

**COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS  
MINUTES****REGULAR MEETING  
December 16, 2014**

The Commission on Veteran Affairs convened in a regular meeting on December 16, 2014 at City Hall, Council Chambers Room 1001, located on 301 West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in Austin, Texas.

Chair Phillip Gutierres called the Board Meeting to order at 2:06 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance:

Phillip Gutierres, Chair  
Del Kolbe, Vice Chair

Bill McLellan  
David Thomas

Staff in Attendance: Tina Lee, Allen Bergeron

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- Chair Phillip Gutierres asked Commission members to review minutes from the regular meeting on November 18, 2014. Vice Chair Del Kolbe moved to approve the November 18, 2014 minutes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Bill McLellan. Motion passed with no objection.

**2. OLD BUSINESS**

- Updates by the working groups lead on the top three priorities for our Veterans.
  - Homeless Veterans – Did a tour at the new Mobile Loaves and Fishes Community and informed the Commission that the owner Alan Graham is receptive to Veterans being in the camp.
  - Female Veterans – No updates were made due to members of the working group were absent from the meeting.
  - Employment and Education – Phillip would like the Commissioners to review the recommendations they agreed to in the beginning of the year and receive input to move forward to submitting any to the Council. Also stated that the ACC “One Stop Shop” is a great resource to Veterans and they are looking forward to partnering with them and assisting Veterans at this new location.
- Chair Phillip Gutierres made a motion to hold the 2015 Commission on Veteran Affairs meeting on the third Wednesday of each month. Vice Chair Del Kolbe moved to have the meeting scheduled on the third Wednesday of each month and Commissioner Bill McLellan seconded the vote. The board approved unanimously to hold the Veterans Commission Meetings on the third Wednesday of each month with no objections.
- In regards to the Veteran property tax exemptions, Phillip informed the Commission that the average price for rent in Austin ranges from \$1,200-\$1,500 a month. Ideas for landlord incentives to accept Housing vouchers for no longer homeless Veterans should remain on the agenda until the need is fulfilled.

**3. NEW BUSINESS**

- Ron Lewis, former state representative informed the commission that property tax exemptions are completed at the state level and that the City will enforce vouchers if the state legislature is passed. Stated that there are many great senators in the surrounding areas to take on the cause of this issue and all Veteran issues to Legislative. Mr. Lewis recommended to address those Veterans with lower than 100% disabilities such as 75% or 50% to possibly be included.
- The organization Save a Hero presented to the Commission in regards to saving and helping Veterans with their PTSD and those who are suicidal. This organization was started by a suicide survivor and they had Bret an Army Veteran talk about his experience with the organization. He sought assistance with the Vet Center, VA, and would like the possibility of partnering with the City to bring awareness to their cause and provide an open meeting opportunity with other Veterans.
- Chair Phillip discussed the initiative based on the City of Austin's Veterans Business Enterprise that offers Veterans with a 20% disability to be given an economic disadvantaged status. He would like the commission to encourage their council member to add Veteran Businesses who are disabled on the City's contract vendor list.
- In regards to the partnership with ACC's One Stop Shop, Vice Chair Del Kolbe talked to ACC about a space being built out and if space is available for other groups to participate. This location would be a great resource for Veterans since it is near a bus route and Texas Work Force Solutions is across the street. The Commission is encouraged to schedule a tour with the Council members and move forward to making this One Stop Shop a success for the City of Austin.

**4. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

N/A (No public hearings during this meeting)

**5. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL**

- Eric Gerber, Chaplain in the Army National Guard is newly employed with the American GI Forum wanted to get involved with the Commission meetings. He informed the Commission on his organization's efforts to assisting Veterans. The American GI Forum offers various programs including a homeless Veteran and Integration program and a closet for men to receive suits for interviews.

**6. STAFF BRIEFINGS**

- Commissioner John Conley and Chris Garcia have fulfilled their term serving the Commission and will no longer be serving the Commission after December. Dave Thomas, USAF Vietnam Veteran has been appointed by Council member Morrison to replace Chris Garcia. Judge Michael Denton, Army Veteran was appointed by Council member Cole and will be replacing John Conley.

**7. ADJOURN:** Phillip Gutierrez adjourned the meeting at 2:56. Without objection