

**COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
MINUTES****REGULAR MEETING
June 17, 2014**

The Commission on Veteran Affairs convened in a regular meeting on June 17, 2014 at City Hall, 301 West 2nd Street in Austin, Texas.

Chair Cassaundra Melgar- C'D 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
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 May 20, 2014. Commissioner John Conley moved to approve the May 20, 2014 minutes. Motion was seconded by Vice Chair Phillip Gutierrez. 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 – Statistics show that 6.7% of Veterans are homeless and this number is increasing and that reinforced housing is an issue. In HUD-VASH, 350 Veterans are housed and 25 are waiting.
 - Female Veterans –Business, education, housing, childcare and transportation are issues among Female Veterans. Carrie Sconza and Greg led a Entrepreneur workshop at Camp Mabry
 - Employment and Education – Met with UT Veteran Services Ben Armstrong and recommendations to council to support their actions is to be determined
- The commission decided to wait on expertise on newly appointed commissioner Del Kolbe to hear ideas and implement considerations to have a “One Stop Shop” in Austin, Texas in the next meeting.
- The commission decided on the 4th Wednesday of every month from 2PM-4PM starting in August.

3. NEW BUSINESS

- Darden Smith, founder and creative director with Songs Writers with soldiers played a sample song to the commission and discussed his mission and what he does for Veterans as a way to help wounded Veterans with song writing and singing.
- Carrie Sconza, Women Veterans Coordinator with TVC shared her experience with the National association for women conference and that Austin will be the next host site in April 2015. She seeks support from the commission to assist and possibly have the state conference held at the same time in 2015. She informed the board about the implementing the idea of having VA ID cards work as a bus pass and to coordinate with the City Metro about this option and possibility.
- Eric Whitfield and Kelli Backhaus from We Honor Vets informed their mission to honor those who are in Hospice care for their service to our country. They started a leadership committee and assist with VA specific needs and that they are hospice veteran partnership.
- Lil Serafine, Chief Operating officer from Grace after Fire showed a presentation on their mission and the director's goals to support and assist female Veterans. Their services include table talk, peer to peer and family retreats.

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS

N/A (No public hearings during this meeting)

5. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

- Gavino Fernandez informed the commission on the 4th of July Parade held on Saturday (June 28) at 8AM. They are partnered with Austin Fire Department and would like the commission to spread the word about this event.
- Paul Theobald informed the commission on the idea of the "One Stop Shop" to be partnered with Austin Community College and to use their resources to advocate and provide assistance to Veterans in and around Austin. He would look into ACC donating space for this project and provided ideas on how to move forward with this initiative.

6. STAFF BRIEFINGS

- Asked the Commission if there was any issues with their City email and to complete the survey the City Clerk's office sent to everyone about terms and exemptions to their service on the Commission.

7. ADJOURN: Chair Cassaundra Melgar-C'D Baca adjourned the meeting at 3:33P.M. Without objection