



CITY COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS



MEETING MINUTES

16 July 2018

Girl Scouts of SW TX, 811 N Coker Loop, SATX, 78216

Commission Present: Richard Delgado – Chairman, Chris Vierya – District 1, James Devno – District 2, Juanita Sepulveda – District 4, Al Dominguez – District 6, Ramon Gonzales – District 7, James Pobanz – District 8, Tim Ferrell – District 9, Matthew Scott – District 10.

Commission Absent: John Rodriguez – District 3, Vacant – District 5.

Staff Present: Maj Gen Juan Ayala (USMC retired), and SFC Edward Brown (USA retired).

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman Al Dominguez called the meeting to order, Chairman will be late arrival.

Pledge of Allegiance

Vice Chairman Al Dominguez led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Roll Call

Vice Chairman Al Dominguez called the roll noting the late arrival of the Chairman, and absence of Districts 3 & 5.

Approval of Minutes

19 Mar 18 & 21 May 18 minutes approved by Chris Vierya – District 1 & Juanita Sepulveda – District 4, no opposition.

Citizens to be Heard

Maj Gen Angela Salinas said a few words as the host of this meeting held at the Girl Scouts of SW TX facility. She expressed her gratitude that she was able to host this event then described some of her service history in the US Marine Corps. She expressed her thanks that the Girl Scouts contacted her about the CEO position because she felt it was a great organization which represented a good number of traditional American values with a leadership structure that all Veterans could appreciate and understand. She praised that both the Girl & Boy

Scouts started at an early age of 5 years old teaching structure, discipline, and pledge to our country and flag plus teaching the children the value of an oath to organization and country. She offered additional Girl Scout Cookies which were provided as snacks then closed out her welcome speech.

No further action was required.

Colt Osborne from CM Courage's Office was announced by Tim Ferrell – District 9 since CM Courage was unable to attend. Mr. Ferrell thanked Maj Gen Salinas again for the use of her facility to which the Maj Gen replied that it was her pleasure to host a fine organization like the VAC and the City of San Antonio who she was extremely thankful to recognize Women Veteran's Day on June 12th. She said she was present and could not think of a more deserving and honorable event than to recognize Women Veterans by dedicating their own official day.

No further action was required.

Chairman Robert Delgado arrived and took over the meeting. He announced a citizen to be heard, Tony Griffin who announced himself as a representative of the Haven for Hope Church, a non-profit church. He announced he had nothing to present, he just wanted to observe a meeting and see what the VAC was about since a good portion of his patrons were Veterans and he wanted to see about other methods to better represent and assist those Vets.

No further action was required.

Chairman Delgado asked Colt Osborne if he had anything he wanted to say on behalf of CM Courage. Mr. Osborne just reiterated the CM's thanks to Maj Gen Salinas for the use of the nice facility for this meeting.

No further action was required.

Information Items

Update on the VAC Bylaws; Chair Delgado asked SFC Brown for any information updates. SFC Brown stated the status was that they were still with the City Attorney's Office and he checked in bi-weekly for status. SFC Brown stated it was still in play for approval but there were higher priority items that were taking the lead at this time, but the bylaws were not forgotten. Chair Delgado mentioned to the VAC Members to remind their CMs about the bylaws in an attempt to possibly enhance the approval process. A question was asked if there was a timeline and how long this had been going on. Chair Delgado mentioned the finalized portion was around 90 days old and SFC Brown mentioned it had been in the City Attorney's hands for a little over 60 days. Maj Gen Ayala reminded the VAC that some CMs were part of the Governance Committee which must first review/approve the bylaws, so he stressed if those CMs were part of the VAC Member's District, talk to them about this matter to try and move it along.

No further action was required.

New Business

Chairman Delgado started the discussion on the Veteran Hiring Preference matter as how the VAC can approach it, how it gets done, and how it can last. Chair Delgado stated that the VAC while having excellent ideas and making great strides was still not known by many San Antonio Veterans, so he stressed to the other members that they needed to make themselves visible. He mentioned that he didn't have expectations for members to attend all events because he knew everyone had other responsibilities, but he stressed that making physical appearances

when possible would only help the VAC mission. He asked that when a member attends any event, try to represent the VAC and not what a member may do for a living. He believes that doing so would enhance knowledge of the VACs existence and mission.

Juanita Sepulveda – District 4 asked the Chair about the possibility of acquiring approved talking points to use when speaking to the public to better represent.

Chair Delgado referred the question to Maj Gen Ayala who stated that was a great idea. Maj Gen Ayala mentioned that his office and the VAC needed to put some ideas together and he would present them to the City Attorney for review. He stated to remember that one point that could always be made was the VAC was the only organization that he was aware of that represented every district plus every Veteran at the ground level, to remember when representing that no other organization did that. The Maj Gen asked the Chair to establish a date/timeline to when this task needed to be accomplished. Chair Delgado said he would coordinate with each representative individually.

Chair Delgado now referred to Matthew Scott – District 10 to continue discussion on the Veteran Hiring Preference matter. Mr. Scott stressed that the VAC needed to brainstorm about the Vet Hiring Process because he believed that something like that could have some good punch for SA Veterans. He praised the initial project which was COSA HR tracking/identifying Veterans in their system for the first time. He stressed that until things are mentioned that you may think are “common sense” items, nothing is done, so do not be afraid to bring up an idea or question. We are Military City USA and don’t have a Veteran’s Hiring Preference when other TX cities like Austin and Dallas have one. He stressed that the VAC needed to brainstorm and go after this proposal as strongly as possible so it can get achieved and finally put into place and all Veterans may take advantage of this opportunity.

Ms. Sepulveda stressed that having a tool like the HR Veteran Tracking enhanced the attendance of Women Veterans at the Women Veteran’s Day June 12th event. If that tracking had not been in place she believed that supervisors may not have known or allowed the employee to attend, so she stressed how establishing something like that has a far-reaching impact.

Maj Gen Ayala stressed that he agreed with Ms. Sepulveda and that a wide-reach City representation was at the June 12th event, such as Police, Fire, Parks, the Solid Waste dept, just to name a few City departments.

Mr. Scott mentioned that those examples showed that it didn’t take a whole lot of effort to enhance significant change and impact with something like the HR Veteran Identification project or with the pending Veteran’s Hiring Preference suggestion. He stated we can look at what the other Cities have done to establish a baseline and have something to present to the respective CMs.

Vice Chair Dominguez mentioned that when last speaking with his CM the discussion came up about Veteran Spouses preference programs similar to what Active Duty Military does. He reiterated the idea of getting with other cities to establish a solid baseline to build on with SA’s preference project.

Tim Ferrell – District 9 reminded everyone that projects like the Vet Hiring Preference had zero economic strain on the City and to remind the CMs of that to try and influence them that it was just an effort to get it done and would have no impact on budget.

Maj Gen Ayala was asked by Ms. Sepulveda if the Vet Hiring Preference would work in conjunction with other organizations such as Texas Serves. He stated that he believed the VAC needed to start simple and concentrate on the getting this established for the City hiring process first, and to do so he recommended getting with the Maj Gen's counterpart in Austin to acquire a playbook and use something like that as a reference tool. He asked SFC Brown to establish contact with Chair Delgado to achieve this playbook idea.

Chair Delgado stressed that he was going to make contact with Austin and that the VAC needed to put their heads together to get this process started.

No further action was required.

Chair Delgado now mentioned VAC web site updates. SFC Brown mentioned that now that the GPA had hired a Web Designer, things have been easier to update on the site, that all names, dates, agendas, and other links have now been updated. If any other items needed to be loaded on the site, contact the Chair or email SFC Brown to get this achieved.

Vice Chair Dominguez mentioned to all members to make sure their numbers and email contacts were up to date and correct.

SFC Brown reminded everyone to just take a moment to check the site and confirm the data, then if any changes were necessary, email him and it should be corrected same day.

Vice Chair Dominguez mentioned that he had heard that the site was very helpful to citizens and pother personnel who wanted to have a VAC questioned answered or wanted to reach someone because it was a time saving tool.

No further action was required.

Chair Delgado reminded everyone about Veteran Town Halls (TH) and mentioned that Tim w/D10 had just had one. He mentioned it would be a good idea for each member to have one in each district and to make sure it was a coordinated effort so one didn't conflict with another.

Mr. Ferrell talked about his town hall mentioning that you find out new information at the TH's such as who are Veteran's that you didn't know were and it enhances your abilities to learn about your district and its people. He praised Texas Public Radio for their user friendliness in announcing their events and providing adequate air time.

Mr. Scott spoke about being in the planning phase for his town hall which is slated for a tentative date of 18 August. He has confirmed vendors of the South TX VA, Bexar County Veterans Office, and is waiting on confirmation from Texas Serves. He stressed that each member share information such as best practices so all districts can benefit from shared data and lessons learned. Each member and district should build off the other to improve and make their own efforts the best it can be. His event will be held at the Tool Yard out by Thousand Oaks.

Maj Gen Ayala reminded all members to keep the political items out of the town halls because it could not be allowed nor could he endorse the event if politics were involved.

Chair Delgado reminded all the share best practices to enhance all future events.

No further action was required.

Chair Delgado brought Boots on Vets to the table for discussion but Maj Gen Ayala stated that the OMVA Office reached out to the office but no return contact had been established. Chair Delgado stated they would set that topic aside temporarily until next meeting or contact could be established.

No further action was required.

Reports

The Chair reminded members that in the off months they should be meeting with their Council Member to inform them on their efforts plus remind them what the VAC offers.

Chris Vierya – District 1: Had a flag ceremony where the Mayor plus 2 City Council were present with an attendance of 438 attendees.

James Devno – District 2: Not much to report other than regular discussions with the Councilman.

John Rodriquez – District 3: Not present.

Juanita Sepulveda – District 4: Sat down for a discussion with CM Saldana stressing to the CM that they need more support and push on the bylaws approval. She also asked the CM if there was budget to have another town hall or other events to bring more awareness to the district. She stressed the difference in the importance of Active Duty versus Veterans because AD come in and out of the City where the Vets normally settle in and stay. She has another future meeting with the CM to see what his office has idea-wise in a way to support the VAC.

Maj Gen Ayala stressed that all members check with their CMs because their offices did have money for town halls and other events, but they just had to take the initiative to ask.

District 5: Vacant.

Ramon Gonzales – District 7: Mentioned he meets with his CM after every meeting to discuss details and plans to have events to support their district. He also met with an AARP rep to discuss holding a Winter Event in his district providing items like jackets, blankets and so forth for Vets in need.

James Pobanz – District 8: Stated that his CM showed little to no interest in communicating with him regarding the VAC but he was able to talk with Commissioner Wolff about a Veterans Transition Center that may be coming online next month.

Tim Farrell – District 9: Praised CM Courage for the support that he and his office has provided to him and the VAC. He mentioned that a rep for Yoga for Warriors was at his town hall and that Maj Gen Ayala did take part in the event plus was able to benefit from the practice.

The Maj Gen stressed that the yoga was not what he expected and was quite hard but did help him with a variety of issues so he was now regularly utilizing it to enhance his quality of life.

Matthew Scott – District 10: Mentioned he didn't have much going on this time because last time he met with his CM he took a long list of items to discuss. After the visit he rethought that he should not take so much to the CM office asking what is the CM office doing but rather present what the VAC has achieved. His big pending event was his August Town Hall.

Al Dominguez – District 6 (Vice Chair): Stated he had been corresponding with the CM's Chief of Staff about the Spouse Hiring Preference idea that he mentioned earlier in the meeting plus he was going to continue new discussions about the Veteran Hiring Preference push. He said his CM's office was big on getting the forgotten portion of the Veteran household recognized which was the spouse and children who also sometimes require assistance. He talked about his experience at recent events witnessing that a lot of Vets don't really want anything other than recognition or being remembered, so he stressed how the "personal contact" of a handshake, coin or visit from a CM to an event would make huge strides in a lot of these Veteran's eyes.

Chairman Delgado: Advised members to just keep doing what they have been doing, he's trying to coordinate a Marine Corps Ball so if anyone wanted to attend, tickets were going fast. He stressed for each member to maintain good info flow with their Councilperson.

SFC Brown made an addition mention that the 2020 Census was big with the City and for all members to try and think of ways to get their Veterans to identify in their districts so accurate counts could be achieved.

Maj Gen Ayala reminded that the numbers were not only important but it means additional funding for the districts as well.

No further action was required.

Announcements

Chair Delgado reminded all the next meeting was 27 Sep and would share the venue information once it had been locked in.

No further action was required.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Delgado recommended adjourning the meeting with no further discussion which was seconded by Ms. Sepulveda.

No further action was required.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward Brown, OMVA