

**COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
MINUTES****REGULAR MEETING
August 19, 2014**

The Commission on Veteran Affairs convened in a regular meeting on August 19, 2014 at St Jones Building, 1000 E 11th St in Austin, Texas.

Chair Cassaundra Melgar- C'D Baca called the Board Meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance:

Cassaundra Melgar- C'De Baca, Chair	Del Kolbe
Phillip Gutierres, Vice Chair	Bill McLellan
Chris Garcia	

Staff in Attendance: Jack Crawford

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Chair Cassaundra Melgar-C'D Baca asked Commission members to review minutes from the meeting on July 15, 2014. Chair Cassaundra Melgar-C'De Baca moved to approve the July 15, 2014 minutes. Motion was seconded by Vice Chair Phillip Gutierres. Motion passed with no objection.

2. OLD BUSINESS

- Updates by the Committee working groups lead on the top three priorities for our Veterans.
 - Homeless Veterans – No updates were made by the committee
 - Female Veterans – No updates were made by the committee
 - Employment and Education – No updates were made by the committee
- The update from Capital City Metro is that it will be discussed after elections and will be a priority issue to be on their agenda for November. This discussion will be about the possibility of Veterans using their VA cards as a bus pass for transportation like a few select cities.
- Commissioner Phillip Gutierres will talk to Travis County Veteran Service Officer about how the Veteran's Commission could contribute and participate this year in the Veteran's Day Parade.

3. NEW BUSINESS

- Jonathan Babiak, from the City of Austin informed the Commission about the upcoming amendment proposal to the City Council to include amount of income to the City code for Housing. Jonathan explained how Veterans may be affected due to the use of housing choice vouchers also known as Section 8 vouchers for homeless Veterans in the HUD-VASH program.
- Parks and Recreation updated us about the status of Veterans Park to be located North of Lady Bird Lake and South of the American Legion Post. Funding under the bond program is

earmarked for \$400,000 and they plan to provide shade and comfort to the park and discuss plans to formalize parking for Veteran's Park.

- Lisa Garcia, Niki Paul, and Erin Young addressed the Commission about the status of Homeless Veterans and their plan to end it by 2015. Lisa Garcia oversees the HUD-VASH program that started in 2002 and combines the Housing Choice vouchers and case management to their clients. There are 335 vouchers allocated and 5,800 vouchers overall. 305 vouchers are being used by HUD-VASH and 71 are unused and expired due to not finding available housing on time. The challenge in Austin is finding affordable housing that will accept these vouchers with its 90% occupancy rate and they have 120 days to find housing. The biggest barrier Veterans are facing would be substance abuse, criminal history, and past history of renting with other apartments and breaking leases or non-payment. They are working with the City of Austin and the Mayor's office to participate in the Mayor's challenge to end Veteran Homelessness and to get the community involved with collaboration of resources with every organization involved with assisting homeless Veterans. Another discussion is to see if any tax incentives for landlords are available and this will be discussed at the next meeting.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS

N/A (No public hearings during this meeting)

5. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

N/A (No Citizen Communication during this meeting)

6. STAFF BRIEFINGS

N/A (No Staff Briefings)

7. ADJOURN: Chair Cassaundra Melgar-C'D Baca adjourned the meeting at 3:44P.M. Without objection