

Arizona Department of Veterans' Service Advisory Commission
4141 N. 3rd Street (North S. Herrera Way), Phoenix, AZ 85012
Thursday – April 14, 2011

MINUTES

Advisory Commissioners

Terrie Gent, Vice Chair
George Cushing
Phil Hanson
Jeffrey Olson
Lionel Sanchez
David Toliver, Sr.

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Joey Strickland, Director
Robert Barnes, Deputy Director
Katherine Harding, Exec. Asst. to Director
Gabe Forsberg, Strategic Planner/Women Vets

Absent

Gary Fredricks, Chairman
Lori Kiefer
Ken Yamanouchi

Guests

Toni Grimes, NABVets Commander
Kris Carlson, Rogers Law Students at U of A
Russell Clarke, U of A Law School
Michelle Behan, U of A Law School

Call to Order –The meeting was called to order at 10:12 a.m. by Vice Chair Terrie Gent. The minutes of the two previous meetings (February and March 2011) were approved as prepared.

Communications: One letter received by the Commission from Eugene Talas, Director of the Office of Hopi Veterans Services, thanking the commission for holding its March meeting in Chinle and requesting consideration for a future regional meeting in the Tuba City/Moenkopi area.

Agency Report

Director Joey Strickland provided the status on various activities statewide and provided a written report. Deputy Director Robert Barnes also provided information and answered questions from the Commissioners. Questions posed to them related to building a state cemetery in the metro Tucson area and a request that the Veterans Benefit Counselor training information be sent to the Commissioners.

Support for Law Student Veterans

Kris Carlson, Russell Clarke and Michelle Behan all provided information about the University of Arizona (U of A) program at the law school and the impact they are making in the community and on campus. Each of the three presenters are veterans who are attending law school.

Rogers Law Veterans provides peer support for veterans enrolled in the U of A law school and it is the first of its kind for graduate programs. They have also established a program where law school students help represent veteran clients in misdemeanor criminal cases in municipal courts. They are hoping to expand services to veterans with legal issues to the justice of the peace courts as well. Rogers Law Veterans would like to see representation expanded to civil cases as the program matures.

The Commission learned about the U of A's program called "SERV" (Supportive Education for the Returning Veterans) at its November 4, 2010 meeting as part of the University's support for undergraduate programs.

Col. Strickland asked that the Commission consider recommending that the agency hire its own attorney with expertise in veteran law.

Arizona State University Program to Support Veterans

David Lucier was unable to attend the meeting today, due to a scheduling conflict.

Legislation

Vice Chair Terrie Gent provided an overview of legislative issues that she and Phil Hanson had been following. Col. Strickland indicated that two bills were signed by the Governor that may be of interest to the veteran community: tuition waiver for veterans attending state schools and the military women license plate.

Phoenix National Cemetery Right of Way Issue

Col. Strickland mentioned that he has been in contact with key players at the VA and with the City of Phoenix who may be able to resolve the issue. While this is clearly not a state issue, the veteran community continues to come to him with concerns that the cemetery will not be able to expand.

Regional Meeting Issues Update

George Cushing analyzed the minutes of the Chinle meeting and categorized the nature of each question raised. He distributed a list of the issues by category which also included the history of previous regional meetings. Because some of the issues did not fit into the previously established categories, he added the last two categories (housing and administrative) so that he could tally the nature of questions raised. Vice Chair Gent thanked him for his work and asked the Commissioners to review it before the next meeting.

Future Regional Meetings

Jeff Olson and Dave Toliver will gather information about a potential outreach meeting in the Havasu and Kingman area on or about September 10, 2011. They will report their findings at the next commission meeting.

Good of the Order

Phil Hanson mentioned that some veterans in Tucson discussed with him their desire to have a veterans' cemetery in the Tucson area. Director Strickland said that the mayor of Oro Valley offered to make some land available for this purpose. Director Strickland will continue discussions with the mayor. Phil Hanson will assure the veterans who raised this issue that the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services is vigorously working on this issue and has had numerous discussions with the US Dept of Veterans Affairs about the necessity to build more cemeteries in Arizona, including one closer to northern Tucson.

Vice Chair Gent adjourned the meeting at 11:45 a.m. The next meeting will be held May12, 2011.