



## CITY COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

### MEETING MINUTES

19 March 2018

District 6 Field Office, 8373 Culebra Rd, SATX, 78251

**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, Tim Ferrell – District 9 (nominated but not voted in yet), Matthew Scott – District 10.

**Commission Absent:** James Rodriguez – District 3, Vacant – District 5, James Pobanz – District 8.

**Staff Present:** Major General Juan Ayala (USMC retired), Lieutenant Colonel Karen Rolirad (USAF retired), and Sergeant First Class 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 & 8.

### **Approval of Minutes**

January 8, 2017 minutes approved by Chris Vierya – District 1 & Juanita Sepulveda – District 4, no opposition.

### **Citizens to be Heard**

Juan Fuentes, introduced himself as a long-time member of District 6. He explained he experienced an incident with his son-in-law, a mature adult, a verbal altercation which occurred outside City limits in Bexar County. A Bexar County Sherriff responded, apprehended and escorted Mr. Fuentes downtown on allegations of assault. His claim or concern was that he was placed in the Sherriff's vehicle without securing a seatbelt and proceeded to transport him downtown. After a block or so the Deputy realized Mr. Fuentes was unsecured, pulled over, then

secured his seatbelt, thereby continuing on to the detention center. Mr. Fuentes' concern is that the detainee seat doesn't have some sort of alarm alerting the driver that the detainee is unsecured. Once at the detention center, Mr. Fuentes was concerned with the in-processing officer. The officer didn't ask about any of his potential disabilities or if he was a Veteran. He claimed he was processed just like an "inmate" and there should be some sort of intake screening process to determine if a detainee is some level of disabled Veteran. He goes further stating that the processing officers should be more sensitive to a detainee's age group on top of Veteran status. He was asked by one of the Commission what he wanted the members to do to which he replied he would like the in-processing officer to have a system of separation between Veterans, age groups, or disabilities so it wasn't such a "cold" process treating everyone like an inmate.

Upon Mr. Fuentes finishing, a Commission member stated that he needed to make clear with Mr. Fuentes that his concerns were with Bexar County and not the City of San Antonio, so he would have to address his concerns to the Bexar County Veterans Office because no one in the COSA Veterans Affairs Commission had a vote or say on anything in the Bexar County system unfortunately. Mr. Fuentes wasn't quite clear on the situation so the differentiation was once again stressed, the VAC is City of San Antonio and he was apprehended and processed at a Bexar County Office and by a Sheriff's Officer. Mr. Fuentes was referred to the Bexar County Veterans Affairs Office which closed the discussion. Al Dominguez of District 6 offered to get Mr. Fuentes the information for that office.

### **Information Items**

Update on the Hidden Heroes Ceremony: Vice Chair reminded all members to make sure and get the word out to each District that this event was coming so it could get a good amount of representation. Lt Col Rolirad advised that she spoke with a rep and that on 16 May was going to be the HH event but they wanted to change things more to a type of fair. She advised them that organizing a fair-type of event was quite a lot to undertake and not what the Dole Foundation had in mind. She advised them they wanted it at one of the Medical Centers with some sort of lunch and a Councilperson speaker because the Mayor would not be available. It was mentioned that they appreciated the Proclamation which was done last year plus really wanted to maintain accountability of the heroes for events and recognitions such as this one. A member asked if there was some sort of flyer yet to distribute but she was advised there was nothing available yet. Vice Chair reiterated that they needed to utilize their social media and email to identify personnel and get the word out of the event.

*No further action was required.*

Update on VAC By-Laws: Juanita Sepulveda – District 4 regarded the existing by-laws as rather old and outdated. She presented a copy to all with copies of the by-laws with some proposed corrections. She asked the members for more goals and specific references instead of keeping some of the wording open-ended and generalized. She asked for specifics to be clarified regarding terms of service on the commission. Having an alternate commission member was an idea suggested as something that could be an added item. She added clarifications should be made regarding the duties of the officers plus organizing in detail the duties of the Vice Chair and Chair. Most data remained the same in the by-laws just with some minor updating. A new subject proposed which was social media. A social media section will be added and requested approval by Council with specific stipulations and rules which follow the City's social media criteria. The point was made by her that in the present situation of members using their own social media accounts to talk about events, as long as they didn't commit the City or mention officials by name that was allowable. Once an official or office was mentioned by name that was when a violation would occur. The possibility of City-sanctioned business cards was also brought

up. All were advised that if they spent their own funds at present time to make their own cards, they could do so but no City Official Logos could be used and the cards would have to be regarded as a personal “unofficial” card. If the Council would approve business cards, then all would have to be the same and follow the same City criteria. Upon Ms. Sepulveda’s discussion completion regarding the by-laws, all copies of the by-laws were collected from non-commission members. She reminded all members that this was a lengthy process to get updated by-laws approved so allow it to run its course and the progress would be tracked.

Ms. Sepulveda was thanked by the Vice Chair for all her information and efforts.

Maj General Ayala made a suggestion that when members returned their suggestions or changes, they sent those to one POC being the VAC Chairman plus cc the Office of Military and Veteran Affairs. The VAC Chair agreed with the suggestion and reiterated that request to the members.

*No further action required.*

Update on the vacant District 5 seat; The Chair reminded all members to continue to get the word out and “shake the trees” in an attempt to fill the vacancy.

*No further action required.*

Update on the District 9 Commission Member replacement; The Chair welcomed Tim Farrell “unofficially” but he was glad to have him on board, hopeful that by next meeting he would be officially voted into the commission.

The Chair opened the floor to Mr. Farrell to tell everyone about himself. He advised all he had been back in San Antonio for about 6 years after retiring from 23 years in the Air Force. He informed everyone that he and his spouse settled back in San Antonio with the intent to make it home in 2011. He was worked on boards and positions with a variety of SA non-profit organizations. He thanked all for the opportunity and turned the floor back over to the chair.

*No further action required.*

## **New Business**

Chairman Delgado reiterated that with Armed Forces Day and Veterans Day forthcoming, he stressed all members to get out and spread the word to all Veterans to let them know what the VAC can do and see if the VAC needs to help in some capacity. The Chair suggested letting the public know when there were meetings or events so they could see they have a place to go or a voice to be heard.

Ms. Sepulveda advised about the upcoming Texas Women Veterans Day on 12 June. On 15 June a celebration signifying this event would be held at Brackenridge Park with a flyer forthcoming detailing the celebration. She stressed that this was recognized by the Senate and this was the first year it will be celebrated. She advised that the event was still a work in progress but would be ready with detailed information by the next VAC meeting.

*No further action required.*

Lt Col Rolirad announced that 5 & 6 May was Military Appreciation Weekend at Fort Sam Houston. She stressed that the base will be open to the public for the first time in many years so non-DOD personnel could attend and take part of the events. She detailed the various performers and activities that would be offered.

MG Ayala reiterated that this was a significant weekend event because it was not only a chance for the various branches to show their capabilities but also an opportunity for the general public to see what the military brings to San Antonio. Not just to educate and enlighten, but also when a future BRAC comes to San Antonio, the entire community both military and civilian will be aware of how significant the military presence is here in the area.

The LTC jumped back in to the discussion to stress that this was also a great recruiting opportunity for young people to see what they may not normally see and possibly give them some direction where they may not have any.

Ms. Sepulveda mentioned an encounter she had with a teen that played in his high school band. She asked him what his plans were after school to which he responded he would probably get a job locally. She asked him about the military and he stated he hadn't considered it but when she mentioned that the various branches had military bands, his eyes lit up and became more interested. So the point to get the word out to potential recruits was emphasized.

The Chair reemphasized this as a great opportunity for the VAC and the City to show what we have to offer and how we take care of those who have served and honor them. He stressed to get the word out and for all members to attend if possible.

*No further action 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: Nothing to report.

James Devno – District 2: Helped 2 Veterans, one needed assistance getting his benefits even though he's listed as 100% disabled and only receiving 50% disability benefits att.

John Rodriquez – District 3: Not present.

Juanita Sepulveda – District 4: Contact with a total of 67 Veterans, 8 of whom were females; the support included PTSD support, housing assistance, education assistance and briefing of local available committees. Ms. Sepulveda met with Councilman Saldana asking him to post information regarding what the VAC offers plus meeting info.

District 5: Vacant.

Ramon Gonzales – District 7: Helped approximately 36 Veterans plus had a meeting with Councilwoman Sandoval discussing expectations and that a regular meeting should be coordinated between Ramon and the Councilwoman.

James Pobanz – District 8: Not present.

Tim Farrell – District 9: Not yet official.

Matthew Scott – District 10: Spoke with Councilman Perry about priorities within the District, asked about there being a City Historian. Reason for question was so the commission wouldn't be "reinventing the wheel" or

repeating past potential failures when proposing new business. Maintained and updated the District 10 social media page.

Al Dominguez – District 6 (Vice Chair): Assisted 3 Veterans plus working on coordinating Veterans Day event.

Chairman Delgado: Advised members to just keep doing what they have been doing, he's trying to coordinate a meeting with the Mayor to go over the VAC mission and what's been accomplished plus what the Mayor's vision is for the VAC. He stressed for each member to maintain good info flow with their Councilperson.

*No further action required.*

### **Announcements**

Ms. Sepulveda announced the establishment of Camp Hope, a facility that will house 16 Women Veterans diagnosed with PTSD. It is a 6 month program completely free to the Veteran, funded by non-Government outside sources. They are working on 15 different locations and have plans of going international. Camp Hope curriculum will include family nights plus child care so all the Veteran's dependents can participate. They are moving forward to enter negotiations to start the building of Camp Hope here in San Antonio.

*No further action required.*

Announcement by the Chair about the next meeting at the Claude Black Community Center on May 21<sup>st</sup>.

*No further actions required.*

The Chair mentioned that the point of moving the meeting around to various District locations was with the hope of having that Councilperson there to see what the VAC is about and establish a better understanding.

*No further action required.*

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Delgado adjourned the meeting with no further discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward Brown, OMVA