



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, August 13, 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 Joseph Baba, Bill Barnickel, Hanley Chan, Deborah Dacumos, Prince Jordan Kelly, Darya Kutovaya, Jenny Perez

ABSENT: President Jason Chittavong (excused), Commissioners: James Boatman (excused), Courtney Ellington (absent), John Reissenweber (absent)

Quorum present.

Following Roll Call, the commission secretary announced that earlier that day the Executive Team received an email from Commissioner Mansori notifying of her resignation. It was noted Commissioner Mansori served two terms as commission president and did great work on the commission's behalf. Secondly, the commission secretary reminded commissioners about importance of regular meeting attendance. During the VAC's June meeting, a member of the public shared useful information about the procedure to report attendance to a commissioner's appointing authority. (Attendance expectations are outlined in VAC bylaws.)

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: Boatman, Chittavong, Ellington, Reissenweber

PRESENTATION – Warriors Resilience Challenge.

Warriors Resilience Challenge is a non-profit with a mission to foster emotional hope to military veterans and the Post Traumatic Stress/Anxiety-Disorder population, through community, art and movement. A key event sponsored by the organization is the, “Take the Rock” Alcatraz swim. Shannon Kleinschmit, the organization’s president, shared a presentation with the Commission that included details about the Alcatraz event. Presentation Slides are posted to VAC website.

During discussion with commissioners, a question was asked how the VAC can help. Mr. Kleinschmit responded that raising awareness throughout the San Francisco community will help. He also noted commissioners may know something he doesn’t (about ways to help).

COMMUNICATIONS

CVSO Report:

- CVSO acting director could not attend the meeting. The June report is posted to VAC website.
- Commissioner Rusanoff read a letter he wrote about need to support the SF CVSO. (The letter is attached to meeting minutes.)
- Commissioner Barnickel commented that issue of staffing shortage at SF CVSO has been ongoing for several years. He especially noted staffing issue at VA on Wednesdays, where only one staff member is available to help numerous veterans.

Secretary Report:

- The secretary reminded commissioners about usefulness of checking the VAC website. All meeting documents and presentations are posted to the website. It’s a good resource for ideas for future meeting agendas.

Supervisor Reports:

- District 4: Commissioner Barnickel reviewed newsletter articles about veterans in District 4 newsletters. (Commissioners can read newsletters by going to District 4 website: [District 4 | Board of Supervisors \(sfbos.org\)](http://District4|BoardofSupervisors(sfbos.org)))



- District 3: Commissioner Barnickel met with staff of Supervisor Peskin to talk about possible elimination of some city boards and commissions. This item may be included on the November ballot. A recent Grand Jury report also recommended reduction of city commissions. (The Grand Jury report, released in June 2024, is a publicly posted document, available online.) Commissioner Barnickel asked commissioners to be aware of these changes. He reviewed some recent accomplishments of the VAC and said he hopes VAC will not be eliminated.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Call for motion to approve June 11, 2024, regular meeting minutes.

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

Absent: Boatman, Chittavong, Ellington, Reissenweber

NEW BUSINESS

Honoring Jennifer Madai Moreno, BIPOC and female veterans. Commissioner Dacumos discussed possibility of presenting a small bronze statue by Elaine Bordeaux of Jennifer Moreno to University of San Francisco ROTC and School of Nursing. Target date is Memorial Day 2025. [DISCUSSION]

- Commissioner Dacumos said she spoke about Capt. Moreno during her speech at the Memorial Day ceremonies at Golden Gate National Cemetery. Commissioner Dacumos noted Capt. Moreno was a graduate of the University of San Francisco School of Nursing and ROTC program, yet she has not been honored in San Francisco. The Commissioner spoke with artist Elaine Bordeaux about Capt. Moreno. Elaine is the artist who recently had an art exhibit at the Philippines Consulate in San Francisco. Included in that exhibit was a sculpture of Filipina war hero Magdalena Leones, the only Asian silver star awardee for heroism during World War II. Ms. Bordeaux was moved by the story of Jennifer Moreno and would like to do something to honor Jennifer and female veterans. Commissioner Dacumos said she would like to invite Capt. Moreno's family as the Gold Star family to honor during next year's Memorial Day ceremonies. The Commissioner will contact family and speak to USF and said she wanted commissioners to be aware of these plans. The goal is to have a sculpture or plaque ready by Memorial Day 2025.
- Commissioner Barnickel asked about funding. Commissioner Dacumos said most likely cost would be cover through fundraising. In looking online, Commissioner Dacumos



found sculptures for about \$5,000, but some go as high as \$100,000. She will talk with artist and with families and keep commission informed of progress.

OLD BUSINESS

Follow up to June meeting discussion about how commission can generate support for CA Senate Bill 1124: Deceptive practices: Service Members and Veterans. Meeting action item is to approve a letter drafted by Commissioner Rusanoff to send to the Mayor and BoS. (The draft letter was shared with commission prior to meeting and posted to VAC website.) [Action].

- Commissioners Comments:

- Commissioner Chan commented the state does not have funding this year, but said he hopes bill will pass next year.
- Commissioner Barnickel talked about a program he worked on in 2017 with Department of Aging in collaboration with Department of Justice and other organizations. Program offered protection to seniors (including veterans) that were living in assisted living homes. Program was very effective and in 2018 it won a national achievement award. He said HSA has Institute on Aging on Geary Blvd. that has programs focused on preventing elder abuse, veterans elder abuse. This is similar to the goal of CA SB 1124.
- Commissioner Chan added that SB 1124 costs \$250,000. He said funding would go to the Department of Justice to fund attorneys to prosecute. He commented this small amount not being funded shows limitation of current state budget.

- Public Comment:

No public comment.

Motion called to approve letter drafted by Commissioner Rusanoff.

Motion / Seconded / All in favor / None opposed.

Letter approved by Commission.

Absent: Boatman, Chittavong, Ellington, Reissenweber

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 Chan commented that during Pride Month, he, as a marriage commissioner, was honored to perform the marriage ceremony for a veteran couple. (The commission secretary will share a picture of the couple with commissioners.)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Commissioner Baba said during Fleet Week ship tours will be arranged for members of the Board of Supervisors.
- Commissioner Dacumos reminded about Senior Leadership events during Fleet Week. She commented on importance of inviting members of the Board of Supervisors and giving plenty of advance notice so they can adjust their calendars as needed.
- Commissioner Chan said there will be a Stand Down in Santa Clara County and VSOs will take claims and help determine benefits on site. Commissioner Chan will email information to the commission secretary. Santa Clara pilot program could be followed by SF CVSO.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Speaker: Chris Ward Kline. Mr. Kline shared a handout with commissioners. He started his comments by thanking Commission for speaking about, "Take the Rock." He said it's a great event and one he's supported as a volunteer in past couple years. Over last several months he said he's been speaking about technology and how it's being used incorrectly. He said a veteran who acts on freedom of speech and speaks up can sometimes get people irritated and people don't like to hear it. Sometimes they target that person with technology. They can get into their Facebook, their Gmail, they can cancel their appointments, they can make their health care more difficult. He said he has been working on this with a couple of investigators and with the Board of Supervisors. Right now, this is informational only. He recommended Commissioners read it. He said he presented it last Tuesday to the Health Commission where it was very well received. He said health care is not where it should be. Health care for veterans will improve and he wants VAC to be a part of that. And for VAC to work closely with Board of Supervisors.

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 6:59pm.

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, September 10, 2024.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Murphy
Commission Secretary
Veterans Affairs Commission

ATTACHEMENTS TO AUGUST 13, 2024 MINUTES DOCUMENT:

1. Letter drafted by Commissioner Rusanoff and read during CVSO report.
2. Handout from general comment public speaker, Chris Ward Kline.

This document is Official Business of the Veterans Affairs Commission, City and County of San Francisco. It is part of the official Public Record of the City and County of San Francisco.

Public Access:

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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.

Disability Access:

City Hall of San Francisco is wheelchair accessible via all entrances. There is wheelchair accessible public parking nearby, including the underground garage at the north side of City Hall. The nearby BART/MUNI station (Civic Center) is wheelchair accessible as are nearby city bus lines and stops. For more public transit information services, call (415) 923-6142 or dial 311.

**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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8/13/2024 VAC Meeting.

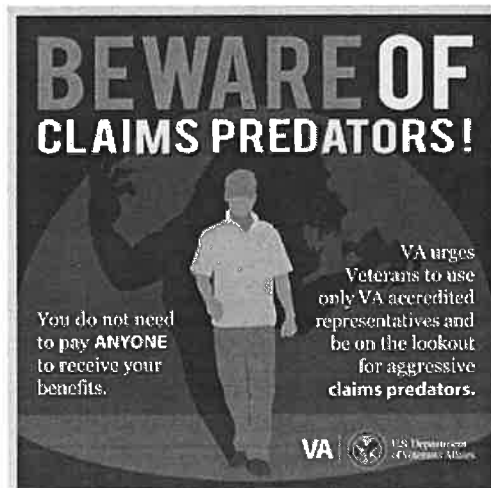
Letter drafted and read by Commissioner
Rusanoff

Nicholas Rusanoff
Veterans Affairs Commissioner
San Francisco Veterans Affairs Commission
City Hall, Room 288
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Date: August 13, 2024

To:
San Francisco Board of Supervisors
Office of the Mayor, San Francisco
San Francisco Human Services Agency (HSA)

Subject: Urgent Need for Additional Resources at the San Francisco Veterans Service Office Due to Increased PACT Act Claims



Dear Esteemed Members of the Board, Mayor's Office, and Human Services Agency,

I am writing to commend the extraordinary efforts of the San Francisco Veterans Service Office (VSO) in addressing the significant increase in claims arising from the recently enacted PACT Act. This legislation has brought long-overdue recognition and benefits to many veterans in our community who have suffered from service-related injuries and illnesses. The dedication and commitment of the VSO team in handling these claims deserve our deepest appreciation.

However, I have recently received reports from neighboring veterans service offices indicating a substantial influx of PACT Act-related cases, which has made it increasingly

difficult for our VSO to manage the large volume of veterans requiring assistance. Some veterans have expressed frustration at the challenges they face in reaching the San Francisco VSO and are consequently seeking alternatives. This situation raises a serious concern, as it increases the risk of veterans falling into the hands of predatory claims handlers, commonly known as "claims sharks," who exploit vulnerable individuals seeking their rightful benefits.

In contrast, my recent interactions with the Veterans Service Offices in Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara, and San Mateo counties have been notably different. In each case, I was able to receive a call back on the same day, demonstrating a level of responsiveness that we must strive to achieve in San Francisco.

To address these challenges and prevent further strain on our veterans, I respectfully propose the following solutions:

1. Request a Report on Follow-Up Procedures: A detailed report on how follow-ups with veterans are conducted by the San Francisco VSO is essential. This will help identify areas for improvement and ensure that no veteran is left without the support they need.

2. Hire Additional Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs): The immediate hiring of additional VSRs is crucial to meet the growing demand. This expansion will not only enhance our capacity to process claims efficiently but will also restore confidence in the services provided by our VSO.

Supporting our VSO in this manner will have far-reaching benefits for our community. By enabling low-income veterans to access Veterans Affairs healthcare, we can alleviate the strain on city resources while ensuring that these individuals receive the care they deserve. Furthermore, by securing their legally entitled pensions, we will bring additional federal dollars into the city, reducing the burden on local resources and placing veterans under the care of the Veterans Healthcare Administration, a premier healthcare service.

I believe that these actions are not only a matter of fulfilling our obligations to our veterans but also a strategic investment in the well-being of our city. I trust that the Board of Supervisors, the Mayor's Office, and the Human Services Agency will prioritize this issue and take swift action to support our veterans during this critical time.

Thank you for your attention and continued dedication to the needs of our veteran community.

Respectfully,
Nicholas Rusanoff
Veterans Affairs Commissioner
San Francisco Veterans Affairs Commission

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8/13/2024 VAC Meeting

Handout from Public Speaker, Chris Ward Kline



**THE WEAPONIZATION OF "DISINFORMATION" PSEUDO-EXPERTS AND BUREAUCRATS:
HOW THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERED WITH UNIVERSITIES TO CENSOR AMERICANS' POLITICAL SPEECH**

Interim Staff Report of the
Committee on the Judiciary
and the
Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government

U.S. House of Representatives



November 6, 2023