can lead to overdoses and suicides. He will elaborate further during general public comments.

Motion called for draft resolution to be re-written to match the amended text of CA SB 1012. Commissioner Kutovaya volunteered to re-write resolution.

Motion / Second / All in Favor.

Motion passed. Revised resolution will be submitted during next month's meeting.

Absent: Barnickel, Chan, Ellington, Mansori

## **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.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Commissioner Dacumos shared the Bataan Death March Commemoration will take place on April 13. (Event details posted to VAC website.)
- Commissioner Jordan said that on April 17 the San Mateo County Veterans Affairs Commission will host a veterans community fair. Everyone is invited to attend.

## **GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Speaker 1: Christopher Klien, a Marine Corps. Veteran. He shared a copy of an e-mail with commissioners about a surveillance system called Sherlock. He said he is contacting several other SF City & County commissions and departments with concerns about this surveillance system.
- Speaker 2: Andrew Dugard shared comments about ways to help improve mental health of veterans. Comments included establishing a "nutritional market" – a combination of a farmers' market and a flea market which can be a more visible platform to share information about veterans benefits. May also lead to employment opportunities for veterans. Working with



animal shelters is also a good option. Canine companionship can be very beneficial to mental health.

- Speaker 3: Mitch Weller, comments included that there is still a lack of awareness of the benefit programs available to veterans. Noted a full-service dashboard was recently launched to help veterans onboard for a complicated tax credit program. These technologies can be applied to getting veterans into housing, getting disability benefits, etc. Improved outreach and making better use of the SF War Memorial Building will help.

## **HONOR 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.

- It was noted, today, April 9 commemorates the 80<sup>th</sup> year of the Bataan Death March. Commissioner Rusanoff asked for a moment of silence in memory of the lives lost during the march.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:19pm.

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, May 14, 2024.

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.

Veterans Affairs Commission



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