



## Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee

---

February 18, 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  
Tephania Hopper  
Justin Rotti  
Hope Jackson  
Bruce Biegel

#### Members Absent

None

#### Unfilled Positions

District 1

1. **Call to Order.** 10:01AM MST
2. **Roll Call.** 8 of 8 Quorum.
3. **Discussion and Action to Approve Minutes of:** January 22, 2022. Minutes Approved unanimously.
4. **Citizen Comment Period:** Individuals limited to 3 minutes; no specific action may be taken. No Comments
5. **El Paso VA Health Care Clinic Update:** Mike Amaral, Director. – Not present
6. **El Paso County Veterans Assistance Program Manager** – Carl Dwyer. Not present. Paul Albright stated that the Crisis Intercept mapping for Suicide Awareness is on February 23, 2022.
7. **Community Update:**
  - a. Homeless Veterans Tenet Based Rental Assistance Program Quarterly Update – Nicole Ferrini
    - i. VTBRA+ covers not only Housing but case management and supportive services. 11 Veterans have been housed and 6 Veterans are in case management. Most important part of this program is case management.

- ii. CHD served 53 Veterans from 9/2021 – 12/2021. Services include: Child and Youth Services, Seniors and persons with disabilities services, Mental and Medical health Services, Homeless services, First time home buying program, and Volunteer housing rehabilitation. Would like to receive feedback from the VAAC on where to place priority in these programs.
- iii. HUD / VASH rental assistance program had 228 vouchers for veterans as of January. 27 are still available. This program is managed through the Housing Authority now known as HOME. They must be referred by the VA. Veterans pay up to 30% of their income.
- iv. Bruce Beigel asked to have the DCHD work with the Veterans Land Board for the FTHB program. Currently the City works with Project Bravo.
- v. Bruce Beigel asked how is the City looking to structure the VTBRA+ program for the future. DCHD would like to have discussions on how to move forward as the contract expires.
- vi. Hope Jackson asks if the office has collaborated the FTHB with the Greater El Paso Association of Realtors. Nicole Ferrini believes that Project Bravo does work with them. Hope Jackson will have the CEO extend an invitation from the Greater El Paso association of Realtors. Nicole Ferrini to a leadership roundtable that will discuss affordable housing.
- vii. Hope Jackson asked for clarification of the 11 Housed and 6 in Case management. Endeavors had to conduct a deep dive into the master list to identify those eligible for the program.
- viii. Hope Jackson asked how long the HUD VASH Voucher is good for. Nicole will research it and provide an answer.
- ix. Justin Rotti is looking forward to learn about the different programs available from the City. DCHD will work with Paul Albright to bring back an additional update on the breath of programs that assist the vulnerable in El Paso.

**b. Endeavors Wellness Center – Ben Miranda**

- i. Endeavors will establish a Veterans Wellness Center in El Paso. This will be the second of its kind in the nation. The first was established in San Antonio. Veterans will have access to medical care, mental health, physical health, occupational therapy, physical therapy, holistic health, education, and supportive services all under one roof.
- ii. Endeavors used the El Paso Veterans Needs Assessment conducted in 2019 to show the importance of a wellness center.
- iii. The wellness center will be located on 10 acres in the Pebble Hills area. Data showed that the zip code area 79936 was one of the largest populated zip codes in the country and the 79938 zip code was one of the fastest growing zip codes in the country. The center will be on the border of these two zip codes.
- iv. 12,000 Square feet of lease space if available for the community. Endeavors is looking for organization that can provide legal assistance, claims assistance, financial assistance, Employment services, mental

health services, Veteran Service organizations, Primary healthcare, and Higher education.

- v. Mellissa Harcrow wants to know when the center will open. Estimated timeline is the grand opening on Veterans Day 2023.
- vi. Mellissa Harcrow asked to define how family is defined by Endeavors.- The Veteran defines what their family looks like.
- vii. Hope Jackson ask who is funding this effort and what the cost to the Veteran will be. This is an Endeavors effort and the cost will be lo to no cost to the Veteran.

**c. El Paso County Veterans Advisory Board Chair update - Alexis McCray. Aldina Hajder briefed for Alexis.**

- i. On February 23<sup>rd</sup> MG Greer will be honored to recognize Black History month.
- ii. Pending a resolution at commissioner's court for VA Clinic Director Mike Amaral.
- iii. In March the Strategic plan will be presented to Commissioner's Court. Will present a revamp of the Veterans of the Year program, Expanded outreach for the VAB and the Veterans needs assessment
- iv. The Crisis intercept mapping will be at 9AM on February 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- v. They will be addressing Veteran Homelessness
- vi. There is a vacancy for District 4 for the VAB.

**d. El Paso Coalition for the Homeless update- Camille Castillo**

- i. HUD/ VASH vouchers are permanent and can move with the veteran.
- ii. 17 Have entered into the VTBRA+ program and 13 have exited. 4 are currently still housed.
- iii. Hope Jackson asked if 11 or 4 are housed in the program. Camille states only 4. This is the report from HMIS.
- iv. Lance Lehr asks if this is an input or an output issue with HMIS. Camille states that she is not sure where the City received the numbers. Only 4 Veterans are housed.
- v. Hope Jackson asks how many Veterans on the master list should be a good candidate for the VTBRA+ program. Camille says 6-10 can be eligible right now.
- vi. Camille will reach out to Hope Jackson to talk about how to move forward and potentially develop flexibility in the contract.
- vii. Justin Rotti asked for clarification on the numbers. 4 are housed and 20 should be at any given time.
- viii. Paul Albright stated that the numbers came from Endeavors and 11 have graduated the program. DCHD will return to the VAAC and explain the numbers that they receive from the contractors.

**8. Discussion and Action: Semi Annual Update to Council – Monday, March 28, 2022.**

- a. The Council update will be at 9am and the brief will occur immediately after any mandatory city updates
- b. Bruce Beigel is concerned that they do not know if the VAAC Strategic plan has been included in the new City Strategic plan.
- c. Paul Albright explained that the new city plan has not been published however, the VAAC strategic plan was included in the strategic outcomes. The word

Veteran will not be in the strategic objectives because it must stay general in nature. The word Veteran cannot be used because it highlights one protected class over another. Veteran goals and objectives will still be accomplished.

d. The update will be moved to Monday, April 11, 2022.

**9. Discussion:** Subcommittee Chairs update on assigned focus areas.

**Bruce Biegel – Employment**

-Would like to highlight that hiring Veterans is good for other City employers, but concerned that the City has not solidified a veteran employment goal.

**Hope Jackson – Homelessness**

-States that unless the agreements are memorialized in writing, the update brief will remain the same

-Would like to clarify the bylaws to extend that 3 missed subcommittee meetings should be cause for dismissal. Lance Lehr will propose the change to the bylaws.

**Laura Butler – Marketing and Outreach**

Lance Lehr will help in the marketing and Outreach subcommittee.

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

- a. The City Website is being revamped to make it more user friendly and welcoming. On March 1<sup>st</sup> the site will start populating.
- b. There is a Veteran Employment Survey that has gone out to 6K businesses across the City. This will gauge employment strengths, and if a business has or is interested in a veteran employment incentive. In March there will be a Veteran Business Survey.
- c. Looking for Tri – War Era Veterans. If you know of any please contact Linda Mais at [epcountyhiddenheroes@gmail.com](mailto:epcountyhiddenheroes@gmail.com)

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

- a. FT. Bliss Expo scheduled for May 12-13 at the Centennial Club.
- b. VA Home Buying workshop February 23<sup>rd</sup> 12-2PM hosted by the USO.
- c. Service Members Veterans and Families winter resource center at the Veterans One stop Feb 24<sup>th</sup>, 11AM – 2PM
- d. Home Depot Repair program with Habitat for humanity. You may qualify for home repairs. Dave Driskell 915 525-2233
- e. YWCA has free Child care for Veterans up to one year.
- f. Flags Across America and DAV will conduct a clean-up effort on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 9AM - 4PM.

**12. Next VAAC Meeting:** March 18, 2022, at 10:00 AM MDT Virtual Meeting online.

**13. Adjourn.** 11:40 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 July AT 12:15PM BY Paul Albright  
PAUL ALBRIGHT.**