

**COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS  
MINUTES****REGULAR MEETING  
September 24, 2014**

The Commission on Veteran Affairs convened in a regular meeting on September 24, 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  
Phillip Gutierrez, Vice Chair  
John Conley

Chris Garcia  
Bill McLellan  
Linda Yoder

Staff in Attendance: Allen Bergeron, Tina Lee

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- Chair Cassaundra Melgar-C'D Baca asked Commission members to review minutes from the meeting on August 19, 2014. Chair Cassaundra Melgar-C'De Baca moved to approve the August 19, 2014 minutes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner John Conley. 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 – Cassaundra informed the commission that it is a high priority of the state to get funding and a special grant specifically for female veterans is being considered at the Texas Veterans Commission. Events taking place for female Veterans are F7Group Retreat, Grace after Fire, TVC Winter conference.
  - Employment and Education – Informed that there was an invitation at UT on affordable health care and that there was difficulty getting universities to introduce a quick course in employment on healthcare.
- Capital Metro informed the staff liaisons that receiving free buses is difficult but Active Duty and First responders ride for free. There is a reduced rate for Veterans if they apply through their website and show their ID.
- The meeting has been rescheduled for November 5<sup>th</sup> and December 3<sup>rd</sup> for the rest of 2014 meetings at 2PM.
- Staff liaison will send the emails concerning the Veteran's Day parade to the commission and Vice Chair Phillip and Commissioner Bill will be representing the City at these meetings.

**3. NEW BUSINESS**

- Marya Crigler, the Chief appraiser for Travis County spoke to the commission today and informed us on the different types of tax exemptions available for Veterans. She informed us that the disability rating will determine the tax exemption of property and that any tax break incentives will have to be lobbied as a legislative issue by Veteran organizations for the possibility of landlords to accept HUD-VASH vouchers.
- Ruben Olgin informed the commission on his mission with BAM academy and how he supports Military Veterans and their families. He is connected with the Samaritan Center and Heroes Night out and trains and motivates Veterans to use physical fitness as an alternative to overcoming any disabilities or hardships to feel better and be around other Veterans. You will be able to find more about his mission at his website BAMacademy.com.
- Ashley Kamrath is the public relations director for an event called Reveille call on November 9<sup>th</sup>. This is an opportunity to connect Veterans to the community and know other Veterans. This is a twofold event with traditional games and an 11 Mile March. This is open to any nonprofit as a fundraising platform
- The white house started an initiative called the Mayor's challenge to end Veteran homelessness and Mayor Lee Leffingwell will be the 5<sup>th</sup> Mayor in Texas to sign this initiative. They believe in a housing first approach and will update everyone on where this signing will take place.

**4. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

N/A (No public hearings during this meeting)

**5. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL**

- Kristen Murry, Army National Guard informed the commission on a charity event for domestic violence and organization called Safe Place.
- Tom Orlando, Home4Vets informed the commission on the update of his organization and that his program is 2 years long for employment. He is looking for land on 20 acres and would prefer a place near the new VA on Metropolis. His community will involve a center with resources and ten cabins.

**6. STAFF BRIEFINGS**

- Allen Bergeron briefed the staff about the Veterans Day Parade that will take place on November 11<sup>th</sup> on the S. Congress Bridge with a ceremony to follow after.

**7. ADJOURN:** Chair Cassandra Melgar-C'D Baca adjourned the meeting at 3:09P.M. Without objection