



DRAFT

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 10, 2024 – 6:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME / Vice-President Nicholas Rusanoff

Meeting called to order at 6:01PM.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Vice-President Nicholas Rusanoff, Commissioners James Boatman, Bill Barnickel, Hanley Chan, Deborah Dacumos, Prince Jordan Kelly, Darya Kutovaya, Jenny Perez, John Reissenweber

ABSENT: President Jason Chittavong (excused), Commissioners: Joseph Baba (excused), Courtney Ellington (absent)

Quorum present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice President Rusanoff led attendees in reciting Pledge of Allegiance.

SET AGENDA

VP Rusanoff called for motion to approve agenda.

Motion / Second / All in Favor / None Opposed

Motion passed. Agenda set.

Absent: Baba, Chittavong, Ellington



COMMUNICATIONS

CVSO Report:

CVSO acting director Maurice Delmer reviewed the CVSO August activity report. [Report is posted on VAC website.] At the conclusion of Mr. Delmer's presentation there was discussion with commissioners. Discussion included the following comments:

- Commissioner Barnickel commented on staffing challenges at CVSO. He noted it is a longstanding problem, he's been hearing about CVSO staffing issues for all the nine years he's served on the Veterans Affairs Commission.
- Commissioner Kutovaya asked about current staff level. Mr. Delmer responded there are five full-time veterans claims representatives. He said his role is one of the claims reps., but because he's filling in as acting director that pulls him away from full-time claims work. Additionally, another claims representative is out on extended leave and expected to return in mid-October.
- A question was asked about digitizing sign-in process at VA Medical Center. Mr. Delmer responded CVSO is working on that with HSA-IT, but in meantime it will stay a manual sign-in.
- Commissioner Chan recommended the Commission be a voice to advocate for CVSO staffing support.
- Commissioner Reissenweber asked about possibility of utilizing qualified volunteers. Mr. Delmer responded that CVSO is exploring ways to use staff from other programs to supplement some administrative work. He gave an example of a recently hired DAS clerk who will be integrated into CVSO office.
- Commissioner Dacumos asked about applicants to CVSO. Specifically, she asked how positions are advertised and who is applying. Mr. Delmer replied that applications come through HSA Human Resources, which are approved by the Department of Human Resources. He added the challenge is having funding to hire additional staff.

At discussion's conclusion, VP Rusanoff thanked Mr. Delmer for his time. He noted the topic of CVSO staffing support is on the agenda later in the meeting under New Business.

Secretary Report:

- Reminder about importance of reviewing VAC website. The website is a good resource for topic ideas for future VAC meeting agendas.



- A representative from the San Francisco Legion of Honor will attend next month's meeting to share details of the Legion's upcoming 100-year celebration in November.
- The secretary recalled that during a previous VAC meeting, Commissioner Chan said during Pride Month (June) he officiated a marriage ceremony for an Air Force couple. Commissioner Chan emailed the VAC secretary a photo from the ceremony, and the photo was displayed during the meeting.

Vice-President Report:

- VP Rusanoff noted that tomorrow – September 11 – marks the 23rd year since the 2001 terrorist attack on the United States. He asked for a moment to reflect on lives lost and reaffirm our commitment to never forget the sacrifices made by so many in the service of our Nation.

Supervisor Reports:

- Veteran Articles in District 4 Newsletters: Commissioner Barnickel noted he has placed a veteran article in three District 4 newsletters. He shared that the next feature article will be about Raymond Wong, a veteran who is also a former VAC commissioner. Commissioner Barnickel further noted at the end of each article, his contact information is listed as a resource for veterans to get help connecting with benefits. He encouraged commissioners to advocate for veterans.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Call for motion to approve August 13, 2024, regular meeting minutes.

Motion / Second / All in Favor. Motion passed. Minutes approved.

Absent: Baba, Chittavong, Ellington

NEW BUSINESS

Review letter advising Mayor about CVSO staffing needs. [ACTION]

- VP Rusanoff read aloud the letter that was shared with commissioners and posted to VAC website.
- The commission secretary recommended a next step. Based on comments made earlier during the CVSO report, she suggested that before sending a letter to the mayor, she



could find appropriate person(s) at DAS for the Commission to talk with about CVSO staffing. Prior to calling for a vote on this recommended action, VP Rusanoff asked for public comment:

- Public Comment:
 - Speaker: Mitch Weller: Mr. Weller said that what we're talking about doing is putting more people in the office. The issue is that's not going to resolve the fact that there's always going to be staffing shortages, and it also increases the budget. Realistically there's no way to resolve this by putting more people in the office. The only way this can be done is by getting lower cost labor in to do all the tasks that are not actually benefits counsel. Right now, you have CVSOs in there doing data entry which is the lowest cost job that you could possibly get in the United States or worldwide doing that job for \$125,000 to \$175,000 a year. The smarter thing to do is to convert that process over to a data entry job, The data entry job could have those people rotate through answering phones, you could get ten of them for price of one CVSO. The CVSO could then focus on different benefits that are available for veterans instead of doing data entry. He added if asking the mayor for these jobs these are very low-cost positions, and the office could hire several. He concluded by saying that in 2019, CVSOs generated \$505 million of benefits at a cost of \$38 million total. He said we need CVSOs doing only CVSO jobs not data entry.
- After discussion, a vote was called to approve the next step to invite someone from DAS to attend a future VAC meeting to discuss ways to address ongoing CVSO staffing issue:

Call for motion to approve action.

Motion / Second / All in Favor. Motion passed. Action approved.

Absent: Baba, Chittavong, Ellington

OLD BUSINESS

Follow up to August meeting: Commissioner Dacumos provided further details about plans to honor CPT Jennifer Moreno and female veterans during 2025 Memorial Day ceremony. Update included sculpture samples. [DISCUSSION / POSSIBLE ACTION]

- Sculpture samples, including price estimates, were displayed. Commissioner Dacumos said she will be in communication with USF School of Nursing and the School's ROTC Program to see which sculpture can be displayed. She will look for contact information



for Cpt. Moreno's family. There is a Gold Star Recognition Day on September 20 that Commissioner Dacumos will attend. VP Rusanoff called for public comment for this item. There was no public comment. The Commission voted to support efforts of Commissioner Dacumos to secure this honor for Cpt. Moreno and female veterans.

Motion called to approve.

Motion / Seconded / All in favor.

Absent: Baba, Chittavong, Ellington

Commissioner Dacumos will keep the Commission updated.

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 Barnickel spoke about a remote (Zoom) ceremony held in late August to present a Congressional Gold Medal to San Francisco resident and WWII veteran Matthew Fong. Sgt. Fong was presented with a Mayoral Certificate of Honor during the VAC's May meeting. Commissioner Barnickel shared good wishes to Sgt. Fong on this important honor.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Commissioner Dacumos said Fleet Week is coming up and she will be sharing information about Senior Leadership events and ship tours. She said she would like it if more commissioners could attend this year's Senior Leadership programs. As she receives details about ship tours, she will email that information to VAC secretary. Commissioner Chan added he will reach out to the Chair of the Governor's Military Council for information on Fleet Week activities.
- Commissioner Chan mentioned Santa Clara Stand Down. He said he will help at the event, and they need more volunteers. He noted it is the first of its kind.
- Commissioner Jordan said there is also a Stand Down event in Alameda County on September 13 and 14.



- Commissioner Jordan announced the Wreaths Across America Event will be held at San Francisco National Cemetery on December 14 at 11:00am. He hopes VAC can have a strong presence at this event.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Speaker: Chris Ward Kline. He said for last several months he has been at these meetings speaking about technology and how it can affect veterans negatively and positively. With the help of hundreds locally, statewide and nationally he said progress has been made in moving forward with more positive outcomes by understanding how 5G and other technology created voice solutions have impacted veterans in a negative manner. Key stakeholders are now working to ensure any vulnerability or excess noise solution will be minimized and we should start seeing vast improvements to veterans and their families' healthcare. He thanked this Commission for giving him a venue and showing their concerns. Collectively, support of this commission and many others allowed voices to be heard, and items were acted on behind closed doors. Separately, Fleet Week is coming up and he said he is looking forward to all the events in the city to honor men and women in the United States Armed Forces. He concluded by referencing a news article about a Las Vegas man that pled guilty to being part of a telemarketing scam that was victimizing veterans. He left copies of the article on the podium for commissioners to look at.

As there were no other speakers, public comment was closed.

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.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:58pm.

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 8, 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

If you or a Veteran, you know is in

urlton B. Goodlett Place San Francisco, California 94102-4689



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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Support

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