

ARIZONA VETERANS' SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION
Director's Conference Room, 3839 N. 3rd St., Suite 209, Phoenix, AZ 85012
Thursday – May 13, 2010

M I N U T E S

Call to Order - The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chairwoman Fulkerson.

Present

Advisory Commissioners

Linda Fulkerson, Chairwoman
Gary Fredricks, Vice Chairman
George Cushing
Larry McKim*
Jeffrey Olson*
Lionel Sanchez
Kenneth Yamanouchi

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Joey Strickland, Director
Robert Barnes, Deputy Director
Gabe Forsberg, Strategic Planner
Homer Rodgers, State Veteran Homes
Dave Hampton, Public Affairs

Guests

Corey Harris, Cong. Harry Mitchell's Office

Absent

Terrie Gent

Steven Meyeroff, Auditor General's Office
Mel Brody, UAV Chairman
Bill Lunsford, former commissioner
Nelson Ladd
Michael Marks
Bob Delker

The minutes of the April 8 meeting were approved as published.

Communications - A letter was received from the Auditor General, announcing the agency and Advisory Commission will undergo a sunset audit.

Agency Announcements and Updates

Col. Joey Strickland briefed the Commission on various agency activities.

- Madison Street Veterans Association was successful in obtaining a grant which will reduce the amount of Veterans Donation Fund support it has needed.
- The agency has assisted organizations apply for grants for homeless women veterans, and funding looks promising. As new grants become available, the agency is assisting service providers develop grant applications.
- The Attorney General's office believes it is unable to represent ADVS and the Fiduciary Board because of a conflict of interest. The agency continues to work with the Fiduciary Board without in-house counsel and may request support to hire an in-house attorney after the gubernatorial election. ADVS is one of only five states that operates a veterans' fiduciary department.
- The Southern Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery will dedicate the carillon at the Memorial Day ceremonies there this year. It is located just to the west of the Historical Soldiers Cemetery. The electronic bulletin board that provides visitors with the locations and times of committal services has also been installed.

- Dave Hampton reported that all legislation that was being closely monitored by the agency was successfully signed into law.
- Homer Rodgers reported that the Tucson state veteran home is progressing as planned and they “are moving dirt” now. He received an email from the VA in Washington indicating that the Tucson home is being used as a model for other state veteran homes. He has a contract with SDB Construction, which is owned by a Vietnam veteran and uses veteran subcontractors. This will make the Tucson home a facility for veterans being built by veterans.

Briefing on ADVS Financial Services and Procurement Policies

Robert Barnes provided a handout that outlines the Veterans Donation Fund (VDF) approval process and a list of all expenditures from the Veterans Donation Fund from FY 2007 to present. There were a number of questions about the procurement process, how contracts are awarded, and how recipients report the “public good” that was served by using the funds. There is a request form completed for all expenditures from the Veterans Donation Fund, which must be reviewed by the members of the VDF Committee. Based on the recommendations by the VDF Committee, the Director has the final approval authority (in keeping with state statute). Dave Hampton reports the VDF procedure and the purpose for expenditures was not always as defined as it now is. Chairwoman Fulkerson expressed her appreciation of seeing how the funds have been spent for the first time in her six years on the Commission.

Mr. Barnes will be sending out a conflict of interest form to be completed by all ADVS employees.

Vicechair Fredricks thanked Mr. Barnes for taking the time out of his busy schedule to educate the Commission on these corrective actions. At the next Advisory Commission, he wants to include an agenda item to close out all business regarding the Auditor General’s recommendations coming from the November 2009 report. In keeping with the open meeting law, Vicechair Fredricks indicated that he would collect feedback from each commissioner in preparation for the August meeting.

Potential Use of State Land Adjacent to the National Veterans Cemetery

Mel Brody, Arizona National Cemetery Memorial Day Committee, requested support in his quest to request more land for the national cemetery. Mr. Brody passed out a map of the cemetery to the Commissioners and provided a history of the land transfer that originated in 1976 when Arizona established a state veterans cemetery. When the state turned over the land to the VA, Arizona failed to transfer 600 acres of the original 836.34 acres. The national cemetery will not have sufficient space to inter veterans after 2018 at the current rate and SB 1186 (June 27, 1976) obligated the land for that specific purpose.

Commissioner Cushing made the motion to prepare a letter of support to the Governor and the State Land Commissioner, requesting that the 600 acres be transferred to the US Department of Veterans Affairs National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona. It was seconded by Commissioner Sanchez and passed unanimously. Commissioner Olson asked if there had been anything in writing from the VA requesting that the land be transferred and Mr. Brody indicated that the administrator did not have authority to make such a request and obtaining such a written request would be a lengthy process. Corey Harris with

Congressman Harry Mitchell's Office offered to bring this issue to light within his office. Chairwoman Fulkerson will draft the letter and post it immediately.

For the Good of the Order

Mr. Harris announced that the Medal of Honor recipients will now be afforded the same level of care as is provided to Purple Heart recipients. He also mentioned that Congressman Mitchell is involved in a veterans history project, attempting to obtain histories from as many veterans as possible through Memorial Day and ensuring these histories are maintained by the Library of Congress. Over 100 veterans were served in Cong. Mitchell's first veterans expo held at Scottsdale Community College.

Mr. Brody invited all to attend the Memorial Day event at the national veteran cemetery beginning at 9 a.m. on May 31, 2010. Chairwoman Fulkerson will continue in her role until June 30, when Vicechair Fredricks will assume responsibilities as the Acting Chair until elections are held in August.

Mr. Barnes and Col. Strickland thanked Chairwoman Fulkerson for her leadership over the past year and for her service on the Commission for the past six years. These sentiments were shared by all Commissioners present.

Larry McKim expressed his gratitude to the ADVS managers and his fellow Commissioners for his three-year commitment to the Advisory Commission. Those present thanked him for his service to Arizona veterans.

Adjournment – Chairwoman Fulkerson adjourned the meeting at 2:30 p.m. The next meeting will be at 1:00 p.m. on August 8, in the Director's Conference Room - Suite 209, 3839 N. 3rd Street, Phoenix, AZ 85012.