

**COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS  
MINUTES****REGULAR MEETING  
December 16, 2015**

The Commission on Veteran Affairs convened in a regular meeting on December 16, 2015 at the ACC Veterans Resource Center located on 6001 Airport Blvd, Austin Texas 78752.

Chair Jason Denny called the Board Meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance:

Jason Denny – Chair - CM Kitchen  
Pete Salazar – Vice Chair - CM Pool  
Ed Colinsky – CM Zimmerman  
Douglas O’Connell – CM Gallo  
Phillip Gutierrez – CM Troxclair

George Bailey Harrington – MPT Tovo  
David Thomas – CM Houston  
Guillermo Villarreal – CM Renteria  
Nicholas Van Zandt – Mayor Adler

Staff in Attendance: Allen Bergeron, Tina Lee

**1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- Chair Jason Denny asked Commission members to review minutes from the regular meeting on October 21, 2015. Vice Chair Pete Salazar moved to approve the last meeting minutes. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Phillip Gutierrez. Motion passed with no objection.

**2. OLD BUSINESS**

- The former commissioners of the Veterans Commission developed three work groups that concentrated on the top three priorities that Veterans face. With a minimum of three commissioners per group they have decided to continue concentrating on the following work groups
  - Homeless Veterans : Phillip Gutierrez, David Thomas, Jason Denny
    - Heroes Lodge: Tax credit by the American GI Forum was received and will continue to move forward to making a difference in assisting with housing homeless Veterans.
  - Female Veterans:
    - No updates
  - Employment/Transitioning Veterans/Education: Nick Van Zandt, Pete Salazar, and George Harrington.
    - All members reached out to ACC regarding partnering with ACC Veteran’s resource center via email. Will re-engage once the holidays are over to continue the talk about this new partnership.
- Chair Jason Denny met with PARD regarding Veterans Park initiative and informed the board that \$400,000 is earmarked for the creation of Veterans Park for the City of Austin. PARD is

aware of the possibility of moving the park and that they are open to design concepts and moving locations based on the commission's recommendations. As the Capital City of Texas, Austin's Veteran's park should be exuberant and capturing for the public to visit and be seen. A possible recommendation is to fundraise to the general public to build this grandeur Veterans Park. The monuments that were slated to be in Veteran's Park will have a home to the American Legion and to have all branches of the Military represented rather than campaigns to remain neutral. The next plan is to talk to legal and PARD regarding the parameters of fundraising.

### **3. NEW BUSINESS**

- At the last meeting, commissioner George Harrington recommended based on MPT Tovo's recommendation to create an external mentorship program with the employees of the City of Austin and transitioning Veterans getting out of the Military. The next step of the commission will be to draft a proposal and recommendations for the Council members to review as an action item. The idea is to not replicate if another organization is doing something similar to this like the TVC MilVet Peer Network. More to be discussed about this initiative at the next meeting.
- The Commission of Veteran Affairs bylaws were reviewed and the only change recommended was the date signed which should reflect this day. Commissioner David Thomas made a motion to approve the bylaws and the motion was seconded by Vice Chair Pete Salazar. The bylaws were passed with no objection.

### **4. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

N/A (No public hearings during this meeting)

#### **• CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL**

N/A (No public hearings during this meeting)

### **STAFF BRIEFINGS**

- The Mayor's initiative to end Veteran homelessness was to be completed by the end of the year to have Austin, Texas the next city to declare functional zero for no more homeless Veterans.
- The City of Austin will partner with the Chamber of Commerce and Fort Hood to participate in the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) act. This act will allow transitioning Veterans who have up to 6 months to be discharged to work for the City of Austin and be paid by the ARMY at Fort Hood with the high objective to be hired after they transition out of the Military.
- Veteran Business Enterprise (VBE) disparity study has been complete and will be on the council agenda for January 14<sup>th</sup> to be voted to be approved or denied.
- Ed Colinsky, nominated by Councilman Zimmerman introduced himself today as the newest commissioner. He served in Artillery during the Vietnam War in the Army for 32 years.

**ADJOURN:** Jason Denny adjourned the meeting at 7:50 PM. Without objection