

**Arizona Department of Veterans' Service Advisory Commission**  
4141 North S. Herrera Way, Phoenix, AZ 85012

**January 12, 2017**

**MINUTES**

**Advisory Commissioners Present**

Ryan Peters  
Joseph Brophy  
Danielle Desmond  
Peter Kloeber  
Ron Perkins  
Arlethe Rios  
Brett Rustand (via telephone)  
Rebecca Villalpando

**AZ Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS)**

Wanda Wright, Director  
Tera Scherer, Executive Assistant

**Advisory Commissioners Absent**

Jill Nelson

**Call to Order** – Chairman Peters called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes** – Chairman Peters called for the approval of the November 10, 2016 Veterans Advisory Commission Meeting Minutes. There being no changes to the minutes Commissioner Kloeber moved to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Rios seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

**Agency Announcements and Updates** – Wanda Wright, Director of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, gave agency updates of the last quarter:

Arizona Management System (AMS)

- Reduced hiring time for nurses from 130 days to an average of 23 days
- Paying 99% of invoices within 30 days
- Filing more claims and receiving more approvals

Roadmap to Veteran Employment

- Skill Bridge launching in West Valley; Maricopa Community College with Luke Air Force Base to man the pilot program
- Commanders and Family Readiness Center will work with individuals separating within six months
- Apprenticeships made available
- Roadmap portal to Arizona@Work site (6) pilots
- Corporate Council – 19 organizations included; co-chaired by USAA and APS

Veteran Student Month (November)

- Governor proclamation
- Veteran Supportive Campus Event recognizing schools

Opened two new locations (replaced old places)

- Prescott
- Flagstaff

Phoenix Home – redesign for renovation ongoing

Yuma Home 40% design completed

Tribal Town Hall in October with 18 Tribes in attendance

MOU with Navajo Nation – trained 5 VSOs, in process of receiving accreditation

Attended Tohono O'odham celebrations in Bapchule, Salt River, Gila River, Sells, Apache White Mountains

Establishing Military Veteran Community Network

- Southern Tucson
- Central Phoenix
- North Prescott

Working w/ADOT for better experience for Veterans getting licenses and plates

Clay Hunt Initiatives – VA, State, Community partnerships to develop a plan to decrease veteran suicides in Arizona

- 1 April launch
- Peer support in communities
- Work w/VSOs, first responders and aging agencies

VVA 50<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of the Vietnam War Events in the following cities:

- Mesa
- Tucson
- Kingman
- Phoenix (Heard)
- Sun City
- Gila River community in February

Women Veteran Group met to begin strategic planning and developed a good mission and vision with a solid plan to begin implementing ideas in 2017

Working with Walgreens on Mental Health/Clay Hunt initiative collaboration

Central Arizona regional veterans court began

Large Grants – Veterans Donation Fund

- 59 proposals received
- Begin evaluation process this week

Five Year Homelessness Plan completed in conjunction with the Department of Housing

The State Approving Agency has been working with Pima Community College to attain compliance;

PCC has been certified as an Arizona Veteran Supportive Campus

Agency Veteran Benefits Counselors (VBC) have begun developing a standard of work and has already increased the amount of federal dollars received by Arizona Veterans by three percent  
VBCs are fully staffed and the Department is seeing a reduction in the turnover rate

### **Open Discussion for the Good of the Order**

Commissioner Villalpando stated that the VBC working in Black Canyon City is doing great work and has heard nothing but good things from the Veteran community.

Commissioner Kloeber stated that the Coconino County Veterans Forum meets four times a year and is seeing representation from 27 different organizations with around 60 people in attendance at each meeting.

Commissioner Rustand complimented the Arizona Coalition for Military Families with their work on the Southern Arizona Military and Veterans Community Network (MVCN) in early December.

Chairman Peters asked about the group “Veterans on Patrol” that is a homeless camp off the Arizona 202 Red Mountain Freeway. Director Wright let the Commission know that ADVS, DES and a couple other organizations paid a visit to the camp to provide assistance to individuals. As it turns out very few were actually homeless and the ones that were there chose to stay.

Commissioner Perkins said there was a group that was trying to get legislation through that would reduce taxes to veterans’ pensions. He further stated there is some legislation relating to the Military Family Relief fund and is interested in seeing what happens with that, as well as the Veterans Donation Fund.

Commissioner Villalpando asked if it would be possible for the Commission to write a letter to the legislature to help influence legislation and Commissioner Perkins agreed the Commission should send a letter to the governor as well regarding veteran issues in Arizona.

Commissioner Perkins feels the AVSAC has lost their image, as historically the commission was invited to events throughout the state. Now he feels the awareness of the Commission is no longer there. Commissioner Rustand agreed that the nature of the Commission has changed over the years and in the past was better at pushing information out to the Veteran community from the Department.

Chairman Peters stated that he would like each Commissioner to reach out to and meet with the Department's Veteran Benefits Counselors in their area.

The meeting adjourned at 11:17 a.m. The next Advisory Commission meeting will be held March 9, 2017.