

Arizona Department of Veterans' Service Advisory Commission

Arizona State Veteran Home - Tucson
555 E. Ajo Way, Tucson, AZ 85713-1000
October 13, 2011

MINUTES

Advisory Commissioners

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

Absent

Phillip Hanson

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Robert Barnes, Deputy Director
Homer Rodgers, Assistant Deputy Director
Mike Klier, Assistant Deputy Director
Cathi Starr, Southern Regional VSD Manager
Gabe Forsberg, Strategic Planner/Women Vets

Special Guests

Rae Vermeal, District Program Mgr., Adult Protective Services
Will Patterson, Southern Arizona VA Health Care System, Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/ Operation New Dawn Program (OEF/OIF/OND Program)
Adriene Weede, OEF/OIF/OND Program Mgr.
Rachel Sharp, Female Vet Outreach/Service to Armed Forces - American Red Cross
Gary Nelson, Area "A" Vice Commander, American Legion
Tom Heaney, Former Advisory Commissioner
Harry Lyons, Former Regional President – Fleet Reserve Association

Call to Order –The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairperson Terrie Gent. The minutes of the August 11, August 18, and September 10 meetings were approved as written.

Communications - Chairperson Gent received 7 bound copies of the Auditor General report on the sunset review for the Commission. In addition, there were 18 letters sent out prior to the Kingman meeting as invitations or confirmations plus 5 post-event letters of appreciation.

Agency Announcements and Updates – Deputy Director Robert Barnes provided an agency report. Homer Rodgers also briefed the Commission on new projects he will be working on, since the Tucson is essentially completed from a construction standpoint.

Standardizing a Claim Form for Use by Veterans Applying for State Benefits - Will Patterson, OEF/OIF/OND Program, wants to collect veteran information on a form that would be used by various agencies providing services to veterans. The design of the form will require coordination with various service providers at the federal, state, and non-governmental organizations. Mr. Patterson is willing to assume a leadership role in this initiative. Deputy Director Barnes recommended that veterans be referred to one of the ADVS counselors who will assist them in completing paperwork. He also suggested that Mr. Patterson speak with Kathy Pearce from Heroes to Hometowns to ask about a similar project she initiated. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords' office may also be helpful to ensure the federal level service providers participate in the standardized form design.

Auditor General Performance Audit Recommendations - The Commissioners were asked to be prepared to discuss the Auditor General's sunset review for the Military Family Relief Fund and

Veterans Donation Fund at the November meeting. Deputy Director Barnes asked Chairwoman Gent to be available for questions at the hearing October 26 at the Committee of Reference meeting where the Commission's sunset review will be discussed. He will also inform the Commission of the outcome of that meeting.

A motion was made and seconded for future meetings: request that ADVS brief the Commission on a few of the recommendations from the Auditor General report over a few meetings. The selection of the recommendations would be at the call of the Chairwoman. The motion passed unanimously. Chairwoman Gent asked for the staff to send the Commissioners each an electronic and hard copy of the Veterans' Donations and Military Family Relief Funds (September 2011, Report No. 11-09).

Regional Meetings – Vice Chair George Cushing provided two handouts that recapped the issues that had been raised during regional meetings.

David Toliver and Jeff Olson reviewed the Kingman meeting and discussed the amount of work demanded to attract the 55 individuals who signed in. They also talked about ensuring that raised issues are also resolved. Commissioner Olson recommended that some of the issues are nation-wide and that Director Strickland would be able to bring the issue to the National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs (NASDVA) so that the VA Secretary can be informed of problems.

Chairwoman Gent asked the Commission to form a subcommittee on Regional Meetings. Commissioner Olson and Lionel Sanchez both volunteered to sit on the Regional Meeting subcommittee.

Because the regional meetings are a major part of marketing the services of the department, targeting younger veterans must be part of the focus of the subcommittee. Chairwoman Gent also discussed the need for proper signage so that veterans are aware of the department. She will ask for a report at the November meeting.

Vice Chair George Cushing is the only Commissioner assigned to Region 1 at this time. He is unable to coordinate the February regional meeting. Commissioner Olson moved to convert the February 2012 regional meeting to a regular monthly meeting, which was seconded by Commissioner Sanchez. Unanimously, the Commission supported the conversion of the February 11, 2012 date to its original Thursday meeting date and time of February 9, 2012.

Status Report on the Governor's Office of Boards and Commissions Progress Filling Two Vacancies on the Commission – The Commission will send a letter to the Governor, asking that she fill the two vacancies.

Chairperson Gent adjourned the meeting at 11:50 a.m. and James Ross, the new Administration for the State Veteran Home – Tucson, offered a tour of the facility to all attendees. The next meeting will be held November 10, 2011.