

**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 July 17, 2012 at 3:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Cris Vieyra

James Devno

John A. Rodriguez

Albert Hinojosa (absent)

Gilbert Rodriguez

Juan Reyna (absent)

Richard Jones (absent)

Michael W. Archer (absent)

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 April 17, 2012 meeting.

Minutes from the April 17, 2012 meeting were approved after a small change. Mr. Spear, upon reading stated that if you wish to have your drivers license show that you are a veteran, you must show your DD 214, if you do not have it, you can still get your license, but without that designation. Mr. Esquivel motioned for approval and Mr. Devno seconded the approval.

4. Citizens to be heard

No one signed up to speak.

5. Action Items

- Welcome new member, Cris Vieyra, District 1.

Mr. Esquivel welcomed new member Cris Vieyra and stated that it was good to have another Marine on the commission. After reading the minutes from the April 17th meeting, he asked about the central point of contact that Mr. Murdock mentioned. Mr. Esquivel explained that there were many organizations that offered help to veterans and instead of each organization competing for the same funds, and having the veterans make multiple phone calls, Mr. Murdock suggested consolidating the organizations and have one contact that the veterans can call for the assistance they need. Mr. Esquivel asked that Mr. Vieyra speak to his council representative to see if there were any concerns that they might want to see addressed.

- Update on meetings with State Officials and City Council members.

Mr. Spear stated that Councilman Soules did not mention any concerns when he spoke to him. He mentioned that there was construction going on along Wurzbach Parkway but it didn't look like the Taps Memorial Highway project that former Councilman Clamp had been working on. He said that when he began with the Commission, they were invited to many of the events at Fort Sam Houston and Randolph AFB. This has stopped and wondered if the commission was still interested in attending these events. He has the impression that the Veterans Affairs Commission (VAC) has been forgotten.

Mr. Gilbert Rodriguez suggested to Councilman Lopez that Veterans use the Senior Centers or One Stop center, using the computers, and exercise equipment. This has been implemented and the Senior Center is now open to all Veterans. The centers also offer monthly meetings where a speaker will come in to speak on Veteran's Issues.

Mr. John Rodriguez met with Councilwoman Ozuna and she is on board with helping with veterans but had not heard about the VAC. He stated that he gave her a brief update about the commission and she asked him to reapply for his position.

Mr. Devno said that he meets with CW Taylor quite often as a member of his home owners association at her monthly meetings. There was a grant that helped veterans winterize their homes but the money is just about gone. There is talk about the grant being renewed and he'll be notified when that happens so he can get the word out. St. Philips College will be building a new veterans wing and Mr. Devno has been asked to help out. He also visits Janet Marquez with Wounded Warriors.

Mr. Esquivel asked if any of the members attended the Greater Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) Military Affairs Committee (MAC). Mr. Spear said that he used to go to represent the VAC but they didn't give them anything to do so he stopped attending. At Mr. Murdock's suggestion, Mr. Esquivel attended a MAC meeting. He felt that the MAC looked at the economic development standpoint and Veterans issues were not part of their agenda. He said that each year they put together a contingent and go to Washington D.C. to speak to House and State legislatures. He said that the deadline to submit an item for the State Legislature is in August and the Federal Legislature is in September. Since the members are looking for a project, he brought this up for them to think about as they might want to be more involved in legislative items. However, Texas seems to lead the way in regards to helping veterans and gave the tax break for veteran's spouses, and education with the Hazelwood Act. Mr. Devno asked what type of issues the VAC would champion. Mr. Esquivel said that it would be up to the committee members. Also discussed at the MAC meeting was a program which Texas is a model called "Got your 6" (www.gotyour6.org). This is a national campaign that helps veterans with finding jobs, education opportunities, health issues, housing, family, and leadership. This program will help veterans with the reintegration back into the communities across the nation. This might be something with which VAC would want to help.

Mr. Esquivel also met with Senator Van de Putte. She said that the Houston Veterans Affairs Commission was really strong and involved with the community. She suggested that the VAC talk to them to get some ideas. Another suggestion was for the VAC to get involved with the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC).

Mr. Esquivel spoke to the District 5 representative as there isn't currently a VAC representative from this district. They were receptive but didn't express any concerns at this time.

At the meeting with Councilwoman Chan, Mr. Esquivel stated that it went really well and spent about an hour talking to CW Chan. She gave the recommendation that a member of the VAC attend the Military Transformation Task Force quarterly meetings as she is a Tri-Chair along with Mike Novak and Commissioner Kevin Wolff. Another contact within the City would be the Inter-Governmental Relations (IGR) Department.

Mr. Devno asked what was being done on Bexar County side in reference to Veterans. Mr. Esquivel stated that he hadn't reached out to Craig Erickson at the Bexar County Veterans Services Office yet. He plans to do so.

Mr. Esquivel stated that during the past three months, he has been able to meet with the City Council District representatives for districts 5, 8, and 9. Spoke to Senator Van de Putte and BG Murdock and was able to set up an appointment with one of the Mayor's staff.

6. Member Announcements

Mr. Gilbert Rodriguez stated that if a veteran has a disability of 60% or above, they do not have to pay for their driver's license.

Mr. Devno stated he attended an event sponsored by CW Taylor that was in celebration of the Buffalo Soldiers.

It was asked if the VAC should go back to meeting monthly or bi-monthly instead of quarterly. After discussion, it was decided that until the VAC has a project in mind, meetings will continue to be on a quarterly basis.

Ms. Bagwell announced that there has been a request for funds from Korean War Veterans for their annual Texas Meeting. The application was given to Mr. Esquivel for review. Mr. John Rodriguez motioned and Mr. Gilbert Rodriguez seconded the motion to accept the donation request. A vote was taken and it was unanimously approved.

Mr. John Rodriguez gave information to VAC regarding a ceremony for a Medal of Honor recipient that is buried at San Jose Cemetery by the name of John E. Kilmer. Mr. Rodriguez said that he has put together this ceremony for many years and would like to invite the other members of VAC. This year, Mr. Rodriguez has invited Mr. Kilmer's surviving brother and has arranged to pick him up and bring him to San Antonio.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:09 p.m. The next meeting will take place October 30, 2012 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