COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEETING MINUTES

A Regular Meeting of the Veterans Affairs Commission was held at the Riverview Tower, 111 Soledad, San Antonio, TX, 78205, on Tuesday October 30, 2012 at 3:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:
Cris Vieyra (absent)
James Devno
John A. Rodriguez
Albert Hinojosa (absent)
Alfredo Dominguez
Juan Reyna
Richard Jones
Mona Meikle
Stephen Spear
John Esquivel

CITY STAFF: Sandra Bagwell

GUESTS: **None**

1. **Call to Order**

Mr. Esquivel, Chair called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

Members and City Staff recited the Pledge of Allegiance

3. **Approval of the Minutes from the July 17, 2012 meeting.**

Mr. Esquivel motioned for approval and Mr. Devno seconded the approval and after a small change, the members unanimously approved the minutes.

4. **Citizens to be heard**

No one signed up to speak.

5. **Action Items**

- Welcome new members, Alfredo Dominguez, District 6, and Mona Meikle, District 9.

Mr. Esquivel welcomed Mr. Dominguez and Ms. Meikle to the committee and asked all of the members to introduce themselves.

Mr. Esquivel stated that he attended one of the recent Greater Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee (MAC) meetings. The MAC is a powerful entity that deals with military issues but not necessarily veterans issues and will focus on what issues to present to the U.S. Congress during the next session. He asked if anyone was interested, he would forward them the information that MAC sends him. He mentioned that they are also sending out information regarding the upcoming CAM events.

Mr. Rodriguez asked about a banquet that honored veterans and expressed interest in attending the banquet this year if there is one. Mr. Devno also expressed interest in attending. Mr. Esquivel asked Ms. Bagwell if she could look into securing a table if enough members would commit to attend the event.

Mr. Esquivel asked the members if they had any more thought in a project that they wished to address. He gave the Medal of Honor project that Mr. Spear worked on as an example. He mentioned the importance of the committee having a project prior to a possible sunset review next May. After speaking to a few City Council members, only Councilwoman Taylor gave any suggestions and asked Mr. Devno to go over the suggestion. Mr. Devno stated that Councilwoman Taylor asked him to assist in a project that St. Philips College was working on to develop a Veterans Assistance Center. The Center is in the planning phase but the renovations of the building are more intensive than originally thought and the budget will not stretch to cover the additional work. St. Philips is reaching out to corporations for possible donations. This might be a potential project and also suggested helping with an organization called Gotyour6.org that was brought up at the July meeting.

Mr. Jones stated that he receives many calls from veterans that need help. He found many charities that will assist veterans but there is not a central location to find a list. He suggested compiling a list that could be printed out so anyone could access the information. He went on to say that he thought there was enough man power in the room to tackle this project. Mr. Esquivel stated that this was an idea that Gen. Murdock presented to the committee. But he said that there were questions on how to disseminate this information so those who needed help would have access.

Mr. Reyna is active with his church and is often asked who to contact for assistance. He states that he will refer them to the United Way's by using the 211 line. They ask if the caller is a veteran and will refer them to a representative that has access to organizations that assist veterans. He also stated that the City Council offices should have free VIA bus pass for those who need assistance.

Mr. Devno stated that he had been invited to and attended the Texas Veterans Commission annual conference in Austin and had requested to be put on the mailing list but hasn't received anything. He said that he will follow up.

Mr. Spear suggested that the members look at what the Bexar County Services Office does as not to duplicate services. Mr. Esquivel agreed.

Mr. Esquivel stated that he would like to see San Antonio's VAC achieve something similar to that of Houston's VAC. He stated that he would have to reach out to them and possibly drive to Houston to talk to them.

Mr. Devno asked Mr. Spear if he had heard the status of the County's Medal of Honor memorial. Mr. Spear stated that he had not heard anything since the meeting about a year ago. Mr. Spear stated that there are 27 recipients to be included with room for future recipients.

6. Member Announcements

Mr. Devno stated that he recently attended a neighborhood association meeting where a staff member from Representative Ruth McClendon's office attended. She gave a briefing regarding the new system that is in place that will track what bills are being considered in the Texas Congress. The website is www.capital.state.tx.us. Mr. Devno also stated that Sam's Club gives veterans who need one a free cane; they just need to show their military I.D.'s on Veteran's Day.

Mr. Rodriguez gave an update of upcoming Veterans Day events and invited the members to attend.

Ms. Meikle stated that she has met with Councilwoman Chan. She mentioned that she works with the San Antonio Rodeo and stated that each Friday night during the Rodeo, 75 Star Experience tickets are set aside for Wounded Warriors. These seats are on the dirt and have many benefits that go with them. Right now, they are looking for donations to sponsor these seats and asked the members if they knew of someone or an organization that could sponsor them to let her know. Mr. Esquivel asked Ms. Meikle to contact him as his office's sponsored charity was the Wounded Warriors Project. Mr. Rodriguez stated that the City Council members have money that they can use for donations; they just need to be asked.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:18 p.m. The next meeting will take place January 15, 2013 at 3 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sandra Bagwell, Office of Military Affairs

Please visit the Veterans Affairs Commission website: www.sanantonio.gov/oma
Audio recording is available at the Office of Military Affairs by written request to: sandra.bagwell@sanantonio.gov

Attachments: None