



Annual Internal Review

This report covers the time period of 7/1/2022 to 6/30/2023

Commission on Veterans Affairs

(Official Name of Board or Commission)

The Board/Commission mission statement (per the City Code) is:

- 1. Describe the board's actions supporting their mission during the previous calendar year. Address all elements of the board's mission statement as provided in the relevant sections of the City Code.**

It has been a difficult year for the Commission on Veterans Affairs. I was appointed Chair having only been with the Commission for two months and was not provided any type of handover. Furthermore, we had many Commissioners who were not attending meetings. In an effort to boost attendance, I implemented a hybrid system so people could video conference into the monthly session. This didn't seem to help. We only met as a Commission six times over the year. Seven meetings were cancelled – five of which were due to an inability to meet quorum. We did finally draft and posted to the City Council a memo proposing the establishment of a Veterans and Military Affairs Office ([Resolution No. 20211209-057](#)) which was finally posted in the Fall. We were ultimately denied. We then drafted a memo proposing removing the Office of Civil Rights from supporting the Commission. This was shared by legal by our liaison but we were denied as the Office of Civil Rights managed to keep the Veterans Commission under their management and they also moved to hire a Veterans coordinator.

We did manage to bring in several community members to discuss Veterans programs and issues, such as Glenn Towery, the Chairman & Founder of the Veterans Suicide Prevention Channel and organizer of the AVA (Austin Veteran

Arts) Fest. However, we did not meet with nearly enough Veterans organizations, in my opinion.

Overall, we did not achieve the full vision of the mission.

2. Determine if the board's actions throughout the year comply with the mission statement.

I believe, while we got very little accomplished and did not achieve the goals laid out in the mission statement, that we did *comply* with the mission statement. Frankly, we were hampered severely by members not showing up for nearly the whole year, making it very difficult to achieve quorum. Furthermore, the disorganization in the Office of Civil Rights meant things slipped through the cracks (such as our memo being posted 3 months late. For the few of us who attended meetings regularly, we tried our best to navigate these roadblocks.

3. List the board's goals and objectives for the new calendar year.

We are very excited for the coming year. I pushed to have those Commissioners who did not show up to meetings last year to be replaced with new Commissioners. Already, we have made quorum in the first two months. Additionally, we have a full-time Veterans coordinator which will be a great help. We spent nearly two full meetings establishing goals and objectives for the coming year:

- We want to have a needs assessment/study be conducted to understand the needs of the Veteran community in Austin. We have already drafted a memo to that end.
- We want to become more engaged with Austin non-profits and organizations that support Veterans. We began building a list of some of these organizations and plan on inviting those organizations to our meetings.
- We want to get a clear picture on the state of homeless Veterans and find ways to support them.
- We want to be involved and have input, in a meaningful way, with the Veterans Day Parade.
- We aim to determine how we can assist vets in getting the education they need (all types of education - college, trade schools et al.)
- We want to explore the feasibility of standing-up a one-stop resource center for Veterans.