

**Arizona Department of Veterans' Service Advisory Commission**  
4141 North S. Herrera Way, Phoenix, AZ 85012

**May 11, 2017**

**MINUTES**

**Advisory Commissioners Present**

Jill Nelson  
Joseph Brophy  
Peter Kloeber  
Ron Perkins  
Brett Rustand  
Rebecca Villalpando

**AZ Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS)**

Wanda Wright, Director  
Tera Scherer, Executive Assistant

**Advisory Commissioners Absent**

Danielle Desmond  
Arlthe Rios

**Call to Order** – Vice Chairman Nelson called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes** – Vice Chairman Nelson called for the approval of the January 12, 2017 Veterans Advisory Commission Meeting Minutes. There being no changes to the minutes, Commissioner Rustand moved to approve the minutes as written. The motion carried unanimously.

**Agency Announcements and Updates** – Wanda Wright, Director of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services, gave agency updates since the last meeting:

The Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University invited her to attend the Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship (V-WISE) Opening and Closing Ceremonies. It was a great event, with 200 veteran women from around the nation coming to Phoenix. Director Wright was able to connect with several female veterans from Arizona that are small business owners, or are in the process of becoming small business owners.

The three Military Veteran Community Networks (MVCNs) were established and chartered. The northern region was the last region to be chartered. MCVN is an acronym for what the VA calls, *My VA Communities*. Members from each region are comprised of VA leadership and employees, VSOs, behavioral health organizations, faith-based organizations, veterans' courts, as well as representatives from higher education, military entities and tribal representation, among others. The VA, ADVS, DES (Department of Economic Security) and AHCCCS representatives must attend. The official launch was announced at the Statewide Symposium in April. Each region hosts open meetings, so a veteran can attend those meetings and ask questions.

The Maricopa County Stand Down was held in February and was well attended. Director Wright is always very interested in how many women veterans come through the stand downs. She said of the 169 women that came through, only a very small percentage is homeless. She believes the number was around nine percent. They do see a decrease in the overall homeless veteran population.

The Department has been working with the Office of Economic Opportunity in support of the Roadmap to Veteran Employment. That office will be working with the community colleges to certify people in manufacturing and construction fields, as well as the types of businesses that are coming into Arizona.

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APS and USAA established the Arizona Corporate Council, which falls underneath the Roadmap. There are about 20 participating organizations in that program, many of which are Arizona Supportive Employers. The plan is to get all the organizations certified as a VSE. Additionally, Director Wright met with the Southern Arizona Leadership Council and provided them information on the Roadmap and invited their members to be a part of the Arizona Corporate Council and also to become Arizona Veteran Supportive Employers.

The strategic planning for women veterans was finalized. The group has worked very closely with the VA and other entities. The first women's veteran expo was held last month and was very successful. The VA hosted a Beauty Bash event last week; ADVS supported the luncheon that was held at that event, as well as provided volunteers. Access to resources is what the Department provides and being at these events for the women to ask the questions they may have is of great importance.

About \$900,000 was awarded from the Veterans Donation Fund in the last large grant cycle, including housing services, an education center at the Gilbert Memorial Wall Park, the West Valley Education Center located right outside Luke Air Force Base, and the DAV legal program, among others. They all fill a gap that exists in the communities.

The Yuma Veteran Home design is at about 60 percent. That project continues to wait for VA funding. Hopefully the funding will be provided in the next fiscal year, but possibly the year after that.

The Arizona Lottery is sponsoring \$50,000 for a program for female veteran transitioning. The Department is looking very closely at women veterans transitioning from prison. Currently there are about 50 women veterans incarcerated in Arizona. The Department will work closely with DVOP/LVRS (Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program/Local Veterans' Employment Representatives) from the DES to provide these women with outreach services. This is already taking place in Tucson for some of the incarcerated male veterans, as they were able to set up a block of Veterans that AZDVS administers to.

CSP (Career Skills Program) and TAP (Transition Assistance Program) from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Luke Air Force Base and Fort Huachuca have a program called Skill Bridge, that will allow DOD members to get into an apprenticeship program to gain experience, and in some cases, certifications, before they separate from the service, while the DOD is still paying their salaries, and hopefully they will then get hired upon their release from active duty. Director Wright said she is trying to create a net that catches everyone, and in doing so, creates an infrastructure. Skill Bridge needs the support of the military installations to participate and support it, but apprenticeships are needed. DES can support the need, as they house all the state's apprenticeship programs.

Lastly, the Department is working with Arizona State University to develop a curriculum under their social and policy school so that individuals, not just veterans, but people that are Navigators, state employees, etcetera, can get a certification in "veterans" by taking a couple of courses that will offer an insight on military history, the Veterans Administration, and Commissioner Perkins asked about the frequency of the MVCN meetings. Director Wright advised the Commissioners that the meetings are scheduled quarterly per region. Commissioner Rustand attended one of these

meetings and he stated that having attended “town hall type” meetings in the past, the MVCN meetings are one of the best meetings he has ever attended, as everyone is right there to provide access to veterans.

The Commissioners discussed the possibility of adding the meeting schedule to the ADVS website for higher visibility. Director Wright advised the co-chairmen of the three regions: Brett Rustand

(Southern Region); Andrew Griffin (Northern Region) and Angel Juarez (Central Region) that she would discuss the possibility for that and other means of getting invitations out to the community.

**Legislative Update** – Dave Hampton, Legislative Liaison, Arizona Department of Veterans’ Services, was unable to attend the meeting but provided a final report to the Commissioners of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Arizona Legislature, First Regular Session located [here](#).

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Commissioner Rustand asked about HB2004, increasing the percentage of state contracts for veteran-owned businesses, passed through the House but died in the Senate. Within that bill was a task for ADVS to create a registry of veteran-owned businesses.

Commissioner Rustand asked Director Wright if that was something that the Department was prepared to do. Director Wright advised the Commission that even generally speaking, there was no additional funding that passed in the legislature or additional FTEs (full time equivalent {employees}) and you’ll notice in the legislative report there are a couple of bills that talk about translating military education and experience into course credit. That alone will be a huge job to take on and the department was given no additional funding or manpower to do it. We will find a way to accomplish this with what we already have in place.

### **Open Discussion for the Good of the Order**

Commissioner Nelson asked Director Wright about the large grant process and whether it had been completed. Director Wright advised the Commission the award letters were sent out in late February, with checks being processed and sent out in March. Almost \$900,000 was awarded to about 23 organizations.

Further discussion commenced about the ease in the application process for organizations to apply for funding. Director Wright agreed that it is recognized that not all VSOs have grant writers on staff and thus the need for it to be as simple as possible. Director Wright gave an overview of the scoring process and the use of review committees, formed by volunteers that are either veterans themselves or work directly with veterans.

The committee reviews the grant proposals, grades them and submits them to the Department for review and final awarding, based on the priorities of the Department and the need to fill a gap access for those programs.

Commissioner Nelson would like to invite Director Wright to a meeting to discuss the value of the Arizona Veterans Advisory Commission. Director Wright reminded the Commission of the history of the group; they used to be responsible for the Department until legislation mandated the director position become an appointed cabinet position. Since that time their role has continued to change. Further discussion was had about the value of the group, and it was agreed that efforts are being duplicated with other meetings being held by the Governor's Office and the VA, to name a couple.

Discussion was held that perhaps the bi-monthly meetings would be more value-added if they adopted a quarterly schedule, with quarterly meeting attendance at the regional MVCN meetings held throughout the state.

Commissioner Kloeber moved to pursue a marriage between the MVCN meetings and the Commission, allowing them to re-align their purpose in the community. Commissioner Rustand seconded the motion; the motion carried.

Commissioner Perkins moved to nominate Commissioner Kloeber to the position of Chairman. Commissioner Villalpando seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Commissioner Kloeber stated the Northern Arizona Veterans Coalition meeting is up to about 30 organizations being represented and the veteran community is grateful for all the efforts of those involved.

Today is Commissioner Perkins' last meeting, having served six years on the Commission.

Meeting adjourned at 11:37 a.m.