



Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee

March 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
Tephane Hopper
Justin Rotti
Hope Jackson
Bruce Biegel
Melissa Harcrow
Rodney Washington

Members Absent

None

Unfilled Positions

District 1

1. **Call to Order. Meeting started at 10:01AM**
2. **Roll Call. Quorum. 7 of 8**
3. **Discussion and Action to Approve Minutes of:** February 18, 2022. Approved
4. **Citizen Comment Period:** Individuals limited to 3 minutes; no specific action may be taken
 - a. Commissioner Ben Miranda of the Texas Military Preparedness Commission. The TMPC commissioners will hold their quarterly meeting on April 4th 9AM – 1PM at the El Paso Chamber. The Office of Congresswoman Escobar and Senator Blanco's office will be in attendance. The Chief Military Officer will provide an update to the Commissioners.
5. **El Paso VA Health Care Clinic Update Associate Director -Tracey Arensmann.**
 - a. Interim Director Mark Riello will be on board and spend 120 days unless a new Director is identified. The new facility is in the final design phase. Anticipate the approval will be in the August timeframe.

- b. Planning for transportation to WBAMC. Several vans from the DAV will provide hourly shuttle runs in the beginning of April. The VA is looking for those with CDL license to help drive.
- c. The VA has experienced a delay with the delivery of prosthetic devices, wheelchairs, scooters, braces, canes ect... Supply chain issues are causing delays. Please call 915 564-6100 ext 7961. If anyone is experiencing issues they can reach out and receive an update on delivery.
- d. Question from Carl Dwyer- In reference to receiving Handicap placards- Many Veterans are having problems with disability forms being filled out incorrectly by providers. Tracey will bring this up at the practitioners meeting.
- e. Question from Bruce Biegel- When will the VA break ground on the new facility? Next year 2023 with a goal of having the first Veteran appointment in 2028. Trying to get it moved up to 2026.

6. El Paso County Veterans Assistance Program Manager – Carl Dwyer.

- a. Thank you for those that participated in the Crisis intercepting mapping. Next meeting is on June 15, 2022. Hosted by the County CIT at the County Sherriff Juvenile Conference room.
- b. Financial Assistance grant is still ongoing. Can provide assistance to veterans in need. Noticed a spike in eviction notices. June 14, 2022 is the last day to accept requests for assistance. Grant reopens on July 15th, 2022.
- c. Question from Hope Jackson- What is a good number to call? Call 915 875-8570. Benefit assistance press option 1. Financial assistance press option 2.
- d. Question from Lance Lehr- Has the information on the gap in service been pushed out on social media? Not yet but will be pushed out soon.

7. Community Update:

- a. El Paso County Veterans Advisory Board Chair update - Alexis McCray.
 - i. Thank to Ismael Lopez
 - ii. The Veterans Advisory Board will be presenting the Strategic plan on Monday at commissioners Court
 - iii. Resolution for Veterans retiring into the community on April 4th. Another Resolution for Mike Amaral on Monday April 11th.
 - iv. The Veteran of the Year billboard is up on HWY 54.
 - v. Please support the Flags Across America cleanup effort on April 23rd and 30th.
 - vi. The DAV has sent care packages to deported veterans
 - vii. Will host an El Paso county Woman's Veterans day brunch on Friday June 10th at Ascarate park. Alexis McCray is the POC.
 - viii. Question from Hope Jackson: Please provide cell phone number? 915 383-5180.
- b. El Paso Coalition for the Homeless update- Camille Castillo
 - i. Currently 77 Homeless Veterans, 53 Sheltered. 4 Veterans not yet confirmed. Working with the VA to receive confirmation.
 - ii. Focusing on if Veterans have access quick access to permanent housing. Previously took about 93 days now down to 53 days.
 - iii. Question from Lance Lehr: How many are housed? 53 Sheltered and 24 are unsheltered. Looking back 90 days - 51 have been housed.

- iv. Question from Rodney Washington: are the individuals housed looking for employment? The EPCH does not go into that level of detail. Focused on housing. Please reach out to the OTC or the VTLC or even the VA Emergency Shelter for men.
- v. Question from Hope Jackson: Of those housed how many are in the Veterans Permanent Supportive Housing program? Ben Miranda answered. 5 Veterans are housed into the program. 3 are pending.

8. Discussion and Action: Assign new Committee members to Subcommittees.

- a. Rodney Washington will be assigned to the Employment sub committee.

9. Discussion and Action: Elect a new subcommittee Chair for Marketing and Outreach.

- a. Rodney Washington assigned to the Marketing and Outreach Committee and further assigned as the Chair.

10. Discussion and Action: Amend VAAC Bylaws in Section 6.

- a. The By-Laws need to address Sub Committee attendance. Recommend after missing three subcommittee meetings a letter is written by the VAAC officers to inform Mayor and Council.
- b. Roberta Brito Assistant City Attorney stated that a vote of excused or unexcused is not necessary. The current provision is in conflict with the City Code. Adding the subcommittee requirement still conflicts with the code. The code does not allow any committee or board to request the removal of any member.
- c. Lance Lehr will go back and relook the bylaws to be in accordance with the City Code.
- d. Paul Albright presented a paragraph attempting to help clarify what could be written in the bylaws. This will be reviewed and brought up for discussion at the next scheduled meeting.

11. Discussion and Action: Semi Annual Update to Council – Monday, April 11, 2022.

- a. Update will be Monday April 11, 2022 at will be at Council chambers. Those that cannot be present will be on Microsoft teams. The Meeting takes about 30 minutes to an hour. Please report at 9AM.
- b. Bruce Biegel will meet to discuss how to get the rest of the employers in the City to hire Veterans and stress how the City can help message the importance of Veteran Hiring.
- c. Hope Jackson will schedule a subcommittee meeting to discuss Homelessness.
- d. Lance and Rodney will meet with Laura Cruz Acosta to discuss Marketing and Communications.
- e. Lance stated that the slides must be ready a week out for a briefing to city staff. The staff will provide feedback. Paul Albright stated that March 30th he will need the presentation in order to present it to the City Manager and Staff. April 1st will be the deadline for final slides which will be submitted to Mayor and Council for their review.
- f. Lance Lehr reminded everyone to think about funding needed for the VAAC focus areas. Do not ask for a specific amount. Ask for a program to be funded. The format will be the same as what has been done in the past.

12. Discussion: Subcommittee Chairs update on assigned focus areas.

Bruce Biegel – Employment

Hope Jackson – Homelessness

Tephania Hopper – Marketing and Outreach

13. Division of Veteran and Military Affairs Update.

- a. City is doing Goal team reporting which will include accomplishments with Veteran initiatives
- b. Our Community Salutes is a national program that recognizes High School Seniors who chose to enlist into the Armed Forces. The event will be held on May 19th at the Starlight Event center.
- c. Flags Across America cleanup will be supported by the City's Environmental Services Department
- d. CMO Attended the Association of Defense Communities Conference in order to explore opportunities to build Army partnerships that help build Military Installation resiliency.
- e. CMO met with HR Director to set up a meeting with Workforce Borderplex Solutions to help continue connecting transitioning service members to local City Businesses.

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

- a. Flags Across America Clean-up on April 23rd. Lance Lehr is working with the Sergeants Major Academy to assist.
- b. Fort Bliss expo has been moved from May to mid July.
- c. Carl Dwyer worked with Ft. Bliss Volunteer services to have the Clean-up event added to the Volunteer management information system.
- d. Hope Jackson wants to know when the state of homelessness briefing will occur. Abraham stated that an invite would be coming to the subcommittee. The quarterly update is scheduled for March 29th. Hope wants to know about the regularly scheduled meetings to prepare for the meeting. Abraham stated there is no regularly scheduled meetings although extensive planning is ongoing. The homelessness subcommittee will be invited to hear what will be presented to city council.
- e. Rodney Washington 2nd Annual March to success for Veterans and their family members. Rodney stated there are many opportunities for employment for Veterans and their families.
- f. Armed Services YMCA flea market Saturday March 19th.
- g. Endeavors 4th Annual Veterans Mental Health summit. Thursday May 4th.
- h. Steven A Cohen Veteran Life Skills. Ongoing. It's a partnership with the United way.
- i. Free Couples retreat on March 26th 9AM-4PM at the Veterans One Stop.
- j. Budget basic class Military Peer Network El Paso County Veterans Assistance Office and SGM Byrd. Contact Jonathon Bohannon for more information
- k. Vietnam Veterans Day Veteran Forum will be on March 26th all day
- l. Disabled American Veterans federal legislative update on April 8th 12-2PM
- m. Armed forces day parade on May 21st. Application deadline April 25th.

15. Next VAAC Meeting: April 15, 2022, at 10:00 AM MDT Virtual Meeting online.

16. Adjourn. 11:30AM

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 Committee 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.**