

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

September 11, 2014

MINUTES

Advisory Commissioners

Ron Perkins, Chair
Brett Rustand, Vice Chair
Kara Caldwell
Andrew Griffin
John Scott

Excused:

Phillip Hanson
Jeffrey Olson
David Toliver, Sr.

AZ Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS)

Ted Vogt, Director
Judy Smith, Administrative Secretary
Yasmin Ramos, Executive Assistant

Guests

Mike McAleer, Public Affairs Officer, VHA
Scott McRoberts, VA Health System Specialist
David Montoya, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the
Office of Public & Intergovernmental Affairs
Jillian Seamans, Supervisor, DES Child Support Services
Diana Alvarez, DES, Child Support Services
Melvin Morris, ADVS Veteran Benefits Counselor
Marion Cartland, Publisher, AZ Veteran Connection
Magazine

Call to Order – Chairman Ron Perkins called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.

Introduction and Welcome of Invited guests – Chairman Perkins asked for introductions around the table.

Wayne Krula served three years on the Advisory Commission and is retiring today.

David Montoya, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs, has been in the position just over one month and, during that time, he traveled around the country meeting people and developing relationships with those he says are actually getting the work done.

Montoya said things are going well in Arizona and much of it due to ADVS' dedication to eliminating Veteran homelessness and its achievement of functional zero veteran homelessness in Metro Phoenix. This is not being done elsewhere in the country.

He thanked veterans in the room for their military service and for continuing to serve veterans. Montoya says he is impressed by people around the table and the associations they serve.

This will not be Montoya's first trip to Arizona; State and city level associations are partners with the VA. In working for the Secretary of Intergovernmental Affairs, Montoya's job is visibility into all the major pieces of the VA. There are 330,000 employees throughout the VA and currently only 20 political appointees.

Montoya looks forward to the next two years in working with ADVS and the Advisory Commission in the important work they do.

Mike McAleer, Acting Public Affairs Officer at the VA Medical Center, is from Martinsburg, VA and came to the VA September 2nd.

Scott McRoberts, Health Assistance Specialist to the Director for the Phoenix Healthcare System, has worked as Acting Public Affairs Officer for more than a year. McRoberts has filled in for the VA Director several times at Advisory Commission meetings; the commission stated that it appreciates his presence here today.

John Scott, Executive Director for the non-profit U.S. Vets-Phoenix, joined the commission this month. John, a Marine Corps veteran, said it is good to be in the company of veterans and those working for veterans.

Commissioner Scott has been in Arizona two years. His background includes working for U.S. Vets in Long Beach, CA. He has a Master's Degree in Social Work and his work with veterans' ranges from managing Veteran Resource Centers at Santa Monica College to individual therapy with combat Veterans suffering from P.T.S.D. He is now the director for the non-profit, U.S. Vets-Phoenix.

Commissioner Brett Rustand has been a member of the Advisory Commission for a year.

Commissioner Kara Caldwell has been a member of the commission for a year.

Andrew Griffin is new to the Advisory Commission and looks forward to serving on the commission and with Director Vogt. He retired from the Army after serving 22 years and started college through the G.I. Bill at Northern Arizona University (NAU). He has served veterans in higher education for 5 years at NAU and is active throughout the state.

Jillian Seamans, DES Division of Child Support Services, does outreach throughout the state helping families with child support. The department is focused on serving veterans.

Diana Alvarez, DES Division of Child Support Services, works directly with veterans in child support matters.

Melvin Morris, an Air Force Veteran, is a Veteran Benefit Counselor (VBC) for the Department of Veterans' Services and is attached to the Phoenix Veteran's Court on Fridays.

Judy Smith is Secretary for the Advisory Commission and Administrative Secretary in the ADVS Director's Office.

Yasmin Ramos is Executive Assistant to Director Ted Vogt.

Ted Vogt is Director of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services.

Marion Cartland is Publisher of Arizona Veterans Connection Magazine.

Meeting Minutes Approval - Chairman Perkins made a correction to the July minutes, referring to page 5, paragraph 4 under Outreach Activities. The minutes state, "Felonies can be commuted or the judge may expunge Veterans' records of felonious convictions in Veterans Court".

Chairman Perkins has learned that, in the state of Arizona, felonies can be set aside, not expunged, from a Veteran's record in Veteran's Court. The July minutes will be revised to reflect this correction.

Vice Chair Rustand moved to approve the minutes as amended. Commissioner Caldwell seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Guest Comments — David Montoya met with Director Vogt today and is familiar with what is happening within the agency. He is here to assist and wants to know of areas where he can help.

Chairman Perkins noted that Glenn Costie, Interim VA Medical Center Director, was originally scheduled to attend but was called out of town this week. Scott McRoberts is here on his behalf.

Mr. McRoberts reported that the final Inspector General's report was issued with 13 recommendations to the Phoenix VA Hospital for correction.

The VA Hospital has made substantial progress in correcting 10 of the 13 recommendations, with documentation submitted. There are three recommendations yet to be completed.

While making those corrections, the VA Hospital is required to give a progress report to the I.G.'s office every 90 days as long as the initial report is open. When all actions are completed, the I.G.'s office will publish an official report noting all actions complete.

Chairman Perkins asked what the three remaining recommendations from the I.G.'s report consist of. Scott McRoberts did not have the items at hand but offered to send them to the secretary.

The VA has pushed for congressional approval for a new healthcare center to offset primary care operations. Legislation was passed recently for a 20-30 million dollar health care center. The Ambulatory Care Center (ACC) and all the operations in the two-story side of the VA Hospital will move to an offsite location. Health Care Centers or Annexes are within 5 miles of the main campus. Primary care will be provided at those locations in the future.

Some ancillary services that primary care will need, such as laboratory, pathology, radiology and diagnostics, will move to the primary care location.

In-patient care will be provided at the VA Medical Center and when primary care leaves campus, it will alleviate stress and space constraints. The VA is severely deficient in space – it could take up to five years for the primary care facilities to be built.

Secretary Robert McDonald wants it done sooner and will apply pressure and expedite the process. Funding is in place; it was just a matter of getting congressional approval.

The Phoenix VA has been constrained and major leases were held up due to how the law regarding major leases was written. A GAO auditing office said major leases for the VA and Federal Government were not being applied correctly and that the VA would have to provide money up front in order to lease. Congress corrected the matter and a new bill was signed. The VA will have a lease sooner than new construction.

Mr. Montoya said there are similar issues in Albuquerque in terms of flexibility. Many leases were let 4-5 years ago, when there was one requirement for patient and director needs. Since the bill was passed, it gives the VA Medical Centers and VISN's more flexibility in how they execute the funding so they are meeting today's needs, as opposed to needs from 5 years ago. This is an action item Dave is working on.

Mr. McRoberts said it is a constant issue for medical centers. The VA presents approved criteria for certain demands they need to meet for customers and by the time it's built, the demands have changed.

Veteran Clinics - Mr. McRoberts said in order to meet immediate demands, the VA is speeding up the process for opening a new VA staffed Veteran clinic in Buckeye; to be known as the Southwest Clinic.

Chairman Perkins asked for clarification on whether the Buckeye Clinic is in operation and, if not, are Buckeye patients still being seen at the Surprise Veteran Clinic?

Mr. McRoberts said the Buckeye Clinic will be VA staffed rather than contract staffed and it is not open yet. The VA has to lease the space and issue a contract. In the meantime, patients are still going to the Surprise clinic.

A new small Northeast clinic will be opened in the metro Scottsdale area. Location and details are yet to be determined.

New clinics in Phoenix metro area have been approved. One or multiple small leased clinics will be opened to offload primary care and space constraints from the main campus. Locations of these clinics are yet to be determined or approved.

Hiring - The Phoenix VA is hiring hundreds of positions at this time. A common confusion when accessing the VA Careers or USA Jobs websites to search open positions, is that the site may only show about 30 positions open but there are more coming online all the time. VA advertises for a position for two weeks and it takes 90 days to credential applicants. It's a 60-day process for hiring nurses and health professionals; the process is not as rigorous as for MD's and DO's.

Parking – The VA approved the building of a parking garage on the west side of the VA Hospital campus which will impact current parking until completed. The VA is pursuing lease options; which has been done in the past but was not successful.

The VA will have two parking space leases; one for 99 spaces to be in place by November before the groundbreaking for building the new parking garage. A second parking garage will house 400-500 parking spaces. It is not determined whether it will be far enough from campus to shuttle staff.

Regulatory requirements must be met when making parking spaces available to staff; parking must also be available to veterans, and shuttle service must be provided from the parking lot to the VA Hospital.

Commissioner Scott inquired if VA has considered valet service; in Long Beach, CA, it worked well.

Mr. McRoberts said valet services have been considered but were not approved for Phoenix; one reason was cost. For the governing board, it meant not hiring two more primary care providers if a valet service was hired.

Mr. Montoya said if VA considers valet services, they could look at what the St. Louis VA is doing. They are using a non-profit organization such as U.S. Vets, or working in conjunction with vocational rehab. They are providing jobs to veterans in transition as valet parking personnel. It helps veterans and provides a valuable service.

Chairman Perkins noted the former medical center director said the VA was trying to acquire the property across the street from the VA Hospital; is that still a possibility? Mr. McRoberts said he does not see that coming to fruition. Montecito School is vacant; however, the school district doesn't seem interested in selling or leasing the property.

Commissioner Scott asked if VA has identified a new area for the Community Resource & Referral Center (CRRC) and does the CRRC have to be within a 3 mile radius of the VA Hospital?

The CRRC is included with the supplemental contracts and the two CBOC's that are being fast-tracked. Mr. McRoberts is not sure of the validity of whether the CRRC must be within a 3 mile radius of the VA Hospital. It could be a regulatory matter or the way the contract is written. This must be researched because once the contract is written; it must be implemented as written.

DES Report-Jillian Seamans and Diana Alvarez - Chairman Perkins welcomed Jillian Seamans and Diana Alvarez of the DES Child Support Division and asked for an update on Christine Groene's report of June, 2013.

An assistant director developed a new Customer Engagement Initiative whereby DES is becoming more customer-friendly and making more resources available. Applications and resource materials were improved so people understand them better and case managers have access to a list of resources to assist callers.

DES conducts outreach for the entire state. Diana Alvarez focuses on veterans and has attended the training needed to better understand the veteran population. The team attended a seminar presented by the AZ Coalition for Military Families.

DES held workshops at the VA Hospital, working with case managers. The case managers call Jillian or Diana for Veterans with child support questions and they are helped that same day. Some VA case managers are now referring cases directly to DES.

DES works with MANA House providing caseworkers to their residents, as well as UMOM VA Services to increase awareness and educate veterans on what needs to be done regarding child support before deployment and after deployment, and the changes that occur.

Information flyers specifically for veterans were created. Jill reviewed handouts, noting that DES provides a free voluntary paternity establishment program for pre and post-deployment child support.

DES is creating a Veteran-specific legal assistance area on their website for veterans. They attend legal clinics and work closely with AZ Veterans Employment for DES who does veteran outreach.

DES is involved with "Yellow Ribbon Events" to help service members and veterans.

Christine Groene had reported that the number of veterans in the DES system paying child support was at 41%; Chairman Perkins asked if that number had increased or decreased.

Diana said it may have increased but she did not have the statistics.

Chairman Perkins asked if DES participates in the Veterans' Stand Down and if a lot of people come to help with the stand down?

DES is popular at the Stand Down; they help veterans fill out their child support packets. An attorney is present and sees veterans who need child support order modifications.

The back child support many veterans owe cannot be modified; DES is in touch with these veterans to do what they can to make monthly payments more manageable.

DES is working hardship cases including homeless veterans, to waive the state-owed arrears in child support. The agency gives parents the opportunity to better themselves and, as a reward, through the Personal Development Incentive Program, veterans who get a GED and present their transcript can get child support arrears waived. DES is recognizing that some veterans may owe large amounts in back child support with no hope of paying it off and is doing what it can to give veterans options. DES conducts mobile workshops and presentations on child support throughout the state.

Commissioner Rustand asked if DES goes to any of the 4 military bases in Arizona and do they communicate with JAG offices as well as Defense Finance & Accounting Services (DFAS)?

Diana said DES has made efforts to visit military bases but those doors aren't easily opened; she asked for referrals so they can follow up. Director Vogt said he will provide information; ADVS has access to the retirement and separation sides of the bases.

Commissioner Caldwell asked what other non-profits DES is working with. DES works with MANA House and the Arizona Coalition for Military Families who refer people with questions.

Commissioner Scott asked if DES conducts work on Human Resource campuses. Ms. Seamans said DES is doing workshops once a month at the human resource campuses to help with modifications. The attendance is low; with 1-3 people at the most. Non-profits are there and we tell them to call DES for assistance.

Chairman Perkins asked if DES attends Veteran Stand Downs in other cities. Ms. Seamans replied that they do attend these stand downs and will be attending the Prescott Stand down in a week.

Melvin Morris, Veteran Benefits Counselor — Chairman Perkins recognized Melvin Morris, ADVS Veteran Benefits Counselor, whom he had met at Veteran's Court, and asked him to share information.

Mr. Morris serves veterans Monday through Thursday through his office in the State Veteran Home, and attends Veteran Court on Fridays. He counsels veterans on filing claims for service connected disabilities. He explains the VA methodology and claims process and refers them to other VA benefits when needed.

On Fridays, Mr. Morris is attached to the City of Phoenix Veteran's Court, also known as a treatment, diversion or problem-solving court, which is a partnership between the City of Phoenix Prosecutors Office, the Public Defender's Office, the Veterans Administration and various community-based volunteer organizations and 501c3 operations whose goal is to address the underlying causes of behavioral issues of veterans' arrests, specifically DUI's, domestic violence and anger management issues. The Court was seeing the same veterans returning to court and the commonality was that these veterans had all been deployed; some as far back as Vietnam, but most were from more recent deployments.

Instead of jailing the offenders, treatment options were established. The partnership with the VA's Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) has been especially helpful. Licensed clinical social workers are assigned specifically to Veteran's Courts and are a key part of addressing and outreaching to veterans who have legal or criminal justice problems.

Not all Veterans in Veteran's Court are eligible for VA benefits due to the nature of their discharge. The greater number of veterans served are of "general under honorable", "general under other than honorable", and a few "dishonorable" discharges.

Federal law states that benefits are available based on the character of discharge. The City of Phoenix states that any veteran with a DD-214 who is arrested on a Class 1, 2 or 3 misdemeanor is eligible for Veteran's Court. The City of Phoenix has funded treatment through a resource known as Terros, Inc., a private mental health and substance abuse treatment center for veterans who don't qualify for VA benefits. Veterans who do meet VA requirements are scheduled for VA healthcare in the mental health care system.

Veterans Court is successful in making a difference in the lives of those veterans who have recently discovered that VA resources are available to them and the services they are eligible to receive.

Many veterans believe that because they received a "general" discharge, they are not eligible for VA benefits. Each veteran must present for an administrative review by the Veterans Administration. The biggest problem is veterans with financial difficulties. We make a forensic review of the veteran's

history to see if they have applied for benefits before and been denied; and determine what they need to do. Mr. Morris says our expertise is to help them prevail and be eligible for VA benefits.

We make a big difference in veterans who suffer from PTSD or TBI, who do not know how or where to get help and end up in Veteran's Court.

Next week the City of Tempe will open its Veteran Court which is to be modeled after the Phoenix Veterans' Court. Gregg Maxon will be the judge at the Tempe Veteran's Court. Each city determines how they want to run their Veteran's Courts.

Mr. Morris explained how veterans get into the Veterans Court. Veterans arrested in Phoenix under a Class 1, 2 or 3 misdemeanor charge attend jail court, which is held every Tuesday. The prosecutor and public defender hold interviews and make an on-the-spot assessment of what the veterans' issues are and, the following Friday, cases are placed on the docket for Veteran's Court, for which attendance is completely voluntary by the veteran. The veteran can choose to have their case heard in open court to be judged by a jury of their peers. Once that decision has been made the veteran cannot revert back to Veterans Court for the same offense.

Commissioner Rustand noted there have been many advances in the Veterans' Courts and asked if the staffing and one-to-one VJO ratio per court is adequate.

Mr. Morris said staffing of the VJO's is not adequate. They are beleaguered with service requests from veterans. Most of the veterans they treat have underlying mental health and substance abuse issues and getting them to show up for court by contacting and calling them is a big part of what they do. There is an average of 80-90 veterans per docket.

Director Vogt said there are five to seven VJO's statewide. Secretary McDonald was here 2 weeks ago and met with General Maxon. He asked General Maxon to send him a letter requesting VJO's for the state's Veteran's Courts.

Chief Justice Scott Bales was invested in July and rolled out his 5 year plan for the Supreme and Superior Courts; Veteran's Court is a top issue. The Legislature passed legislation to allow the establishment of Regional Veteran's Courts, making it easier for veterans to attend court.

The first Veteran's Court in Mohave County is taking shape; Judge Mitch Kaluali of Lake Havasu City presides over Veteran's Court there and will travel the circuit to Bullhead City and Kingman to hear veteran cases. There is a lot of ingenuity going on regarding Veteran's Courts. VJO's are critical, as are Veteran Benefit Counselors and community-based partners. Mr. Morris says he is proud to be helping veterans as a part of the Veterans Court program and as a ADVS Veteran Benefit Counselor.

Director Vogt said it is preferred that veterans with TBI and PTSD be treated by the VA who is the expert. If the veteran has a dishonorable discharge, they are not eligible for benefits, so in order to be treated, the City of Phoenix is paying Terros to treat Veterans, the goal being immediate treatment. Those not eligible for VA care can apply for an administrative review while they are in the Terros program for anger management, PTSD or substance abuse counseling and, after review, if they are approved for VA care; they are then transitioned to the VA.

Director Vogt said ADVS annually supports Terros, Inc. through a large grant.

Commissioner Rustand inquired about outside Maricopa County, near Tucson; and whether Terros can provide service providers with a behavioral health authority. Mr. Morris said, yes, those who initially qualify for VA healthcare are sent to a mental health authority immediately for treatment as soon as they come into the criminal justice system.

Commissioner Griffin said there is a Veteran's Court in Flagstaff and inquired if there is a Terros treatment center in the Flagstaff area.

Director Vogt said the person to contact for that information is Thomas Winkel of the Arizona Coalition for Military Families. Commissioner Griffin will be provided that contact information.

Commissioner Griffin noted that if the veteran could have received the proper treatment for whatever actions caused a discharge, it could have helped the veteran stay in the military or at least have eased their transition out of the military. If the same issues still exist, there is a process that continues to help these veterans so that cycle can be broken, even if they are no longer in the military.

Mr. Morris said the underlying cause of misbehavior may have resulted in a less than honorable discharge. The Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) had to discharge the veteran but it doesn't mean the issue that caused the discharge has gone away. Most of the veterans in Veteran's Court have "general under honorable", or "general under other than honorable" discharges, and they feel cast aside, which is not the case.

Director Vogt said it also doesn't mean that the behavior that led to their discharge is not a result of a battle-born injury or situation. General Maxon works to upgrade discharges and the success rate is about 5%.

Mr. McRoberts said there is an OEF-OIF clinic run by social workers for veterans needing treatment who are not yet in the Veteran's Court system. It is specifically designed for veterans who have TBI or PTSD related issues to help them navigate and readjust to civilian life. They get into the clinic through primary care screening. It is another resource that is available along with the many other resources at the VA.

Mr. Montoya plans to attend Phoenix Veteran's Court on Friday and suggested that a Human Resources person who handles social workers be present.

Director Vogt said in rural areas, where some veterans cannot get to the Veterans Court, rural telephonic courts are being provided. These courts are coming into use around the state.

Commissioner Griffin said in order to help veterans be successful in society, he strongly believes education should be part of that treatment. The in-state tuition benefit for honorable discharged veterans is a great benefit that is offered to veterans with a general discharge under honorable conditions. He and his colleagues have received letters from veterans who asked why they were not entitled to the same education benefits even though their discharge says "honorable" in some form. Andrew reviews their DD-214's and because the discharge is under other than "honorable" conditions, it does not qualify the veteran for education benefits.

Mr. Morris said he addresses the matter by helping Veterans upgrade their discharge package.

Chairman Perkins said he has visited Veteran's Court and seen individuals complete the program who have been in it for a year or longer. He encouraged other commissioners to visit Veteran's Court and see what takes place.

Marion Cartland - Visitor

Marion Cartland, Publisher of Arizona Veterans Connection magazine, announced the 4th issue will be distributed next week. She says the magazine is doing great and expanding with many more sponsors as it is recognized and seen in the state.

Communications – Letters were received for the Chair and Vice Chair from the Udall|Shumway law firm announcing a third “Protect Our Veterans” community service seminar on September 24 in the Udall|Shumway Conference Center in Mesa. The letter was forwarded to Chairman Perkins and Vice Chair Rustand.

Fully executed Oaths of Office for the re-appointment of Chairman Perkins and the appointment of Commissioner Scott were received from the Governor’s Office of Boards & Commissions. Commissioner Griffin’s Oath of Office was hand delivered and executed before today’s meeting in order to meet the quorum of five members. We are awaiting Commissioner Caldwell’s Oath of Office for re-appointment.

Agency Announcements and Updates – Director Vogt reflected on a solemn day 13 years ago today when terrorists in planes crashed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field in Pennsylvania. Nearly 3,000 lives were lost that day, including firefighters and emergency personnel. He noted President Bush’s words, “This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for Justice and Peace. America has stood down enemies before and it will do so again. None of us will ever forget that day as we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in this world.” These words are as true today as they were 13 years ago.

Director Vogt welcomed new commissioners Scott and Griffin to the Advisory Commission.

Director Vogt welcomed Mr. Montoya who will be working with ADVS; he looks forward to that partnership.

Director Vogt and Deputy Director Robert Barnes will attend the National Association of the Directors of Veterans’ Affairs (NASDVA) semi-annual meeting in California next week. Mr. Montoya and VA Secretary Robert McDonald will also attend.

Saturday, September 27th will mark the 2nd Women’s Health and Knowledge Fair, to be held simultaneously at the Phoenix VA Medical Center and the Southern Arizona VA Medical Center in Tucson. Director Vogt will attend in Tucson and Deputy Director Barnes will facilitate at the Phoenix VA Medical Center.

ADVS has been working with the AZ Coalition for Military Families in developing a plan for veteran employment. We finalized the plan and are talking to the community about it. We met with Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPS) and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERS) from DES and in early October, we will be meeting with DES Director Carter and key leadership at DES and other state agencies.

We will talk with Veteran Benefit Counselors on how to deal with the persistent issue of veteran family unemployment and underemployment. With the Afghanistan war coming to a close in December, we anticipate 1.5 million veterans joining our communities in the next five years.

Cemeteries

Director Vogt noted that Commissioner Griffin emceed the groundbreaking ceremony at the Camp Navajo Veterans’ Cemetery on Saturday, September 6th. The project has been 10 years or longer in the making; the site is beautiful and is very important to the community.

Director Vogt said groundbreaking for the State Cemetery in Marana will be held at 9:00 a.m., Saturday, November 8, 2014.

Veteran Homes

ADVS is anticipating receiving a deed from the City of Yuma for the donation of land for the future State Veteran Home in Yuma. In October when the Federal Fiscal Budget comes out, we should know where we fall in their priority for funding.

Chairman Perkins commended Dave Hampton's ADVS monthly update and noted that Veterans from VSO's like the update.

Director Vogt said the reception the State Veteran Home - Tucson has received is impressive and at any given day, there are only 2 or 3 empty beds in the 120 bed facility, which indicates there is a need for the State Veteran Home in the Tucson area.

Outreach Activities for the Commission – Vice Chair Rustand noted that POW-MIA Day, will be recognized Friday, September 19, with services to be held at most VA facilities.

Fisher House

The first Fisher House in Arizona will be built on the Southern Arizona VA Medical Center Campus next to the polytrauma center in Tucson and will serve all of Arizona. The Fisher House will provide a place for families to stay while a family member is receiving treatment at the VA.

Land has been allotted for the Fisher House; the community must raise 3 million dollars for operating expenses. Dr. Dana Staggs is overseeing the community fundraising and there should be information coming out on their progress soon.

Mr. Morris inquired if the Fisher House specifically serves families of veterans being treated for mental health or substance abuse issues or will it serve veterans under any kind of medical treatment. Commissioner Rustand said the facility serves families of veterans undergoing any kind of medical treatment or post-service treatments due to physical or mental injuries.

Director Vogt said when the initial 90%, or 3 million dollars has been raised to start the project, ADVS will donate the last 10%, which is \$300,000.00 (subject to available funds).

Chairman Perkins received an outreach activity report from Commissioner Olson. Commissioner Olson attended a meeting in Sierra Vista of about 50 people. There were many questions about the VA and whether a State Veteran Home will be built in Sierra Vista. The city would be willing to donate an existing vacant hospital building for a Veteran Home.

There were questions about tax breaks for military retirees and property tax relief for 100% service connected disabled veterans. Some were asking how to go about becoming a commissioner.

The audience gave favorable comments about the ADVS Veteran Benefits Counselors in Sierra Vista.

Chairman Perkins reminded commissioners that the Advisory Commission will not meet in October, however, the Executive Committee, Jeff Olson, Brett Rustand and Ron Perkins, will meet in October.

The next Advisory Commission Meeting will be November 13 and we hope to meet at the Prescott VA. Commissioner Kara Caldwell will contact the VA and VBC office in Prescott. If anyone has suggestions or contact information, please forward them to Chairman Perkins and Commissioner Caldwell.

Chairman Perkins reviewed Commissioners' Regional Assignments. In support of veterans around the state, Chairman Perkins would like the commissioners to consider where they would like to hold the first 2015 Outreach Advisory Commission meeting; Sierra Vista, Yuma, or another area.

Open Discussion for the Good of the Order – Commissioner Scott announced a U.S. Vets ribbon cutting ceremony on Friday, September 12th in Prescott for the new U.S. Vets facility.

Mr. Montoya will try to attend the Prescott AVSAC meeting in November and will have a VHA or one of his representatives come to Prescott meeting. It would be preferable to hold the meeting at the Prescott VA so the Director can engage the commission and answer questions.

The work that is happening at the state level is a partnership with the VA; there should not be a differentiation or barriers between what is happening in the state and the VA and we need to push past these barriers between the state and VA Hospital in Prescott.

Commissioner Griffin acknowledged the exceptional work of a director for rural VA health care in the Flagstaff Native American community. He travels to Native American communities working long hours to bring good to the Native American communities.

Commissioner Griffin would like to bring attention to this director's exceptional work through acknowledgement by the VA. Mr. Montoya said it is important to highlight those accomplishments; he asked Commissioner Griffin to email the information to him and he will respond.

Director Vogt presented outgoing Commissioner Wayne Krula a plaque with deep appreciation from the Department of Veterans' Services for his years on the Advisory Commission and his commitment and service to veterans.

Wayne Krula said it has been a pleasure to serve on the Advisory Commission for the last three years. Commissioners develop a bond and all serve the same purpose; representing veterans throughout the state. It is a high calling and a privilege to serve; Mr. Krula has fond memories of his time on the Advisory Commission. He wished the Advisory Commission, Director Vogt and his staff continued success.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m. The next Advisory Commission meeting will be held November 13, 2014, in the auditorium of the Northern VA Health Care System, Prescott, AZ.