

Arizona Department of Veterans' Service Advisory Commission
4141 N. 3rd Street (North S. Herrera Way), Phoenix, AZ 85012

January 9, 2014

MINUTES

Advisory Commissioners

Jeff Olson, Chair
Ron Perkins, Vice Chair
Kara Caldwell
George Cushing
Philip Hanson
Wayne Krula
Brett Rustand
David Toliver, Sr.

AZ Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS)

Ted Vogt, Director
Steve Weintraub, Outreach Coordinator
Dave Hampton, Public Information Officer
Judy Smith, Administrative Secretary
Yasmin Ramos, Administrative Secretary

Guests

Mark Field, Publisher/Editor of AZ Veterans Magazine
Diana Alvarez, DES Child Support Division

Call to Order – Chairman Jeff Olson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. There were no corrections to the November minutes. Commissioner Cushing moved to approve the minutes as presented. Commissioner Hanson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Introduction and Welcome to Invited guests – Chairman Olson recognized guest Mark Field, Publisher and Editor of AZ Veterans Magazine. Mr. Field took photos of the Commissioners and Director Ted Vogt for an article about the commission that will be published in a future publication. Mr. Field is donating a newsletter page to ADVS to help bring exposure to ADVS and the Advisory Commission, and provide information to veterans.

Diana Alvarez of the DES Child Support Division was present to observe. DES has implemented a new program for veterans in the child support division and Diana would like to attend a future meeting, along with her supervisor, to speak before the commission. Chairman Olson invited Ms. Alvarez to come back and present to the commission at a later date.

Communications – The secretary reported that Sharon Helman, Director of Carl T. Hayden Medical Center was scheduled to speak but cancelled due to jury duty selection. She will reschedule her presentation for a later date.

Sandra Flint, Director of the VA Regional Office was asked to speak to the commission but is out of town and unable to attend today's meeting. She will reschedule.

Marjorie Cook of the DES Child Support Division was scheduled to speak in December. Due to the meeting cancellation, she or a colleague will reschedule at a later date.

Director Vogt extended an invitation to Joe Cuffari, the Governor's Policy Advisor for Public Safety, to attend today's meeting and introduce himself. Mr. Cuffari is unable to attend today but plans to attend the February meeting.

Chairman Olson requested that Lee Sevy, Administrator of the ADVS Veterans Education & Training Approving Agency, attend and respond to questions from the July meeting regarding G.I. Bill payments made to veterans and what they consist of. Mr. Sevy was not available to attend but sent detailed information on the Montgomery and Post 9/11 G.I. Bill, which was distributed.

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An e-mail was received from AVSAC stakeholder, Dorn Patrick Farrell, who had applied in September for a commissioner position. He asked about the status of his application. The secretary contacted the Governor's Boards & Commissions and was told Mr. Farrell's application remains current and there is not a date as to when the governor will make a decision to fill the vacancy on the commission. The secretary informed Mr. Farrell of this information.

Vice Chair Ron Perkins asked if the secretary could follow up with the Governor's Boards & Commissions regarding Terry Tassin's application for commissioner that was submitted in August, 2013. He would like to know the status and whether the applicant has to reapply in 2014. The secretary will follow up.

Director Vogt said as long as there is a vacancy, the applications remain current until the governor makes a selection. There is no communication letting applicants know that their application remains in active status. Openings come available on a cycle. We can find out if the applicant needs to reapply, if not chosen, or if they must apply annually for their application to be considered current.

Chairman Olson said Sharon Helman and Sandra Flint are very important people for the agency and commission to hear from and we should continue to invite them to attend an Advisory Commission meeting. Chairman Olson is making a contingency plan to be sure the meetings are educational, worthwhile and policy based for the governor and that the commission fills the time with good quality subjects.

Director Vogt will contact Sharon Helman and Sandra Flint to see if they can to attend in February, or have someone else in their divisions attend.

Agency Announcements and Updates – Marana and Flagstaff Cemetery Projects -_ADVS

Director Ted Vogt reported that on November 22nd, the agency was notified by the Federal VA that Marana was selected to receive a federal grant for the new veteran cemetery. This request has been in progress since 2006. ADVS closed out the process of accepting requests for qualifications for engineering firms and expects to select an engineering firm by February 5th.

Engineering will start with the master planning on the Marana site. Groundbreaking for the Marana and Camp Navajo cemetery projects is expected this year. We expect both projects to be completed in 2016. The department was very busy in November and December and the year will continue to be busy with these two projects. Victor Daniels, ADVS Facilities Project Manager, is the lead on both projects.

Director Vogt reviewed ADVS funding issues that were not pushed through due to the economic downturn and raised some issues of funding for future veteran homes and cemeteries. We are waiting to see if these funding issues will be incorporated into the governor's new budget; we should know by Friday, January 17.

Homeless Veteran Program

On December 19th, Mayor Stanton announced that the last homeless veteran is off the street and into bridge housing. We are well on track for all homeless veterans to be in permanent housing by February 14, 2014, which is our goal for functional zero in chronic veteran homelessness.

Phoenix is the first city in the country to reach functional zero in veteran homelessness. A press announcement by the City of Phoenix is scheduled for the morning of February 15th; Eric Shinseki, Director of Veterans Affairs and Shaun Donovan, Secretary of Housing & Urban Development, from Washington, D.C. are invited to attend the announcement. Governor Brewer, Director Traylor from the Housing Department, Mayor Stanton and Senator John McCain are also invited to attend.

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Commissioner Perkins inquired where and what time the announcement will take place. Director Vogt is not sure of the time and location, but will be sure the commission is notified.

Tucson and Pima County are not far behind in reaching their goal of functional zero in veteran homelessness. They intend to reach the VA's goal of functional zero veteran homelessness by the end of 2015.

We don't have a count of homeless people, other than veterans, but have heard the number is up from 1,000. Some of those may be experiencing chronic homelessness and some may be seasonal; it is a hard number to determine. The good thing is that the Arizona plan to end homelessness is about building capacity. By taking care of the chronically homeless, we can move on to the next group.

The chronically homeless, as defined by U.S. Housing & Urban Development, is someone who has a debilitating condition and has been homeless for more than one year or has experienced homelessness four times in the course of three years.

In terms of those homeless for 6 months or less, we have not reached functional zero as yet. People move in and out of homelessness. Arizona's plan to end homelessness is to build on capacity and move on to the next group and coordinate efforts in all jurisdictions to end homelessness across the board. Many community partners are building the capacity to end homelessness.

Commissioner Krula noted that those who don't make the cut off or meet the threshold have access to all the VA services veterans have. Director Vogt said the reason for that may be because some community partners don't have to meet the same thresholds as the VA in building the capacity to deal with homelessness.

Legislature Reconvenes - Director Vogt noted the Arizona Legislature goes back into session on Monday, January 13th.

Dave Hampton said the agency has nothing on the legislative agenda other than focusing on Director Vogt being confirmed in the senate. Dave noted that former legislators can be on the floor of the legislature.

He has met with members of the Military Affairs committee and when we know the date that Director Vogt is to be confirmed as Director of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, he will let the commissioners know. We would like as many commissioners there as possible for the committee hearings.

Director Vogt said ADVS has been working behind the scenes and is making sure the department's issues have a voice in the state's budget.

Student Veteran Association – Steve Weintraub, Outreach Coordinator, attended the Student Veteran Association (SVA) National Conference January 2-5 in Scottsdale. Student Veterans of America is a national, non-profit. Their mission is to provide military veterans with the resources, support and advocacy needed to succeed in higher education and following graduation. The conference was very positive and there was a good student veteran turnout from Arizona colleges. Representatives from Arizona Western College in Yuma were present and all Maricopa County colleges, Pima Community College, U of A, ASU; and NAU, were well represented.

Steve met Wayne Robinson, CEO and President of Student Veterans of America and told him what Arizona is doing with colleges and universities for employment of student veterans who graduate and what we do for them after graduation. Arizona provides programs and support networks such as the

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AZ Coalition for Military Families, who provides resources that the community and the VA don't provide. Wayne was able to see the strides Arizona has made toward serving our student veterans.

Wayne Robinson is interested in what Arizona is doing for student veterans and its partnership with the AZ Coalition of Military Families. He wants to implement these programs on a national scale and said Arizona is in front of them in achieving these goals. He's coming back to Arizona February 4-7 and wants to visit the schools and employers we are partnering with so he can get a better idea of the programs he wants to institute nationally. Wayne understands that the reintegration of veterans starts with the community colleges.

Steve will escort Wayne to community colleges, universities and the businesses we are partnering with so he will get a better idea of what Arizona is doing for student veterans. Wayne considers Arizona the pilot for what he wants to do in Washington, D.C.

Veteran Support Campus – Prescott College submitted an application for supported campus certification. Even though they are a private college, they are reducing tuition rates; other private schools are doing the opposite. Prescott reached out to the Governor's Policy Advisor for Education, Dale Frost, who wanted to know about Prescott College. He is interested to know when Prescott becomes certified so an event can be planned and the college director can present a proclamation and certificate from the governor's office. This event will be done for all the colleges that become certified. Prescott may be the first college to become certified other than ASU, NAU and U of A.

Mesa and Glendale Community College applications are pending. Scottsdale has submitted an application and when they have implemented a veterans' success course during the spring semester; that is all they need to become certified. They will become a veteran supportive campus in the spring.

Steve recently learned that Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio segregated veteran inmates from the general population. Steve will meet with the Arizona Coalition to End Homelessness and the AZ Coalition for Military Families on Monday, January 13, along with Sean Price, ADVS Homeless Veteran Services Program Manager, to discuss the services we can provide veteran inmates. The main topic is homelessness.

Upon release from prison, many veterans don't have a place to live and they become homeless. ADVS and its partners intend to get in front of this situation so that when released, if the inmates don't have a place to go, they will know by that evening where they can go to be off the street. Other services such as counseling and employment resources will be offered.

Steve and the coalition have been going around the state collecting data and feedback from veterans, employers and educators for compiling a strategic plan for veteran employment. Friday, January 10th, Steve and the coalition will be in Yuma for roundtable discussions to collect data and feedback from veterans, employers and educators.

Phoenix Logistics, an aerospace and defense employer in Tempe, is very interested in partnering with students who are interested in the aerospace and defense industry. They will host a luncheon every month for ten students from supportive certified campuses who are interested in aerospace and defense. The employer will be looking at these students as potential employees. We want to make this program available statewide for other educational institutions and employers.

Director Vogt wants to focus the department on veteran employment. Unemployment for veterans as a whole, in all generations of employment, is lower than the national average and for Gulf War era men and women ages 18-24, the unemployment rate is higher than the national average. Women are more likely to experience unemployment than men. Adjutant General Michael McGuire, of the Arizona National Guard, told Director Vogt there is 12% unemployment among national guardsmen.

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Unemployment leads to other adverse consequences; it is critical that the state deal with veteran unemployment.

When asked about the tracking of student veterans, Steve said there are about 17,000 statewide and we are working with schools to get student veterans to identify themselves. Schools have a good idea what their veteran student population is. The easiest way to track is through the V-Wrap or post 9/11, Chapter 33 G. I. Bill benefits records.

There are student veterans in technical and vocational schools, universities and community colleges that are not taking advantage of their benefits so they are not necessarily being counted. Steve is working with schools to urge veterans to self-identify. Some veterans want to save their benefits for graduate school and if they are attending a community college, they want to save their benefits for a university.

Commissioner Hanson wanted to know how many states were represented at the Student Veteran Association Conference and how many people attended.

The numbers are not available yet, but Steve thinks there were 800 to 1,000 in attendance. There were educators and representatives from schools; the event was well attended.

Not every student in Arizona will be able to attend next year's SVA Conference, wherever it will be held, so for 2 hours the Arizona people met privately and talked about issues and decided to hold an annual in-state veteran conference aside from the national conference.

Mark Field said many people may not be aware that there are over 48,000 veteran-owned businesses in Arizona. He met with the U.S Small Business Administration (SBA) and they are interested in holding a small business symposium to help veterans start and expand businesses in Arizona. In regard to employment, the SVA might want to partner with the SBA to get more people to start businesses in Arizona. Director Vogt said the SBA was brought into our initiative.

G.I. Bill information – Chairman Olson referred to the G.I. Bill information handout and noted that the G.I. Bill is different today compared to what it was in past years. For example, in the past when leaving the service, the veteran received a monthly stipend for 48 months and that was the end of the compensation. Now, all tuition fees are paid for the veteran. In public schools, all tuition fees are paid, which is a great step forward. Private schools have a state-based formula that pays so much money per credit. Jeff believes the amount in Arizona is \$725 a credit.

Commissioner Rustand said there are a lot of participating private schools that are Yellow Ribbon Schools that will cover the difference between the highest paid in-state tuition and state school tuition.

Director Vogt said the formula public schools use is based on the total compensation paid to the highest public institution in that state. If the private school is more expensive than a public school, you will only be compensated up to the public institution level. U of A is the example for how the institutions are compensated. The "Yellow Ribbon Program" makes up the difference in tuition state by state.

Jeff Olson said in addition to the maximum tuition and fees, veterans can receive a housing allowance that is tied directly to the base allowance for housing with dependents, which is about \$1460/mo., and a supply allowance not to exceed \$1,000 a year. There are some good things in the bill to help student veterans successfully stay in the program.

There is a one-time rule benefit; if the veteran lives 500 miles from their school, they can get a one-time allowance for moving expenses. It's about \$400.

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One of the best programs in the 9/11 G.I. Bill, for the first time in history, is the transfer of benefits. This would create another subset of veterans that aren't being tracked. They may be going to school and have transferred their benefits to their spouse or dependent children. The dependent children may not use those benefits for several years.

Steve noted that the military is communicating to active forces before they transition out of the military, that in order to transfer their benefits, they have to do so while they are in active duty status. Benefits transfers cannot be done once the veteran is off active duty. Veterans have 10 or 11 years to use the benefits from the date of transfer.

Post 9/11 G.I. Bill feedback from student veterans is the concern that when school is not in session, they are not receiving benefits, including a stipend for housing allowance. When the government shut down in October, 2013, they didn't receive benefits and that was a concern.

The coalition is trying to find ways to improve those areas by working with employers to hire students on a part time basis so they have income while they are on school break.

Commissioner Perkins asked if this encourages the students to attend school year round and what is the maximum load of credits?

Steve said students who are attending a community college go to school over the summer to maximize their credits so they can enroll in a university in the fall. The maximum load is 18 credits; the minimum is 9 or 12. A full time student is 12 credits.

Steve said students need to manage their money to carry them through the holiday shutdown. Some are better at it than others; however some students are on the verge of being homeless because they can't pay rent. The coalition learned from Southern Arizona veterans that some were becoming homeless during the holiday shutdown. The coalition told veterans to let them know of students about to become homeless so they can leverage community resources to help bridge that situation.

Chairman Olson questioned whether veteran organizations and the National Governor's Association should ask congress to change the law not to include the summer break. It is too long a period of time and by changing the law, it would keep veterans benefits coming to them. Changing the law would not increase the federal government national debt but might keep some veterans in school. Chairman Olson said this subject will be covered further at the February meeting.

Steve said the flight school at ASU Poly in east Scottsdale is where the flight program is taught. The Post 9-11 G.I. Bill benefits cover students' fees and flight time. It is a good program and is liberal as to what the funding covers.

Outreach Activities for the Commission – Chairman Olson and Commissioner Brett Rustand attended Rally Point Tucson, a non-profit group that was established to help veterans navigate the VA system with housing and other matters.

The Rally Point meeting was an informal gathering of 25-30 homeless, or at risk of being homeless, veterans. It was very enlightening. He found that the vast majority of veterans are not active in Veteran Service Organization (VSO's); we have to go where they are. Jeff talked with people he would never have found at a veterans' service organization.

Jeff talked to a young man who is a heroin addict. He had been in a drug treatment program and was put on methadone drugs. He became hooked on the drug and was kicked out of the drug program for failure to conform. Jeff asked him if he was enrolled in another VA program and he was not. Jeff asked if there were other community programs that would work with him. The man said there are programs but the VA doesn't have contractual dealings with drug abuse programs. Jeff is pretty sure the VA has the authority to develop those contracts.

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In the meantime, the young man is getting drugs where he can and was told he can't come back into the treatment program. It would seem that the VA should be able to find a contractor to work with people who are in this situation. Jeff was taken by his story and the other stories he heard. It was obvious most people there that day were eligible for VA treatment but about half of them were not in a VA program.

Commissioner Rustand agreed that this is a huge issue among younger veterans. We need to operate through traditional VSO's but also realize the younger generation is not participating in VSO's.

Additionally, unless veterans are receiving care and compensation from the VA because of a serious injury/illness, most younger veterans are not enrolling with the VA. They go back to their communities and when illnesses occur, they get treatment from doctors through the traditional system.

Rally Point is in a tough position because the VA is refusing to contract with community organizations and is dis-enrolling hard cases and sending them back to their communities. Non-profits like Rally Point are left to pick up the pieces without any funding or ability to be compensated for these services. Rally Point is finding homes and drug treatment for veterans not served by the VA. For whatever reasons, the VA has dis-enrolled 40 or 50 veterans in the Phoenix area and 30-40 veterans in Tucson that Rally Point is now helping.

There are many providers all over the state ready to contract with the VA to help these veterans. They are staffing their offices with veterans to provide peer support, hotlines, suicide prevention and substance abuse. At present, the VA is impenetrable.

Director Vogt said one of the groups ADVS is working with is the AZ Coalition for Military Families and their goal is to set up a resource network. There are issues and if a veteran has a less than honorable discharge, that forecloses many resources to the veteran. This could be the case with the veteran Jeff Olson encountered.

The AZ Coalition for Military Families is trying to build public and private partnerships, find providers for healthcare and finances, and jobs, by creating a network of individuals who will work together after the community goodwill recedes.

Once the last troops come out of Afghanistan and stories fade from the headlines, you will see the goodwill and federal dollars start to recede. If anyone knows of providers, please refer them to Thomas and Nicola Winkel of the AZ Coalition for Military Families because they are looking for providers. If you encounter veterans in need, refer them to the AZ Coalition for Military Families.

The Coalition is in the process of training the first of 100 navigators. Some may be full time; but it is more likely the navigators will be people from within the service providers that have volunteered.

Their aim is to build a "no wrong door concept" so that if somebody calls and they don't have a job, and it becomes apparent to the navigator that there are other stressors going on, the navigator can send the caller to a volunteer within that resource network who can help that veteran or family. The Winkel's goal is to have 750 to 1,000 navigators statewide. Some may be full time, or they may be volunteers from the organizations that have volunteered to be the point of contact for veterans.

About 10% of veterans in Arizona get compensation or health care through the VA. The majority of veterans are not active in VSO's and are not involved in the VA. They are out there and we have to go to where they might be.

Commissioner Rustand agreed that navigators will be essential. Part of the difficulty for navigators is that organizations are funding the navigators either out of pocket or through crisis dollars or some other method, to move this work along. The VA has been directed by two U.S. presidents through

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executive order to work with community organizations. Some states have slowly introduced this and others have not.

The former Tri-West has been contracted to build community networks. The key is getting the VA to realize the majority of services are being provided outside the VA network and they need to find a way to bridge that gap.

Chairman Olson said there was a disproportionate number of female veterans at the Rally Point event. Two veteran women he encountered were homeless and had children. As we discussed in the past, we need to keep our focus on, and others should as well, the changing demographics of returning veterans.

Commissioner Krula recently spoke with three women veterans and asked if they had attended the Women's Veteran Health and Wellness Conference in June. They had attended the conference in the past and felt it was focused more toward current women veterans and those veterans were addressed more than women veterans from their time of service. The conference did not encompass some of the needs these women were experiencing. Mr. Krula noted that Gabe Forsberg is still very much involved and working with women veterans. He passed this information on to her.

In December, Chairman Olson was at Northern Arizona University (NAU) in Flagstaff and because of the holiday, there was no official SVA meeting. He met with some student veterans who are happy with their tight knit group. They are watching the development of the new cemetery outside Flagstaff. Jeff thinks there might be an opportunity to ask veteran students from the college to volunteer to help get jobs done on the cemetery project. The student veterans are also watching the development of the Chinle Veteran Home. He noted the Flagstaff newspapers are active with veteran articles.

Dave Hampton noted that the Arizona Daily Sun in Tucson contacts him regularly. A reporter, Johnathan Betz, has contacted Dave on a number of occasions regarding the cemetery at Camp Navajo

Commissioner Toliver attended a veterans court in Nevada. He spoke to a class and encouraged them to get back into the mainstream. He advised them that once they have gone through the program and graduated, their records are cleared. It was a productive effort and Dave appreciated the opportunity to talk to veterans and assure them that 'one mistake does not a life make'.

Steve Weintraub noted that Phoenix and Tucson have robust veterans court programs. Arizona has a Federal veterans court also. Some veterans don't qualify for VA benefits because of bad paper or something negative that happened in their military career. That is why we're leveraging the public and private sector with the AZ Coalition for Military Families. We're working with parole officers and attorneys and firms that are helping veterans get right in their mentorship. Steve is not familiar with the Nevada program, but Arizona has strong programs and law students at U of A are very involved with the veterans court in Tucson.

Some veterans don't qualify for the Federal Veterans Court because of negative factors in their military record or a less than honorable discharge. The veterans court program is strong in Arizona and this is where the AZ Coalition for Military Families is working through resource networks. Dave Hampton noted that General Gregg Maxon, who is now with the Arizona Supreme Court, is working to expand the student veterans court program in Arizona. .

Today, Director Vogt will meet with the Supreme Court's government relations personnel to discuss the jurisdictional changes the court is seeking during this next legislative cycle so we don't have to go county by county to set up veteran treatment courts.

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March Advisory Commission Meeting - Chairman Olson would like to hold the March Advisory Commission meeting in Tucson. It would be a good opportunity to hear from Jonathan Gardner, Director of the Southern Arizona VA Medical Center, and James Ross, the Veteran Home Administrator.

Jeff asked for Director Vogt's and the commissioner's thoughts on meeting in Tucson in March. It would also be an opportunity to drive through the Marana property as well as to hear from people in southern Arizona.

Director Vogt suggested meeting at the Veteran Home, which is close to the VA Hospital and those who wish to, could tour the veteran home. The chapel seats a large group and would be suitable space for the meeting.

Commissioner Cushing said the commission represents everybody, not just Maricopa County, and they should make a field trip to let people in Tucson know the Advisory Commission exists and is interested in what is going on in Southern Arizona. He is in favor of meeting in Tucson.

Commissioner Toliver suggested inviting just military organizations, similar to a Town Hall meeting, which would give the commission better control of parameters. How would we announce the commission's presence and get the word out to veteran organizations?

Commissioner Krula thought it might be good to use the picture that was taken today for advance publicity. The picture and invitation to attend the March meeting could reach all of the VSO's in the Tucson area. If the newspaper publicity states civic organizations are encouraged to have a representative there, with advanced publicity, major VSO's would help generate more participation.

Chairman Olson said we would impose on our new and good friend Mark Field to put an announcement in his AZ Veterans Magazine, and by posting the agenda. Brett and Jeff could get word out through the local veteran associations and newspaper. Jeff said it is an opportunity for a Town Hall meeting with a Q & A setting and believes we would have a good turnout. Jeff wants all guests to have a chance to speak.

Commissioner Ron Perkins suggested holding the Advisory Commission meeting from 10:00 a.m. to Noon, eating lunch, and then holding a town hall meeting for local service organizations and allowing people to come and meet with the commissioners. It could be an all day event focused on several organizations to hear their complaints, if they have any. If we advertised ahead of time, guests could solicit questions at their organizational meetings and bring them to the commission.

Commissioner Hanson is not in favor of a Town Hall meeting because in the past, one or two people took up the entire time with their complaints, leaving out many people who had questions or concerns. If we hold the Town Hall meeting, he would like to keep it to a smaller invited group.

When asked if a state vehicle could be used to transport commissioners and staff, Director Vogt said we will look into taking a van.

Dave Hampton noted that the Open Meeting Law does not allow commissioners to respond to any concerns the VSO's bring up, which usually makes them unhappy. Chairman Olson will proceed with planning the March meeting and invite Jonathan Gardner from the Tucson VA Medical Center to speak. He will invite organizations to attend and make the public aware that the meeting is open to all and not just veteran organizations. He believes if the invitation is to veteran groups only, the public feels they cannot attend and we don't want that.

Commissioner Perkins asked whether the agency is still receiving outreach activities from the VBC's to share with the commission. He noted that Ron Shackle in the Chandler VSD office has nothing

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going on presently, but the department sends out an e-mail of upcoming activities. The commission wants to attend these activities with the table top display and let people know we are there to listen to their concerns on behalf of the governor and that we want to help.

Director Vogt said he has asked veteran organizations and groups to advise our agency of events they have going on so ADVS can attend these events and share the information with the commission.

Chairman Olson said he would encourage commissioners to look for community gatherings; they don't have to be specifically veteran meetings, as many attendees at community activities are veterans, or veteran dependents, and they have different ideas and concerns.

Open Discussion for the Good of the Order – Commissioner Cushing noted that since legislation was passed to allow veteran status on driver's licenses, the DMV was to share that database with ADVS as a way to determine how many veterans are in the state of Arizona.

One of the driving forces behind the policy was if the veteran was detained for a traffic or minor offense, the police would recognize them as a veteran and treat them differently than they would for a DUI offense by placing them somewhere other than the criminal court system.

Mr. Cushing recently spoke with an Iraq war veteran who said he belongs to several veteran organizations and many younger veterans of his generation are opting not to have the veteran identifier on their driver's license. They see it is another tool for "Big Brother" to watch them. If the veteran is a gun owner, he feels this is a way to identify him as such and may cause him to be watched by the government.

Mr. Cushing said this is the first time he had heard a veteran talk about the driver's license veteran identifier. He believes this could be a reason younger veterans are not joining veteran organizations.

Ron Perkins hopes some good comes out of this veteran license registration. He recently went through security at the airport and the agent had not seen veteran status on a driver's license. He thanked Ron for his military service. Ron has heard stories of veterans who were stopped for speeding and the officer saw the veteran status, warned them for speeding, but let them go. Dave Hampton said that is not something we want to endorse.

Commissioner Hanson received an email from a graduate student at NAU, Joseph Kohout, asking for financial support.

Steve Weintraub is aware of this veteran and said he is currently enrolled at Coconino Community College with a background in nursing, which was his job in the Army. He's asking for financial assistance to get a computer science degree. He wants to combine his computer science degree and robotics with his medical degree.

The veteran is eligible for federal aid and loans but he chooses not to apply for financial aid and is looking for other avenues. Steve spoke with the veteran and the matter has been handled. Chairman Olson said over the next two weeks, he would like the commissioners to submit specific questions for directors Gardner, Helman and Flint and please forward them to him in advance so he can pass them along to the VA directors to allow them to prepare answers ahead of the meeting. The meeting will not be restricted to just those questions.

Chairman Olson adjourned the meeting at 11:34 a.m. The next Advisory Commission meeting will be held February 13, 2014.