

**Arizona Department of Veterans' Service Advisory Commission**  
4141 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street (North S. Herrera Way), Phoenix, AZ 85012  
May 10, 2012

**MINUTES**

Advisory Commissioners

Terrie Gent, Chair  
Gary Fredricks  
Philip Hanson  
Wayne Krula  
Jeffrey Olson  
Ronald Perkins  
Lionel Sanchez  
David Toliver, Sr.

AZ Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS)

Joey Strickland, Director  
Mike Klier, Assistant Deputy Director  
Homer Rodgers, Assistant Deputy Director  
Gabe Forsberg, Strategic Planner/Women Vets  
Greg Sulzer, Special Projects  
Diana Rodriguez, Exec Assistant – ASVH  
Kathering Harding, Exec Assistant - Director

Guests

Brian Mancini, President & Founder – Honor House  
Susann Adams, VISN 18 Incarcerated Vet, Re-entry Specialist  
Monica Cabrera, Public Affairs Officer, VA Regional Office - Arizona

Absent

George Cushing, Vice Chair (pre-arranged)

**Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 10:02 a.m. by Chairperson Terrie Gent. The minutes were approved as published.

**Communications** - The Commission received an email from Dan Standage regarding his request for support. He had earlier requested that the Commission recommend that a veteran student be named to the Arizona Board of Regent. He will collect further information and is not requesting formal action from the Commission at this time.

**Agency Updates** – Director Joey Strickland briefed the Commission and asked both Assistant Deputy Directors Klier and Rodgers to provide updates. The agency Veterans Benefits Counselors (VBCs) are responsible for filing claims for around 50,000 veterans. The agency needs 3 additional VBCs, which may be difficult to obtain in this economic environment.

**Honor House** – SFC Brian Mancini (Retired E-7 USA) discussed issues of importance to newly returning veterans. He met with Director Strickland to ask for support in establishing a model for supporting veterans' assimilation back into society after combat. His training as a medic helps him understand the physics behind issues and he proposes a veteran-centered model of care that focuses on alternative treatments.

Honor House builds partnerships with service providers in various modes of treatment (animal therapy, yoga, chiropractic, cooking, and outdoor recreation programs) to promote healing and minimize the use of medications. The major diagnoses are traumatic brain

injury and post-traumatic stress. To ensure that veterans also receive peer support, Mr. Mancini also proposes the use of social media to keep veterans connected.

Director Strickland will work with Mr. Mancini and will ask him to meet with the Phoenix VA Hospital's new administrator, Sharon Helman. Director Strickland also asked Mr. Mancini to accompany him as he meets with Terros, a community-based behavioral health organization that helps people recover from substance abuse, mental illness and other behavioral health problems. Terros intends to establish a veterans program and has asked for assistance.

**Veterans Salute for the Legislature** – Director Strickland described a program hosted by his counterpart in Wisconsin. A venue was selected away from the state capitol and the program was developed with local veterans service organizations. It was held from 4 pm until 7 pm and there were several presentations designed to encourage the support issues of importance to veterans. Gary Fredricks moved to support the agency sponsoring an event of this type in Arizona. Commissioner Sanchez seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The event should be slated for late January 2013.

**Veterans Donation Fund (Grant Approval Process) also called the VDF** – This program is the only one of its kind in the nation. Greg Sulzer, former Fiduciary Division Manager, is now working on special projects for the Director. He provided an overview of the grant process under development for the agency. Grant requests for less than \$5000 will most likely be processed by a committee made of up agency personnel, while grants request for more than \$5000 will adhere to a formal procurement process (like any state contract). Katherine Harding and Diana Rodriguez have been responsible for the agency's first grant selection process. Based on the process they developed, Mr. Sulzer is now documenting the process.

Before an award is made, the VDF grant package is reviewed by the Attorney General's Office. After awards have been made, the recipient is required to report progress. In some cases, the recipient will need to submit receipts before any funds are provided.

Grants will be awarded when it meets the statutory requirement of benefiting veterans in the state as well as aligning with agency objectives. Commissioner Fredricks recommended the agency publicize the grant process so that potential grantees understand the process. The agency is working toward that end. The Commission expressed its support for using the VDF as a one-time means of supporting the state veteran home in Tucson, which will be financially self supporting in approximately one year.

**Report on the Flagstaff Parade Participation** – Lionel Sanchez will coordinate with the other three Commissioners (Chairperson Gent, Phil Hanson, and Wayne Krula) who will attend the Armed Forces Day Parade Saturday, on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012 in Flagstaff.

**Annual Letter to the Governor from the Advisory Commission** - Chairperson Gent reminded the Commission that the last letter from the Commission encouraged the Governor to improve the process of appointing Commissioners. The Chair asked the Commissioners for their input on what should be communicated to the Governor. Jeff Olson felt the Tucson outreach meeting April 11 was significant and should be included in a letter. The Commissioners expressed the need to have an Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran appointed. The Commissioners also felt a

briefing on the report provided by Mr. Mancini should be sent to the Governor in a letter without including any other policy recommendations.

Commissioner Olson moved to have the Commission write a letter to the Governor, requesting her support of the agency intention to sponsor programs for wounded warriors. The motion carried. The letter will be prepared by Director Strickland with the assistance of Mr. Mancini.

**Discussion of the Tucson Outreach Meeting** – Commissioner Olson felt the meeting was more productive than the previous town-hall style meetings. The Commissioners received valuable insight into the Tucson Veteran Court. Chairman Gent recommended that a future meeting be scheduled at ASU. Director Strickland will assist in making the necessary contacts.

**Regional Assignments and Efforts to Increase Visibility of the Commission** – Commissioner Krula discussed a means of getting Commission contact information into the hands of veterans statewide. The current plan assumed that there would be two Commissioners assigned to each of four regions of the state. Since that concept is under review and possible elimination, Commissioner Krula's plan may need to be modified. Commissioner Sanchez felt there must be a process to follow up with veterans after making connections with them at various events. These issues will be taken into consideration as the strategic plan and guidelines are updated. The subcommittee charged with reviewing these documents will be Vicechair Cushing and Commissioners Olson, Toliver, and Sanchez.

**For the Good of the Order** – Mr. Mancini offered to have representatives from the Phoenix Fire Department and the Phoenix Police Department come to a future meeting to brief the Commission on their sensitivity training as they work with veterans. Recent legislation now provides a check box on the Arizona drivers' licenses to identify veterans, which may be helpful to first-responders.

Mr. Mancini suggested that the Commission use social media as a means of becoming more visible. Susann Adams reported that it was very difficult for her to find any information on the Commission and supports using social media as well.

Commissioner Fredricks reviewed the list of Commissioners. Currently, the Chair and Vicechair are continuing to serve but have not been formally re-appointed by the Governor. The terms for Commissioners Olson and Sanchez will expire as of July 1, 2012. Both indicated they will re-apply. Chairperson Gent recapped her conversation a few months ago with Linda Stiles, Director for the Governor's Boards and Commissions. Director Strickland will schedule a meeting with Ms. Stiles to discuss these issues personally.

Chairperson Gent adjourned the meeting at 12:35 p.m. The next meeting will be held June 14, 2012.