

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

MINUTES

Advisory Commissioners

Gary Fredricks, Chair
Terrie Gent, Vice Chair
George Cushing
Phil Hanson*
Lionel Sanchez
David Toliver, Sr.

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Col. Joey Strickland (US Army, Ret.), Director
Homer Rodgers, Assistant Deputy Director
Dave Hampton, Public Information Officer
Michael Booker, Fiduciary Dept. Accounting Mgr.
Brian Williamson, Fiduciary Human Services Mgr.
Katherine Harding, Exec. Asst. to Director
Gabe Forsberg, Strategic Planner/Women Vets

Guests

Richard Gross, VA Regional Office Manager
Tom Sloan, Commander - Am Legion #137
Joe Frame, Jr. Vice Cdmr – Am Legion #137
Kevin Widner, Exec Bd. – Am Legion #137
Toni Grimes, Cmdr. National Assoc. of Black
Veterans (NABVets)

* Participated by telephone

Call to Order –The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairman Gary Fredricks. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as modified.

Communications: A letter was sent to the Manzanita Baptist Church specifying the time for the September 10, 2011 regional meeting in Kingman.

Agency Report

Director Joey Strickland provided an overview of the agency's recent activities. Homer Rodgers provided a handout that outlined status of the Tucson state veteran home, the Sierra Vista cemetery and plans for future facilities. Dave Hampton reported that he had asked veterans service organizations to provide him with desired legislative changes, but he has not received feedback to date from any organization.

Fiduciary: Chairman Fredricks provided background on the sunset audit that started a year ago. The Fiduciary report is the first of several that will be published by the Auditor General's Office. There is a comprehensive spreadsheet in place to monitor deadlines of contract attorneys, which will prevent issues with missed deadlines in future. The department has all 22 full-time employees authorized and does not have a staffing shortage. Chairman Fredricks noted that while the Commission is an advisory board with no authority over day-to day operations, the board recommends that ADVS take the following action:

1. Retain the Fiduciary responsibilities within the ADVS.
2. Pursue an initiative to revise the existing statute that limits the percentage of income that can be retained by the Fiduciary Department. The percentage should be increased from the current limit such that it would permit the department to cover its fiduciary costs and avoid the necessity of using general funds.
3. Pursue the commission recommendation to achieve authorization to hire an in-house counsel; the commission understanding that it is an authorization issue rather than a funding issue.

4. Conduct a review of fiduciary department internal ADVS reporting metrics and make any necessary alterations to ensure that profit and loss financial data (to include both revenue and cost) are regularly reported in addition to operational performance data and that appropriate metrics are provided to top management for review monthly.

Director Strickland agreed to the recommendations.

Additional Auditor General Reports:

Director Strickland and Homer Rodgers report that the next report expected to be published as part of the sunset audit will be for the State Veteran Home. Following that report, the Auditor General is expected to publish reports for the Veterans Donation Fund, Military Family Relief Fund, and Procurement.

The commission, while acknowledging that audit reports are not always received by the department before release to the public, requested and the department agreed to make any future reports available for discussion at commission meetings as soon as possible.

The agency will testify in September to answer any questions raised during the sunset audit.

Status of Buckeye VA Clinic and Related Phoenix VA Health Care Issues

Tom Sloan, Commander of the American Legion Post in Tonapah #137, reported his activities since the June meeting. The Commission’s role at this time is to continue to monitor progress. George Cushing was concerned about waiting the year until the contract expires, but Commander Sloan reported that veterans now have van transportation access to obtain necessary care from VA facilities.

Regional Meetings

September 2011

- The next meeting will be in region #4 under the leadership of Commissioners Olson and Toliver on Saturday, September 10, 2011.
 - Dave Toliver passed out a report of actions taken to date with a timeline for future actions.
 - Dave Hampton will send out information to media in the area next week.
 - Commissioner Cushing will send out information to all American Legion posts in the area and encourage them to attend.

Future regional meetings

- Chairman Fredricks followed up with Mike Klier, ADS Veterans Service Division, regarding regional meetings to be scheduled February, May, August and October. For planning purposes for the 2012 regional meetings, meetings will be scheduled as follows:

2012 Regional Meeting	Where
February	Region 1 (central Arizona)
May	Region 3 (southeast Arizona)
August	Region 2 (northeast Arizona)
October	Region 4 (west Arizona)

UAV Proposal to Partner on Legislative Initiatives

Chairman Fredricks provided background on the Unified Arizona Veterans (UAV). Lionel Sanchez suggested that the term “partner” may indicate a more active role than the Commission is able to take and recommended that the two organizations could coordinate. Commissioner Cushing reminded

Chairman Fredricks that there was another very active consortium in Sierra Vista that should also become involved in any legislative initiatives.

Phil Hanson asked for clarification of the Advisory Commissions role; whether it is responsible for crafting legislation or if it is to support/oppose proposed legislation. The Commission will need to decide its role as it relates to state legislation. Chairman Fredricks will coordinate with Linda Fulkerson from the UAV Legislative Committee and the UAV Board and report back to the Commission.

Plans to Orient Incoming Advisory Commissioners

When the new Commissioners have been appointed by the Governor, they will be invited to an orientation. A packet of information will be provided to both incoming appointees and the website will feature some reference materials (such as key correspondence and published reports). Chairman Fredricks was willing to help with the orientation.

Open Discussion

Kevin Widner briefed the Commission on federal regulations that are being proposed by the VA for service animals (38 CFR, Part 17, RIN 2900-AN51). The deadline for comment is August 15 and the Commission will not be able to officially support or oppose the proposed legislation without violating the open meeting law.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Terrie Gent was nominated as Chair and George Cushing was nominated as Vice Chair. Both were elected by acclamation.

Newly elected Chair Gent adjourned the meeting at 12:04 a.m. The next meeting will be held September 10, 2011.