

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION
Commission on Veterans Affairs
Recommendation Number: 20250219-006

WHEREAS, the City of Austin seeks to be a national leader in supporting its veteran and military community by providing comprehensive services and addressing critical issues such as housing, employment, mental health, and community reintegration;

WHEREAS, the Commission on Veterans Affairs has accumulated information concerning the needs of veterans in the Austin community through testimony from community members, veteran service organizations, non-profit groups, and city employees as well as the 2024 Texas Veterans Needs Assessment indicating that current support and access to Veteran services in Austin is insufficient;

WHEREAS, the City Council passed Resolution No. 20240814-021 directing the City Manager to develop a Veterans Affairs Action Plan to address recommendations for staffing, budget, organizational structure, and resources necessary for the effective provision of services;

WHEREAS, the Interim Director, Office of Equity and Inclusion reported to the Mayor and City Council in January 2025 that she reviewed and concurs with the 2024 Texas Veterans Needs Assessment that barriers exist in the City of Austin to ensuring local veterans have access to services and support;

WHEREAS, the City Council has previously recognized the great need for Veteran support services and adopted Resolution No. 20211209-057 directing the City Manager to explore the establishment of a Veterans and Military Affairs Office, identifying costs, possible funding sources, and steps associated with establishing this office;

WHEREAS, the Commission on Veterans Affairs passed Recommendations No. 20200115-B003 and No. 20240320-006 encouraging consolidation of all veteran and military-related initiatives, programs, and personnel dispersed throughout the City of Austin government into a single office to improve efficiency, accountability, and service delivery; and

WHEREAS, establishing an Office of Military and Veterans Affairs reporting to the City Manager, as is found in most large cities in Texas, will strengthen the City's commitment to addressing the needs of Veterans in our community and supporting the Veterans and currently serving National Guard and Reserve members working in the City of Austin government.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission on Veterans Affairs recommends the creation of an Office of Military and Veterans Affairs. The Commission recommends the following:

1. The Office should report to the City Manager. Employees will engage with Federal, State, and County government officials and across the City of Austin government.
2. The Office should seek to maximize Federal and State funding available for Veteran programs to support City activities.
3. The Office will engage with City employees across all agencies who are Veterans or currently serving National Guard and Reserve servicemembers.

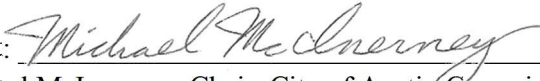
4. The City should reorganize the current Veterans Administrator and Veterans Services Consultant into this Office.
5. The City should create or reorganize sufficient positions to address assessed needs. The Commission recommends a Director-level manager, and sufficient staff to manage grants, assist with claims, provide benefits counseling and case management, coordinate outreach and partnerships, manage recruiting, military leave, and City employee resource groups.
6. The City should seek physical office space to host the Office of Military and Veterans Affairs.
7. The City should consider office space that would provide additional space for a one-stop-shop for local and national partner organizations to provide centralized access to veteran services and meeting space for City of Austin Veterans employee resource groups.

Date of Approval: February 19, 2025

Record of the vote: 6-0; Commissioner Armando Gonzalez made the motion and seconded by Commissioner Patrick Bissett

For: Michael McInerney, Amber Schleuning, Armando Gonzalez, Curtis Wyman, Patrick Bissett, William Dahlstrom

Not Present: Maria Brown-Spence, Gustavo Ramirez, Mark Balch, Christopher Wilson, Philip Reichert

Attest: 
Michael McInerney - Chair, City of Austin Commission on Veterans Affairs