

**Arizona Department of Veterans' Service Advisory Commission**  
4141 North S. Herrera Way, A-107 Conference Room, Phoenix, AZ 85012  
Thursday – December 9, 2010

**MINUTES**

**Present**

Advisory Commissioners

Gary Fredricks, Chairman  
Terrie Gent, Vice Chair  
George Cushing  
Lionel Sanchez  
Phil Hanson  
Ken Yamanouchi

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Joey Strickland, Director  
Dave Hampton, Public Information Officer (left at 11:00 a.m.)  
Homer Rodgers, Assistant Deputy Director (left at 11:45 a.m.)  
Colleen Rundell, Veteran Home Administrator  
Katherine Harding, Exec. Asst. to Director

Absent

Lori Kiefer was ill and unable to attend.  
Jeffrey Olson is out on travel and had discussed with the Chairman before the meeting.

Guests (The Hopi guests left at 11:21 a.m.)

David Lucier, President, of Arizona Veterans Foundation at Arizona State University  
Eugene "Geno" Talas, Director, Hopi Veterans Services, The Hopi Tribe  
Lennadine Toney, Secretary, Hopi Veterans Services, The Hopi Tribe  
Les Ryan, Veterans Service Officer, Vietnam Veterans of America  
Curtis Honanie, Chief of Staff, Office of the Chairman, The Hopi Tribe  
Adrian Honanie, Hopi, Guest  
Louella Nahsonhoya, Public Information Officer, The Hopi Tribe  
Phillip Quochoytewa, USMC, Hopi Tribe, Former AZDVS Advisory Commissioner member

**Call to Order** –The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m. by Chairman Gary Fredricks. After the Pledge of Allegiance, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved and published.

**Communications:** There were two items received by the Commission:

- An invitation to attend the Glendale Community College “Veterans Services Center” dedication on November 10.
- An email from Gene van den Bosch that included a PowerPoint presentation that describes the Arizona Veterans’ Education Foundation (formerly ArmedZilla) and a report submitted to ADVS in the summer of 2010, which was updated November 2010 to reflect the new name of the organization. “Arizona Veterans Supportive Campuses Initiative – Toward a Seamless Transition from Military to Higher Education” contains data about veterans enrolled in post-secondary education, programs in place to support veterans, and recommendations to enhance support for veteran students.

**Agency Report**

Director Strickland provided an overview with specifics on construction and the State Veteran Home in Phoenix provided by Homer Rodgers and Colleen Rundell. Legislative Liaison, Dave Hampton, provided a copy of Senate Committee Members Senate. Budget matters will be addressed in the session.

Homer Rodgers, Assistant Deputy Director provided a report:

- Tucson Home:
  - Announced that the Tucson Home was 57% complete at the last on-site inspection.
  - The Arizona Department of Health Services has made their architectural 50% review with 1 minor issue to be resolved:
  - The construction is on schedule and anticipates completion 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> week of July. It will take 2 – 3 months to obtain licensure to allow the agency to operate the

- Tucson Home. Anticipates mid-October as the date the facility can become operational.
    - There is a waiting list for admissions to the Home.
    - Mr. Rodgers has a schedule for hiring core personnel 4 -6 months in advance of opening and other staff will be hired in late summers and as the census builds. They are already collecting resumes for staffing the facility. A critical first-hire will be the administrator to lead the effort to build and train the staff.
    - The facility will not be self-supporting the first year, so it will depend upon general funds until the Tucson Home is able to generate sufficient income to covers all operational costs. The Commission may be called upon to remind lawmakers about their commitment to fund the Tucson Home until it is financially self-sustaining.
    - On the agency website, construction photographs ([www.azdvs.gov](http://www.azdvs.gov)) are posted.
  - The \$5 million Sierra Vista cemetery expansion:
    - Will include two additional columbaria built for cremated remains, additional curbing and road replacement.
    - Developing water retention will avoid paying the City of Sierra irrigate the grounds (a savings of around \$30,000 per year).
  - The cost of the Cemetery Expansion will be \$5 million dollars. He confirmed with the agency Chief Financial Officer the \$500,000 “seed money” is available to start the project. The entire expansion project is funded by VA State Cemetery Grant Services. When the project reaches the construction document phase, the initial investment by the agency will be reimbursed.
  - The Phoenix Home renovations are 99% complete. The agency recently received \$180,000 from the general fund to finish the final renovation program at the Phoenix Home (to upgrade the air-conditioning system the home).
- Colleen Rundell, Administrator provided the report for the Arizona State Home.
- The census has been a challenge. It is currently at 174 and there is a total capacity of 200 veterans who can live at the home.
  - Medicaid, which in Arizona is called ALTCS (Arizona Long Term Care System), is scrutinizing those who are eligible for nursing home care statewide because of budget issues.
  - She is working with Homer to develop position description questionnaires (PDQ’s) to establish job specifications for employees of the Tucson Home.
  - Ms. Rundell stated that they are working with the agency’s Information Technology department to implement electronic medical records for the facility.
  - She holds managers accountable and some of the staff has resisted some of the culture changes she has implemented. Her approach is that the facility is their home and the staff are visitors there.
  - Ms. Rundell has been with the agency for four months and she has started to tightly focus on streamlining operations and eliminate non-critical positions. Ms. Rundell has been focusing on vacancies which have recently occurred. With 3 eliminated positions, she expects to save \$200,000/year.
  - An office will be provided to the residents who have been elected by the Resident Council to provide them with a designated place to conduct business.

Director Strickland stated that the agency has been scrutinized since he came on board and he is doing very well with all of the funds in his control. A former employee accused him of favoring requests from Native American veterans because he is an Indian person. As a result, he requested a 2-week investigation as to how the Veterans Donation Funds had been spent and has met on several occasions with the Governor’s staff. Funds went to four different tribes and the rest of the Veterans Donation Fund (VDF) went to other veteran organizations. The VDF has a balance of around \$3 million. The Governor’s Office advised the Director to be specific on which organizations may apply for veteran donation funds in future, but were pleased with how the funds had been recently invested

to support veterans statewide. Director Strickland stated that the Governor's Office felt the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services had been good stewards of all of its funds.

The Military Family Relief Fund (MFRF) will have around \$3 million by the end of December.

- At present, 64 military families were given \$250,000 in monetary assistance.
- More of the fund needs to be spent and the MFRF Advisory Committee is working to increase the number of applicants.

George Cushing also serves on the MFRF Advisory Committee and recapped their outreach efforts for MFRF. Ken Yamanouchi offered to assist the MFRF Advisory Committee; he is able to provide a contact name for the Department of Defense's Health Services Command who has the ability to get the word out worldwide about this benefit for Arizona military personnel.

MFRF eligibility was expanded last year, as only families of killed in action or wounded/injured-in-action were eligible to apply until last summer. The new eligibility will expire next year, however, and Commissioner Cushing offered to bring the need to extend the broader eligibility to the MFRF Advisory Commission as a possible legislative action.

### **AZ Legislative Resolution to honor Hopi Code Talkers, 50<sup>th</sup> Legislature, 1<sup>st</sup> Regular Session**

Eugene "Geno" Talas, Director of Hopi Veteran Services and Commander of the American Legion Hopi Post #80, requested support from the Commission to honor Hopi Code Talkers.

- The Department of Defense identified ten Hopi Code Talkers who transmitted and decoded secret radio communications as US Army Code Talkers during World War II. They will receive medallions as a result of Public Law 110-420, the Code Talkers Recognition Act. Two more Hopi Code Talkers were identified by the Vice Chairman of the Hopi Tribe. Rex Pooyouma and Orville Wadsworth were assigned to the Fifth Bomber Command, Army Air Force and will also be honored.
- While this national effort is underway, Commander Talas has requested that the Advisory Commission support the resolution to be introduced by Arizona Senator-elect Jack Jackson to honor the Hopi Code Talkers. The resolution also petitions the Arizona Department of Transportation to name a segment of Arizona Highway 264 that extends across the Hopi Reservation to be named "Hopi Code Talkers Highway."
- Director Talas also explained that the reason so little was known about Hopi Code Talkers was cultural. When Hopi warriors return home, they do not speak about their war-time experiences in accordance with their customs.

Director Talas provided a detailed proposal packet for the Advisory Commission.

- 1<sup>st</sup> Attachment – photos of nine Hopi Code Talkers and replica of the Bronze Plaque dedicated November 11, 2009 on the reservation.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Attachment – narratives of combat operations
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Attachment – Code Talkers Recognition Act of 2008, Public Law 110-420.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Attachment - draft concurrent resolution dated 12/6/10, acknowledging the Hopi Talkers for their substantial contributions to American history and military success.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Attachment – Hopi Veterans Services information (client transports, transportation costs and newsletter)

Chairman Fredricks commended Director Talas for his detailed presentation and information packet. The Commission agreed in principal with the concept of recognizing the Hopi Code Talkers. It was further agreed that it was premature to formally vote on endorsing the initiative, pending the receipt of the actual legislative bill language that we were being asked to support. The Commission committed to bringing the action to a vote through a future agenda item after the final bill language is available.

Former Commissioner Philip Quochytewa expressed gratitude to stand before the Advisory Commission. He provided background about how difficult it had been to gain national recognition for

all tribes whose language was used to secretly transmit information. The Advisory Commission thanked him for coming to the meeting and for continuing to advocate for veterans.

Director Talas expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services for their support of Veterans Outreach Day. He provided an "End of the Year Cost Report" in the same handout distributed to the Commissioners. It provides an overview of how his department has used the veteran donation funds received from the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services. A total of 700 veterans seek services on the Hopi Reservation, and Director Talas reports that his department also provides transportation to non-Hopi veterans. Director Talas also commended Veteran's Benefits Counselor, Tanya Dooline for her claim processing.

### **Regional Meeting**

Commissioners Sanchez and Hanson asked who should be invited by the Commission. Chairman Fredricks indicated that Gabe Forsberg, Strategic Planner, may have a compiled list of City, Mayor, County Board of Supervisors, and Veterans Service Organizations. Ms. Forsberg will also provide a flyer and news release for the regional meeting. The Commission felt it appropriate to also invite the congressional delegates in addition to state and local elected officials.

### **Support of Veteran Students**

Chairman Fredricks was uncertain about how the Commission can support veteran centers on campus, as it is charged with policy and not implementing programs. Vice Chair Gent gave a brief background of the information that has been collected about veterans' resource centers on various campuses in Arizona (which was one of the short-term objectives mentioned this fall for the Commission). The Commission has now educated itself on supporting veterans enrolled in college. Individually, the Commissioners are each better equipped to support efforts in their respective communities.

Chairman Fredricks suggested that Col. Strickland may want to consider scheduling a meeting to call together various programs that support veteran students. Chairman Fredricks and Vice Chair Gent will meet with Director Strickland on January 13 to further discuss plans to coordinate veteran student support amongst various colleges.

David Lucier, President, of Arizona Veterans Foundation at Arizona State University, said it is critical to support veterans as they transition from active duty military to civilian life on a college campus. Based on the University of Arizona model, the rate of veteran graduation has risen from a single digit to a graduation rate of 90% of enrolled veterans. In the past, veterans were not embraced by the colleges and there is an effort now to get alumni associations involved in supporting veterans.

Mr. Lucier emphasized the need to focus on the veterans within the campus from initial contact through and beyond graduation. His 4-page handout spelled out details for the Veterans Initiative for Academic Excellence at ASU. Two excellent models are Ohio State University and the University of Arizona. The list of core elements in his handout was very similar to those objectives developed by the U of A (presented to the Commission 11/4/10). The cost for his program over the next 3 years will be \$250,000 and public-private partnerships are being sought by Mr. Lucier.

### **Veterans Task Force (VTF) and Veterans Research Council (VCR) Recommendations**

Chairman Fredricks reviewed the recommendations of these two reports listed on the matrix provided to the Commissioners before the meeting. Each recommendation from those two reports has now been listed on the matrix as either an open or closed action item. Open actions can be placed on future Commission agendas as time permits to determine if the commission wishes to take further action on that specific item.

Each commissioner was asked to review the two reports in preparation for discussion of their "Guiding Strategic Principles and Policy Objectives – 2010/2011" at the January meeting. The VTF



and VRC final reports will assist Commissioners as they review their policy objectives. Assuming that the Commission agrees to proceed, the document must be revised include Commissioner comments and should be re-written in a more user-friendly style. The Commission will then need to develop a plan for how to share information contained within the report. Some ideas included posting it on the website, sending it to the Governor, sending it to the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate as well as to each committee member on the respective Arizona Senate and House military/veteran committees. The Commission was warned against rushing the completion of the report, but it would have the most effect if the report were finalized early in the legislative session that starts January 10, 2011.

### **National Cemetery**

Chairman Fredricks mentioned some concerns about the National Memorial Cemetery in North Phoenix:

- The cemetery needs to ensure the 32<sup>nd</sup> Street Parkway does not interfere with the VA Cemetery's expansion plans.
- Wayne Ellis, Director of National Cemetery, has extensive projections of land usage, based on the number of interments.
- The Federal Government needs to apply to the City of Phoenix to abandon the right-of-way property in preparation for expanding the cemetery before it reaches capacity in 2030. The Commission may wish to raise the issue and suggest that this action be taken by the federal government.

Tammy Duckworth is the Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs. A teleconference with her might be the best means to raise the issue about the 32<sup>nd</sup> Street right-of-way issue. Col. Strickland offered to schedule a telephone conference after the first of the year, if the Commission wishes. The issue is that the right of way issue needs to be dealt with now, before the cemetery can take the next near-term step in developing the existing cemetery ground. The federal government does not appear to be taking any action at this time.

### **Good of the Order**

Commissioner Cushing thanked Director Strickland and Colleen Rundell for the incredible assistance his wife received for the gift shop. Ann Cushing is with the Ladies Auxiliary of the American Legion and will be sending a formal acknowledgement to Ms. Rundell.

Commissioner Hanson announced that Glendale Community College (GCC) has opened a facility that will serve as a Service Center for Veterans. GCC created this program and is staffing it to ensure veteran students receive the support they need to be successful students.

Dave Lucier, President, of Arizona Veterans Foundation at Arizona State University stated that they are working to get advisory group with Maricopa County Community College to transition veterans to Arizona State University.

Lionel Sanchez announced 75 rooms are being opened at Victory Place to house formerly homeless veterans.

Vice Chair Gent met with President at Cochise College Community to inform him of the U of A veteran support program. Vice Chair Gent continues to be very involved with veteran treatment courts and is uniquely qualified to support that initiative as an attorney. She is a non-voting member of an Arizona Bar Committee working to help establish veterans courts, and she continues to work with the Superior Court judge in Cochise County to encourage such a court in Sierra Vista.

Chairman Fredricks adjourned the meeting at 12:21 P.M. The next meeting will be held January 13, 2011.