



## Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee

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January 21, 2022 – 10:00 AM MT  
Virtual Meeting on Microsoft Teams  
Live Streamed via City's website:  
<http://www.elpasotexas.gov/videos>  
Television on City15

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/cityofelpasotx/videos>

### MINUTES

#### Members Present

Lance Lehr  
Laura Butler  
Jonathan Bohannon  
Melissa Harcrow  
Tephane Hopper  
Justin Rotti  
Hope Jackson  
Bruce Biegel

#### Members Absent

None

#### Unfilled Positions

District 3

1. **Call to Order.** 10:00AM MST
2. **Roll Call.** 8 of 9 Quorum.
3. **Discussion and Action Annual Election of Officers**
  - a. Lance Lehr selected as Chairman unanimously
  - b. Bruce Biegel selected as Vice Chairman unanimously
  - c. Laura Butler selected as Secretary unanimously
4. **Discussion and Action to Approve Minutes of:** November 19, 2021. Minutes approved unanimously.
5. **Vote to approve or disapprove absent or no show members**
  - a. Bruce Biegel – absence approved
  - b. Hope Jackson – absence approved
6. **Citizen Comment Period:** Individuals limited to 3 minutes; no specific action may be taken.
  - a. **Jon Martin Deputy Director Opportunity Center for the Homeless-** The new Veterans Transitional Living Center will be located on Magoffin Ave. The facility will be a 20-bed facility each with its own bathroom. The architectural work is

approximately 90% complete. Expectation is to break ground in the February or March timeframe. Because the location is in a historical district, there may be a requirement for an archaeological dig. There is a capital campaign to raise funds by purchasing a paver at \$500 or a brick at \$100. Checks are also accepted. The current VTLC will move over to the new building. The Veterans shelter will be moved to the old VTLC. The Veterans Shelter will be repurposed into a safe haven concept which is a focused on the chronically homeless with a mental health diagnosis. The Women's Resource center will have an expansion made to the building to incorporate a second floor. The OTC is also developing a facility for elderly homeless men and putting in a tranquility garden. The OTC was awarded a \$1M dollar grant from the VA for construction purposes that covers approximately 40% of the total cost.

- b. **David Garcia Disabled American Veterans-** Thankful to Lance Lehr, Paul Albright and Carl Dwyer for supporting the beautification project of Old Glory Memorial. He is looking for Volunteers throughout the community. The project will be in early spring. A flyer will be developed soon for maximum media exposure. There will be a BBQ to feed all of those who volunteer. Contact has been made with the EP Country Veterans Treatment Court. A letter will be written for a formal request of resources. Funding is being worked with the City of El Paso Military and Veterans Affairs to provide assistance.

**7. El Paso VA Health Care Clinic Update:** Mike Amaral, Director.

- a. Not present

**8. El Paso County Veterans Assistance Program Manager – Carl Dwyer.**

- a. The County Veterans Resource Directory is published twice a year. Now is the time to reach out to the County Veterans Assistance office and send any updates if necessary. There is a new El Paso County Veterans Facebook page. The link will be send out via email. Recognized Paul Albright and the 82<sup>ND</sup> Airborne Association for a great celebration of life event for LTC (ret) Robert Chisolm a WWII, Korea and Vietnam Veteran who recently passed away.

**9. Community Update:**

- El Paso County Veterans Advisory Board Chair Update – Alexis McCray
  - The County Veterans Advisory Board will meet on February 3<sup>rd</sup> to create the 2022 strategic plan. The regular meeting will be February 8<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 PM. The VAB will provide administration support for the cleanup effort at Old Glory memorial. The VAB Strategic Plan goals will focus on ending Veteran homelessness, marketing and outreach, as well as incorporating goals from the County Veteran of the Year. It will be presented to commissioner's court in March. Alexis will be facilitating a Women's Veterans Network group on February 22 at 6:30PM with peer leader Pamela Dickinson. It is open for eight Women Veterans.
- El Paso Behavioral Center – Ron Jackson
  - El Paso behavioral health is a resource in the community that provides stabilization and treatment for those who have suicidal thoughts, anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Homicidal thoughts, depression, and Substance abuse. EPBC has a dedicated military unit for Veterans and a

dedicated Woman's program. There are two outpatient locations in El Paso. A table will be set up in the VA Clinic every Tuesday in February to ensure Veterans are aware of the resources available to them. Any Veteran in distress can call the care center or personally go to a location for immediate assistance.

- Institute for Veterans & Military Families Entrepreneurship Programs – Kayla Eberhardt
  - The IVMF at Syracuse University has programs to assist entrepreneur Veterans wherever they are in their journey. The program has three phases: Ideation, Early Stage, Growth and Sustain. There are 11 entrepreneurship programs. Programs focus on all Veterans from Vietnam era to Post 9-11 to eight programs offered to Military Spouses. The classes are designed on a continuum and offer ongoing support services. The IVMF is an R1 research institution. Learn more at: [www.ivmf.syracuse.edu/programs/entrepreneurship](http://www.ivmf.syracuse.edu/programs/entrepreneurship). There was a detailed presentation on multiple business programs. Paul Albright will connect Kayla to the Economic Development department.

**10. El Paso Coalition for the Homeless Update: Camille Castillo**

- a. The Master list current numbers: 65 Homeless veterans, 45 sheltered, 20 unsheltered. In the last 40 days, 47 veterans have moved into permanent housing and 74 have flowed into the system. EPCH has been focused on improving the data with the VA over the last six months. Three weeks ago, the data showed it took 93 days to house a Veteran. This was a combination of bad data. The improved Data tracking now shows it takes 38 Days to house a Veteran. The 38 days is well within the established timeline. EPCH will continue to work with organizations to find methods to improve. Improvements to the housing timeline is being made at the initial entry phase to the system. Verification of a Veteran is being simplified. There are challenges to tracking the unsheltered Veterans. Not all stay local and not all are cooperative with organizations. Homeless Veterans are placed into apartments or homes with case management. A Veteran will be removed from the Master list when there is no contact after 90 days. Veterans that are known to be unsheltered that refuse assistance are documented on the Master list and excluded from timeline data. There are many Veterans that move through several housing programs looking for the correct program that suits their needs. There is no community list of Veterans that are banned from shelters or programs. The organizations do have a general idea of who is banned and why. HUD requires that no Veteran should be homeless for more than 30 days.

**11. Discussion and Action: Subcommittee Chairs update on assigned focus areas.**

- Bruce Biegel – Employment
  - Bruce would like to have assistance with the District 3 vacancy being filled. Paul Albright provided an update that the representative should be filling the position soon. The committee is pleased to see that the VAAC has managed to achieve many accomplishments over the last year. The committee is looking at reaching out throughout the City with the support of Council to ensure Veterans are being employed. May 4<sup>th</sup> is the Ft. Bliss hiring expo.

- Hope Jackson – Homelessness
  - Hope Jackson formally requests to receive the contract for the Homeless Veterans Tenet based rental assistance program. She was not able to access the link that was provided. Abraham Gutierrez will ensure that the contracts will be provided. The Sub Committee meets the first Wednesday of every month. The Sub Committee will be at the Master list meeting the second and fourth Friday of each month. Bruce Biegel reached out for assistance in helping a homeless veteran. Hope would like to know what is the process for helping the Veterans in need. Abraham Gutierrez stated that he is the point of contact and he is the one who will assist in provided the resources. The point in time will be on January 27<sup>th</sup>. Anyone interested in providing assistance must contact Camille Castillo.
- Tephania Hopper – Marketing and Outreach
  - The committee met with Laura Cruz and was disappointed in the meeting. The committee requested the following: A strategic press release; Non Profit organizations list updated; VAAC Head Shots with a paragraph; USO, Ft. Bliss, and United Way volunteer programs added to web site; change emergency information to community resources; update web site to be more engaging; updated by laws. Would like to see billboards, bench ads and advertisements on waste containers. Tephania stated that she thought Laura Cruz did not want to do it but received an email from the Chief Military officer who stated that all requests will be filled. After the meeting, she was told by Paul Albright that she was not in line with what the VAAC will be doing. She would like to know what her role is. Paul Albright stated that the VAAC role is to advise council and explained to Tephania that she does not have to do the physical legwork. She has to advise that City Staff do the work. No VAAC member should be doing the hard work. Tephania stated that she did not know that she did not need to do the hard work when she started in the position. She is very disappointed and upset that she was not told how to operate in her position. Tephania has resigned her position because she is moving to a new state.

**12. Discussion and Action:** Request for Meeting with City Manager with Chair and Sub Chairs on VAAC Strategic Plan.

- a. Would like to receive feedback on what was placed and not placed into the new City Strategic Plan. Formally requests that a meeting be scheduled.

**13. Division of Veteran and Military Affairs Update.**

- a. The Center for Development and Civic Engagement (Volunteer Services) is in need for donations. There was over 200 volunteers with the department but are now down to between 12-60 on any given week. POC is Ron Rucker 915 564-7882.
- b. The City recognized the Veteran community with Proclamations and Resolutions. The City recognized the VFW post 812 Axillary and passed a resolution to provide funding to rename a portion of Patriot Freeway to the Korean War Memorial Hwy.

**14. Announcements:** Limited to Veteran and Military Events pertinent to the El Paso Region.

- a. Laura Butler - officers need to meet with individual VAAC members to have discussions.
- b. Hope Jackson – invites Abraham Gutierrez and Nicole Ferrini to the Sub Committee meeting

**15. Next VAAC Meeting:** February 18, 2022, at 10:00 AM MST Virtual Meeting online.

**16. Adjourn.** 1150 MST

**NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC:**

*The Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee of the City of El Paso may retire into EXECUTIVE SESSION pursuant to Section 3.5A of the El Paso City Charter and the Texas Government Code, Chapter 551, Subchapter D, to discuss any of the following: (The items listed below are matters of the sort routinely discussed in Executive Session, but the Veterans Affairs Advisory Community of the City of El Paso may move to Executive Session any of the items on this agenda, consistent with the terms of the Open Meeting Act.) The Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee will return to open session to take any final action and may also, at any time during the meeting, bring forward items for public discussion, as appropriate.*

*Section 551.071 CONSULTATION WITH ATTORNEY*

*Section 551.072 DELIBERATIONS REGARDING REAL PROPERTY*

*Section 551.073 DELIBERATION REGARDING PROSPECTIVE GIFTS*

*Section 551.074 PERSONNEL MATTERS*

*Section 551.076 DELIBERATION REGARDING SECURITY DEVICES*

*Section 551.087 DELIBERATION REGARDING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT*

**NEGOTIATIONS**

*Sign Language interpreters will be provided for this meeting upon request. Requests must be made to the Community Development department at phone number 915-212-1654 a minimum of 48 hours prior to the date and time of the meeting. Copies of these Minutes will be provided in Braille, large print or audiotape upon request. Requests must be made a minimum of 48 hours prior to the date and time of the meeting.*

POSTED THIS 28 DAY OF June AT 12:15PM BY *Paul Albright*  
PAUL ALBRIGHT.