



COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Veterans Affairs Commission

Recommendation Number: 20150318-B004

City of Austin Veterans Resource Center Startup

WHEREAS, the City of Austin Veterans Affairs Commission was chartered in 2013 by City Council to advocate solutions to Austin Veterans homelessness, housing, employment, education/training, women issues, PTSD/mental health and counseling for VA benefits and Veterans access.

WHEREAS, Veterans homelessness in Austin is complicated by the lack of affordable housing leases within Austin with close proximity to resource providers, employers and infrastructure. Vouchers and third party lease payments often are not enough to lease acceptable housing within Austin, further, public transportation with access to Veterans service providers and work are a challenge and limit housing options for Veterans.

WHEREAS, Veterans employment, education, training, women and family counseling, PTSD/mental health, healthcare, and VA benefits counseling are scattered throughout Austin and decentralized; making access to vital and necessary services difficult for some Veterans with limited economic and transportation resources.

WHEREAS, the Commission finds that Austin, as a national leader in addressing Veterans myriad needs, would benefit from a centralized Veterans Resource Center of all Veterans services in one location. Conceptually, this would be a clearinghouse in which approved Veteran non-profits, Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), Texas Veterans Commission, VA and various other important Veteran's support and benefits organizations would have representatives office to meet and provide all the services at their disposal to Veterans and their families in a "One Stop Shop" environment.

WHEREAS, the Commission recognizes that Austin's historic Veteran Non-profits and Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) play a vital role in the lives and service of Veterans; coupled with VA benefits, healthcare, counseling, insurance, financial, family and various other services we can provide deserving services within one central network of Veteran service providers.


NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Austin Veterans Affairs Commission encourages the Austin City Council to allocate funds for the purchase or lease of office space for the formation and implementation of a Veterans Resource Center; located as central to transportation and support services as possible. To this goal, the Commission recommends the following steps:

1. Locate an office building within Austin's property inventory or an available lease facility with space large enough to accommodate the satellite informational resource offices of Veteran service providers. The City of Austin Department of Veterans Affairs Director and Staff would also be located in this location. The office space should be at least 5,500 sf, with a budget to remodel a network floorplan, furnish and integrate a network database to follow the Veteran from entrance to exit.
2. Veteran service providers would be invited to have their representatives be available at this location and provide information and menus of services they provide along with all important contact and application information. These organizations would include but not be limited to: proven local Veteran non-profits (i.e. ECHO, Caritas, Pier-Networks, F7 Group...Hope for Heroes, etc.), Veteran Service Organizations (i.e. VFW Foundation, American G.I. Forum Foundation, American Legion...), State Veteran service providers (Texas Veterans Commission, Texas Workforce Commission) and federal, the Veterans Administration. The result of which would create one large proven network of Veteran service providers under one roof, available to all Austin-Area Veterans and their families.
3. Additionally, under this program the Veterans Resource Staff would create an interactive website that links all Veteran services providers in Austin; marketing and advocating the inclusion of all non-profits and VSOs that service Austin Veterans.
4. This proactive and comprehensive program would keep Austin in the forefront of addressing our Veteran's issues and provide a model and roadmap for other communities across the country to meet the needs of those whom have given so much of their lives on behalf of the American people.

Date of Approval: 3/18/2015

Record of the Vote: 5/5

Attest:



Phillip Gutierrez, Chair