

**COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
MINUTES****REGULAR MEETING
November 18, 2014**

The Commission on Veteran Affairs convened in a regular meeting on November 18, 2014 at the Mexican American Cultural Center Room 201, 600 River Street in Austin, Texas.

Chair Cassaundra Melgar C' De Baca called the Board Meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance:

Cassaundra Melgar C'De Baca, Chair
Phillip Gutierrez, Vice Chair
Chris Garcia

Del Kolbe
Bill McLellan

Staff in Attendance: Tina Lee, Allen Bergeron

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Chair Cassaundra Melgar C' De Baca asked Commission members to review minutes from the special called meeting on October 23, 2014. Cassaundra moved to approve the October 23, 2014 minutes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Del Kolbe. 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 – Vice Chair Phillip Gutierrez would like to continue to bring up the issue about housing vouchers to assist our Veterans at every meeting.
 - Female Veterans – A mental health awareness clinic is available and there is a challenge noticed of getting women at these events.
 - Employment and Education – There are no updates for this committee and would like to continue on looking at the status for the recommendations drafted for council to take action.
- The board decided to schedule the 2015 Veteran Commission meetings for either the 3rd Tuesday or Wednesday for each month.

3. NEW BUSINESS

- Nominations for the Chair and Vice Chair were convened at this meeting and nominations for Chair were current Chair Cassaundra Melgar C'De Baca and Vice Chair Phillip Gutierrez. Phillip was appointed as the new Chair for the Veterans Commission by 3:5 votes. Commissioner Del Kolbe was nominated as Vice Chair and was appointed unanimously.
- Phillip Gutierrez informed the board about the possibility of forming a committee to meet with the commissioners to speak on the boards on behalf about the Veterans tax exemption. Del informed the board that this is a legislative issue to have a possible tax exemption for landlords

who accept housing vouchers. Vice Chair Del Kolbe will look into the possibility of tax exemptions due to his past history of being involved in that area.

- Morgan Little, chair of the Texas Coalition of the Veterans Organization presented to the board about their organization. There are 8-10 members actively involved to helping Veterans and the coalition has helped pass the 100% disability tax exemption policy to legislative and the surviving spouse. In 2015, the legislature goals are to improve the deduction for Veterans who are less than 100%. They will also push forward the issue about Veteran employment for hire and to bring more incentives to businesses who hire Veterans. They will like to remove the age limit for dependent children for the Hazelwood Act since there is a 26 year old limit. They have many issues they will bring up to the Legislative issue to bring benefits to Veterans for 2015.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS

N/A (No public hearings during this meeting)

5. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

- Carrie from the Texas Veterans Commission informed the board about the Telling Project which is a national program available to write stories relating to what our Veterans go through in the Military to the citizens. This production involves a coalition of veterans and military family members, artists, community partners and volunteers.

6. STAFF BRIEFINGS

- Mayor run off will begin tonight and both candidates support Veterans. The 10/1 will change the commission but we will overcome and be proactive to make a difference to Veterans. The commissioners need to be active to meet with their council members and that there is no state other than Texas better for Veterans.

7. ADJOURN: Cassaundra Melgar C'DeBaca adjourned the meeting at 3:58PM. Without objection