



Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee

April 11, 2016 – 11:00 am
300 N. Campbell – CITY 1
Council Chambers

MINUTES

Committee Members Present

Joe Fierro
Siria Rocha
David Nevarez
Bill Sparks
Tommy Loyd
Lynn Westbrook
Michael Flores
Daisy Ramos

Members Not Present

Brian Kennedy

Staff and others present

Verónica R. Soto, AICP, Director
Don Minton, Legal Department
Raul Escobedo, Sun Metro
Yolie Cedillo, CD Secretary

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call & Discussion and Action on Committee absences
The committee votes to excuse Brian Kennedy
4. Citizen Comment Period (individuals limited to 3 minutes; no specific action may be taken)
None
5. Discussion and Action to approve minutes of February 1 and February 18, 2016
The committee votes to approve the minutes. Motion passes unanimously.
6. Update: Transportation Issues for Veterans – Sun Metro follow up
Raul Escobedo provides details on the 6 month pilot program that city council approved to begin on June 1, 2016. The program will run for approximately 6 months before becoming permanent as Sun Metro needs final approval from the FTA. Information will be provided to non-profit agencies who may help identify homeless veterans that qualify for free transportation or for reduced fare. A bus pass will be issued to participants that will be linked to the referring agency.

7. Discussion and Action: Identification of Housing Issues for Veterans and Possible Recommendations to address housing Issues for Veterans
Bill Sparks proposes to meet with the Housing Finance Corporation to see if they can offer solutions to address the housing needs. The Housing Authority already offers HUD VASH coupons. Homeless shelters that veterans are referred to are outside the city limits and one is a shelter for sex offenders which is not adequate for female veterans. He suggests that veterans be allowed to stay in hotels within the city but the VA has strict guidelines that must be followed when housing veterans.
Daisy Ramos adds that transitional housing will no longer exist due to budget constraints.
Motion made by Tommy Loyd and seconded by David Nevarez for the housing sub-committee to meet with the Housing Authority and the Housing Finance Corporation for further discussion.
Motion made by Joe Fierro and seconded by Siria Rocha to expand the housing sub-committee as Lynn Westbrook would like to be included in those discussions.
8. Discussion and Action: Identification of Employment Issues for Veterans
A. City of El Paso information on: Number of Veterans Employed by City and Hiring Policy for Veterans
HR informed Ms. Soto that the number of veterans employed by the city is approximately 907 which averages to about 15% and adds that when an applicant identifies himself as a veteran they are issued extra points.
A policy letter from the Texas Veterans commission is provided that reflects their hiring policies in regards to veterans.
Tommy Loyd states that most military jobs correlate to civilian jobs. At what point is the certification that HR requires actually needed. Bill Sparks adds that Dennis Rodriguez from VECI is working to improve barriers.
Siria Rocha comments that while employed with the county there were not many veteran applicants and requests some feedback on how many veterans actually apply for city jobs.
9. Discussion: Discussion on creation of a Department of Veterans Affairs
The item is tabled for discussion at a later date as the item requires some research.
10. Discussion: Committee members report on upcoming Veteran events in the community
The Old Headstand located on Dyer will accept donations of ramen noodles, clothes and irons. They would also like volunteers to wash and iron the donated clothing.
11. Adjourn
Meeting adjourned at 12:23 p.m.

Chair

Vice Chair

Date

Date