

Arizona Department of Veterans' Service Advisory Commission

Arizona State Veteran Home - Tucson
555 E. Ajo Way, Tucson, AZ 85713-1000
November 10, 2011

MINUTES

Advisory Commissioners

Terrie Gent, Chair
George Cushing, Vice Chair
Gary Fredricks
Philip Hanson
Lionel Sanchez

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Joey Strickland, Director
Homer Rodgers, Assistant Deputy Director
Mike Klier, Assistant Deputy Director
Gabe Forsberg, Strategic Planner/Women Vets

Absent

Jeffrey Olson (arranged prior to the meeting)
David Toliver, Sr. (arranged prior to the meeting)

Special Guests

Monica Cabrera, VA Public Affairs Officer
Ray Thomas, VFW State Adjutant
Jerril Price

Call to Order –The meeting was called to order at 10:15 a.m. by Chairperson Terrie Gent when a quorum was present. The minutes of the October 13 meeting were approved as written.

Agency Announcements and Updates – Director Joey Strickland and Assistant Deputy Directors Mike Klier and Homer Rodgers provided reports. The agency announcements included a briefing on long-range plans for cemetery expansion and land acquisition, support to the Navajo National for a veteran home on tribal land, and plans for future state veteran homes.

Auditor General Performance Audit Recommendations – Director Strickland will be finalizing grant procedures prior to the December meeting and will brief the Commission at that time. Vice Chair George Cushing provided information on the Military Family Relief Fund as a current member of that advisory commission. An updated application form is available on the website.

There were five Commissioners in attendance at the Committee of Reference on October 26: Chairwomen Gent, Vice Chair Cushing, Lionel Sanchez, Gary Fredricks, and Philip Hanson. The purpose of the hearing was to review the Auditor General's recommendations and obtain responses from the agency. As Director Strickland explained his position on questioned Veterans Donation Fund expenditures. He received support from Rep. Ruben Gallegos who also disagreed with the Auditor General's findings. Also voicing support for the positive changes in the department, Senator John Nelson congratulated Director Strickland for the marked improvements since assuming leadership for the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services.

The two areas where Director Strickland will be developing grant programs are the Military Family Relief Fund and the Veterans Donation Fund. Chairwoman Gent said that in both cases, issues may have been avoided if an in-house counsel were available. Commissioners were encouraged to speak with their contacts in the Legislature to see if there may be support for the Commission's recommendation to hire in-house counsel. Commissioners will report their findings at the December meeting.

Regional Meetings – Jeff Olson was on travel status and asked that this agenda item be discussed at the December meeting.

Publicity for Veterans Benefits Counselors – The commissioners discussed the fact that members of the public don't seem to know about the free services of the veterans' benefits counselors. Colonel Strickland said that he would look at developing a publicity campaign.

Status Report on the Governor's Office of Boards and Commissions Progress Filling Two Vacancies on the Commission – Gary Fredricks moved to prepare a letter to the Governor's Office of Boards and Commissions requesting more regularity in the appointment of Commissioners. The motion was seconded by Phil Hanson. Because the Chair and Vice Chair are both awaiting official confirmation that they have been re-appointed to serve a second term, it may be considered a conflict of interest for them to prepare the letter. Commissioner Fredricks was asked to craft the letter. A copy of the letter will be sent to Director Strickland and Dave Hampton, the ADVS Public Affairs Officer.

Col. Strickland reported that there were two new appointees: Ron Perkins from the Military Order of World Wars and Wayne Krula from Korean War Veterans.

Chairperson Gent adjourned the meeting at 11:35 a.m. The next meeting will be held December 8, 2011.