



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, October 8, 2024 – 6:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME / Vice-President Nicholas Rusanoff

Meeting called to order at 6:00PM.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

President Jason Chittavong (6:28pm), Vice-President Nicholas Rusanoff, Commissioners Joseph Baba, James Boatman, Bill Barnickel, Hanley Chan, Deborah Dacumos, Prince Jordan Kelly, Darya Kutovaya, Jenny Perez

ABSENT: John Reissenweber (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 the agenda.

Motion / Second / All in Favor / None Opposed

Motion passed. Agenda set.

Absent: Chittavong, Ellington, Reissenweber

PRESENTATIONS

- Kaiser Hospice – Veterans Pinning Program
Presenter: Leah Hellerstein, LCSW, MPH, Hospice Social Services Manager
 - Ms. Hellerstein discussed efforts to recruit veterans for a Kaiser SF hospice volunteer program. The hospital recently started a “pinning program” where a veteran volunteer visits a veteran hospice patient



and present them with a pin to acknowledge their service. Ms. Hellerstein requested that commissioners spread the word about this volunteer opportunity throughout the veterans community. She left business cards for commissioners to take and left contact information with the commission secretary.

- San Francisco Legion of Honor 100-year Celebration
Presenter: Paria Dea
 - Paria shared a PowerPoint presentation with information about events for the Legion's 100-year anniversary celebration. [PPT is posted to VAC website.] Celebratory events will be held between November 9-11. Paria thanked Commissioner Reissenweber for his assistance in securing a Color Guard and bagpiper for one of the special ceremonies. Paria invited all the commissioners to join the celebrations in November. She noted that a direct invite was sent to each member of the SF Board of Supervisors and asked that commissioners encourage BoS members to attend. Commissioners thanked Paria for the information and enthusiastically expressed their interest in attending the Legion's celebrations.

COMMUNICATIONS

CVSO Report:

- CVSO director did not attend the meeting. September's report is posted on VAC website.

Secretary Report:

- Noted that earlier in the day she emailed all commissioners, a "Call for Agenda Items" for November 12 meeting. Asked commissioners to reply to that email with any agenda item requests for next month's meeting. Indicate if the requested item is discussion or actionable and attach all supporting documents.
- Reminded that next month's agenda will include nominations for commission president and vice-president. Voting will be held during December 10 meeting.
- Provided contact information for the Veteran's Day Parade organizer. A follow-up email will be sent to all commissioners. The organizer, Nestor Tom, is looking forward to commissioners' participation.



- Update from last month's meeting discussion about support for the CVSO. A DAS manager will attend a future VAC meeting to answer commissioners' questions about CVSO staffing.

Vice-President Report:

- Brought attention to the recent passage of CA SB1025, which expands the military diversion program to include certain felony offenses for veterans. The expansion of this program will increase the number of veterans eligible for pre-trial diversions. It is imperative that the BoS prepare to provide additional support to the Veterans Justice Court. The expansion will create a greater need for comprehensive care to help veterans re-integrate into society. Supporting these efforts is essential to ensure the success of our veterans population.

Supervisor Reports:

- District 7 and District 4: Commissioner Barnickel talked with District 7 and 4 supervisors about including veterans in future affordable housing projects. He briefly talked about the recently approved Stonestown housing project and noted that, through the efforts of several VAC commissioners, housing units in that project were designated for veterans. He concluded by encouraging commissioners to talk with supervisors about the importance of being advocates of affordable housing for veterans.

Commissioner Barnickel asked about status of the veterans priority in preference categories of the San Francisco housing lottery. The commission secretary said a representative from the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) will be invited to give an update at a commission meeting in early 2025.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

- Call for motion to approve September 10, 2024 regular meeting minutes.

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

Absent: Ellington, Reissenweber

NEW BUSINESS



- Santa Clara Stand Down 2024. Commissioner Chan attended the event and shared feedback with commissioners. Discussion ensued about challenges encountered by veterans attending the three-day event. Issues mentioned included confusion about pre-registration requirements, long wait time to see a claims representative, prioritization of walk-ins over appointments, and no attendance from SF or Oakland CVSOs. If an event is ever done in SF, it was recommended to start on a smaller scale and work out issues before moving to a larger event like Santa Clara's. Commissioner Chan noted the Santa Clara Stand Down was a pilot program modeled on a Colorado Stand Down. Discussion concluded with a recommendation that a director involved with oversight of the Santa Clara event be invited to a future commission meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

- Gold Star Parents' Day and Cpt. Moreno. Commissioner Dacumos updated commissioners on progress made since September's meeting on the efforts to honor Cpt. Moreno during the 2025 Memorial Day ceremonies.
 - Commission Dacumos said Cpt. Moreno's family presented the USF School of Nursing with a flag and medals of Cpt. Moreno. School did not think they had a place for a statue. Noted fundraising timeline is running tight. Cpt. Moreno's family is aware of honor during next year's Memorial Day ceremony. Commissioner Dacumos will reach out to the family again and 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 Jordan congratulated Hanley Chan for his recent graduation from SFFD Academy.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Commissioner Baba reminded the commission about Honor our Fallen Concert on Thursday, October 10.
- Commissioner Barnickel shared that the Navy Band will play at the VA at 12:30pm tomorrow, October 9.



- Commissioner Dacumos said the Inter-Faith Blessing of the Fleet is on Sunday, October 13. And reminded that the Senior Leadership Seminars will start tomorrow. Encouraged commissioners to attend.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Speaker: Chris Ward Kline.

He thanked the commission for bringing up the Veterans Day Parade on Sunday November 10 and noted he will be marching in the parade. He mentioned commissioners' comments he heard earlier in the meeting about systems talking to systems, computers talking to computers, and that is exactly what he's been talking about these past several months. He said basically that's what it is, someone has a computer system and they want to take over someone's computer and make all the decisions. Noted this happened before in 1970. The last couple of weeks he has been speaking at churches to warn people that when this comes out it's going to make people very angry and may lead to protests. In California, in 1972, they passed Proposition 11 because of technology. Concluded by announcing that the Marine Corps. Drill Team and Band will perform multiple places this week, including Friday at 4:00pm in Union Square. Encouraged commissioners to attend.

- Speaker: John Lowell

He said he was at the meeting to observe and he has a pending application to volunteer with the VA next year. Shared that because of a collision, he's experienced injuries and PTSD similar to what veterans experience in combat. Noted news stories that said DoD and VA were not speaking the same language on the health of people with injuries sustained in combat and how that were treated by SF VA. SF Department of Public Health did not have the same records as the SF Police Department. They were not communicating about people with sustained injuries. Noted that after correct training he will bring this to the attention of the VA.

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 6:56pm.

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, November 12, 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 SFVAC 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



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**Veterans
Crisis Line**



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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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