

**ARIZONA VETERANS' SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION**  
**Director's Conference Room, 3839 N. 3rd St., Suite 209, Phoenix, AZ 85012**  
**Thursday – August 12, 2010**

**M I N U T E S**

**Call to Order** - The meeting was called to order at 12:58 p.m. by Acting Chairperson Gary Fredricks.

**Present**

Advisory Commissioners

Gary Fredricks, Chairman  
Terrie Gent, Vice Chair  
George Cushing  
Lori Kiefer  
Jeffrey Olson  
Lionel Sanchez  
David Toliver, Sr.

Absent

Phil Hanson  
Kenneth Yamanouchi

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Homer Rodgers, Assistant Deputy Director  
Colleen Rundell, Administrator for the AZ  
State Veteran Home - Phoenix

Guests

Albert Deschinny, Legislative Advisor,  
Navajo Nation  
El Wheeler, Navajo Nation Council  
Delegate  
Ray Thomas, Adjutant for the Veterans of  
Foreign Wars  
Monique Cordova, Performance Auditor -  
Auditor  
Robbie Sherwood, Cong. Harry Mitchell's  
Office  
Tom Fenner, Military Liaison – Hospice of  
the Valley

After the Pledge of Allegiance, the minutes of the May 13 meeting were approved as published. All of the Commissioners introduced themselves to two of the newly appointed three commissioners.

**Administrative Issues for the AVSAC**

The new Commissioners were invited to participate in one of the two standing committees: the Legislative Committee and the Action Item Committee. Vice Chair Gent will chair the Legislative Committee and Chairman Fredricks asked that Phil Hanson replace him. George Cushing volunteered to chair the Action Item Committee.

**Communications**

The Commissioners were provided copies of a letter from the State Land Commissioner in response to Mel Brody's request to expand the VA's veterans' cemetery. She provided a history of the land, stating that there was no state land set aside for use as a veterans' cemetery in 1989 when the State Land Department conveyed the property to the VA.

**Agency Report**

Homer Rodgers highlighted some of the agency's accomplishments. He introduced Colleen Rundell as the new Administrator for the Arizona State Veteran Home – Phoenix. She comes to this position after serving in that capacity in Vermont (the 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest state veteran home in the country).

Ms. Rundell is awaiting temporary licensure now that her FBI background has been received. She was particularly drawn to her new position because she would be working with three men with proven track records in the long-term care arena - Col. Strickland, Bob Barnes, and Homer Rodgers.

Other agency highlights:

- Mr. Rodgers announced that the Phoenix home was up to 92% occupancy now, which is significantly improved from when he first arrived.
- The Veterans Service Division will provide Veterans Benefits Counselor (VBC) refresher training in Prescott (site to be determined) on October 14 through 15, 2010.
- Troops to Teachers continues to be a very successful program with over 600 troops transitioning into teaching positions in the state of Arizona since the program started.
- Dave Hampton gave a legislative update.
- The Diné (Navajo Nation) met at the Arizona State Veteran Home August 11. Col. Strickland wants to train more Navajo VBCs. There is an effort underway now to establish a state veterans cemetery on 65 acres of Navajo land, which means that the Navajo Nation may need assistance with the "seed money" needed to get the project through the construction documents phase.
- Directors of all state agencies will be submitting a "wish list" for needed legislative, but are severely limited on what they can propose (cost is a major consideration).
- The Tucson Home is well underway. It is designed to be much less institutional, but will provide skilled nursing care. Substantial completion is expected in June 2011 and the opening is planned for September 2011.
- Brad Bridwell is the Homeless Coordinator for the agency. He provided a briefing of his activities with the ultimate goal of preventing homelessness amongst veterans in the next five years, which aligns with the VA's objective.

### **Response to the Auditor General's Sunset Audit Questions**

The Commissioners reviewed and commented on twelve sunset factors that were included in a "strawman" document distributed prior to the meeting. The Commissioners reviewed each question posed in the boilerplate document from the Auditor General's Office.

Lionel Sanchez recommended that the document be written more clearly so that individual veterans would be able to understand the background. Chairman Fredricks recommended that the response to the Auditor General could be finalized today. George Cushing moved to adopt the response as modified during the meeting. Jeff Olson seconded the motion and the Commission unanimously approved the response as modified. Chairman Fredricks will work with Gabe Forsberg to finalize the document immediately after the meeting ends.

### **AVSAC Letter to Governor Janice K. Brewer**

AVSAC responsibilities are spelled out in ARS §41-602.E. "*The commission shall provide policy advice to the governor and the director regarding veterans' issues.*" Chairman Fredricks crafted a draft for consideration by the Commission regarding the most pressing issues at this time: (1) provide Gov. Brewer the Commission's response to the Special Investigation of the Arizona Department of Veterans Services published November 2009; (2) acknowledge that it is currently undergoing a sunset audit, and (3) the agency's need to hire an in-house attorney, thereby avoiding conflict situations in the Fiduciary Division. He drafted a letter for consideration by the Commission with a copy to Victor Daniels, Policy Advisor to the Governor on Military Affairs and a copy to Director Strickland. The motion to finalize the letter to Governor Brewer was unanimously approved.

## **Administrative Issues**

*Meeting Schedule for the AVSAC:* Chairman Fredricks brought a proposed meeting schedule for the rest of 2010 through the end of 2011 for discussion. Director Strickland had asked if the AVSAC limit its meeting due to budget constraints earlier in the year. In reaction, AVSAC halted two meetings during the summer and limited every other meeting so that out-of-town Commissioners participate by phone (to limit travel costs). There were originally four regional meetings (held outside Phoenix) in 2010, which were reduced to one. The cost for travel for the 9-member Commission is very low and the Governor-appointees receive no pay to participate. Chairman Fredricks felt that it shouldn't cost the Commissioners to volunteer their time and talent, so he spoke with Director Strickland prior to this meeting to see if more regional meetings and fewer teleconference meetings would be acceptable. Col. Strickland supported his request and Chairman Fredricks posed the future meetings to the Commission. A list of proposed meetings dates and times will be posted on the website and sent to the Commissioners.

*Dress Code:* Attire for the meetings has been coats and ties for the male Commissioners and similar clothing for the females. Business casual is more appropriate for the regional meetings. Chairman Fredricks expressed his desire to have each Commissioner dress as he or she feels works best for them. As for him, Chairman Fredricks felt that he wanted to be comfortable with how he was dressed if he were to encounter the Governor since he was a Governor appointee.

*Region Assignments:* Since the AVSAC Chairman is normally not assigned to a region and there are three new Commissioners, the new assignment for regions have been revisited.

- Region 1. Yamanouchi & Cushing (Maricopa, Pinal & Yavapai Counties)
- Region 2. Hanson & Sanchez (Apache, Coconino, Gila, & Navajo Counties)
- Region 3. Kiefer & Gent (Cochise, Graham, Greenlee, Pima & Santa Cruz Counties)
- Region 4. Tolliver & Olson (La Paz, Mohave & Yuma Counties)

Lionel Sanchez suggested that the next regional meeting be in Region 2, possibly in the Chinle area working with Geno Talas from Hopi Veterans Services. Chairman Fredricks reported that Ken Yamanouchi was considering Flagstaff.

Two regional meetings will be scheduled per year until the budget constraints are lifted.

Elbert Wheeler, Delegate to the Navajo Nation Council, invited the Commission to come to his part of the state in March.

*Absences:* If Commissioners won't be able to attend a meeting, they should let the Chairman know.

**Adjournment** – Chairman Fredricks adjourned the meeting at 3:26 p.m. The next meeting will be at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, September 9, in the Director's Conference Room - Suite 209, 3839 N. 3rd Street, Phoenix, AZ 85012.