



## Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee

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May 21, 2021 – 10:00 AM  
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  
Tephania Hopper  
Bruce Biegel  
Laura Butler  
Don Parrott

#### Members Absent

Justin Rotti  
Hope Jackson  
Reginald Daniel

#### Unfilled Positions

District 8

1. **Call to Order** at 10:00AM MDT
2. **Roll Call.** 5 of 9. Quorum
3. **Discussion and Action to Approve Minutes of April 16, 2021.** Minutes Approved unanimously.
4. **Citizen Comment Period:** Individuals limited to 3 minutes; no specific action may be taken.
  - a. Dave Garcia Benefits Protection - 187 Disabled American Veterans (DAV). On Jan 29, 2020, 3 chapters joined for protection of benefits. The DAV currently has 3600 members representing 47K Disabled Veterans across the community in all aspects of causes. On July 9 1-2 PM: updated legislative presentation. Presentation will discuss legislative benefits and advocate for all VSOs. If anyone wants to attend meeting, Bruce Biegel will provide details.
5. **El Paso VA Health Care Clinic Update:** Mike Amaral, Director.
  - a. The VA replacement clinic should be completed within 4 years or sooner.
  - b. Northeast clinic will open June 14 for ribbon cutting (June 7 to see patients). Question from Bruce – Will the Ceremony be open to the public? Answer: Unknown at this time, waiting for guidance from DVA.

- c. Offering COVID vaccine. There is plenty of it, and can be administered to caregivers and spouses of veterans if registered. Question from Lance Lehr – An Executive order for providing Reserve and Guard forces vaccinations was recently published. Is the EPVA providing vaccines to NG and Reserves? Answer: Not sure. If Beaumont is vaccinating Mike will reach out and see. However, all are eligible for VA care when not on active duty.
- 6. El Paso County Veterans Assistance Program Manager – Carl Dwyer.**
- a. Funds have been awarded for Veteran assistance from the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) for 2022. Applications for financial assistance will be awarded starting July 1, 2021. Current funds will be exhausted on June 15<sup>th</sup>. Applications for the new grant will be accepted starting June 15, but not be awarded until July 1. Question from Bruce – How much was the award for the TVC grant? Answer: \$300K. Last year was the first-year funds were carved out to bring full time manager for the program, and now carving out further funds for a case manager. For 2022, \$200k is going to assistance. Providing needed case management rather than paying utilities and not treating the financial root problems.
  - b. VA is looking at herbicide claims and can assist with evidence gathering. We can help expedite claims to VA.
  - c. Homelessness: several Veterans in community are concerned about population, how we can collaborate with homeless subcommittee. Volunteers want to help to get numbers down, and County wants to help with come to action. Don will reach out to Carl and talk.
  - d. On June 2, 2021, Phase 3 of Veterans Crisis Suicide Training. This is a 3 hours Substance Abuse Mental Health Association (SAMHSA) training.
  - e. EP County to work in the Veterans Assistance Office looking for VA work studies. Tony Brooks is the current VA work study. VA work study will be on the team for 6 months.
  - f. Only 10 TVC grant applications submitted for EP. If interested grant applications need to be in by October. Contact Bruce or Carl for assistance.
- 7. Receive an Update on the Veterans Permanent Supportive Housing Program. Ben Miranda**
- a. Program has two case managers and the wrap around services creates success.
  - b. 8 Veterans are currently housed (all are high risk, high need), and is two more than last month. Working hand in hand with GI Forum/VA/Endeavors; one Veteran in process to make 9 Veterans housed by end of June. Program is working with 4 property owners.
  - c. Clients are becoming less dependent on case managers, reaching daily goals, getting IDs etc.; 5 of 8 have stable jobs, and one has received a raise. 2 clients are going higher ed. All are registered for the American GI Forum, mental health services, pantry services and the Texas Veterans Network.
- 8. Community Update: Presentation: Combined Arms and the Texas Veterans Network – Ben Miranda.**
- a. TVN under Combined Arms is the first interconnected network in TX. Provides statewide and national resources for transitioning military members and the military / veteran community. TVN is comprised of 156 active organizations with 720+ resources. The Network covers about 80% of the state. The Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Veterans Commission fund TVN. Veterans enter through partner organizations. TVN is the bridge to needed services. All orgs have accountability component meaning they have 48 hours for an organization to connect with a Veteran in need. Veterans can take an

assessment that will connect them to resources based on needs categories. TVN was launched July 2020. Mia Garcia is the current Executive Director. TVN is comprised of regional managers. Ben Miranda is the Regional Manager covering West TX.

**Presentation: American GI Forum – Jose Orozco**

- b. National Veterans Outreach Program (NVOP) provides local community services to the military and Veteran community. Established in 1972 to provide hands on services to Veterans. American GI Forum provides services under the Department of the VA Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) for the last 6 years with Endeavors (Homeless population). GI Forum provides temporary hotel stays, and a rapid rehousing program. Case management is important and proven to work by investing time for prevention of recidivism. American GI Forum is working to attain functional zero and check every 90 days to meet guidelines.
  - c. Texas Workforce Commission Partnership (TWCP): employment program geared to spouses or other non-veteran employment barriers that are at risk for homeless. This program is for a Veteran spouse that is unemployed.
  - d. Texas Veterans Outreach Program (TVOP): for veterans that have employment barriers (disabled vets, homeless, ex-offenders, substance abuse or recently discharged within 48 months with dishonorable discharge).
  - e. The American GI Forum has its headquarters in San Antonio. There are five offices in TX.
- 9. Discussion and Action:** Semi Annual Brief to Council scheduled June 8, 2021.
- a. Brief to council: VAAC will have subcommittee meetings and build slides together.
  - b. Brief on June 29 to council. Motion and a Second. Motion passed unanimous
- 10. Discussion and Action:** Subcommittee Chairs update on assigned focus areas.
- Bruce Biegel – Employment: SHRM class to directors is scheduled for 8AM 24th of June during the directors meeting. Would like to see the class with slides.
- Hope Jackson – Homelessness: Meeting with Nicole. CFO agreeing to VTBRA initiative for 2022, included in budget, voted in Aug but open item. Would like to see budget.
- Lance Lehr – Marketing and Outreach: Conducted a useful meeting focused on the website/branding/signage. Further focus on LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram. Need to know how marketing and outreach should support program. Must produce the strategic plans with goals in a unifying document. Must produce document to show what needs to get out to the public. What, why and end result prior to June meeting. Everything must tie into marketing plan. Lance presented a motion to elect a new chair for marketing so Lance can be freed up. The nominee is Tephania Hopper. Motion and second. The Motion passes unanimous.
- 11. Discussion and Action:** Vote to approve the VAAC Bylaws.
- a. Simple Corrections made. Motion and a Second. By-Laws voted unanimously.
- 12. Division of Veteran and Military Affairs Update.**
- a. Our Community Salutes will be at 6PM May 21<sup>st</sup> which is a program recognizing all community seniors that are joining the Armed Forces. Ceremony will be broadcast on Facebook live and On CityTV.
  - b. City of El Paso recorded a Memorial Day message. City employees speaking as to what it means to them.

- c. Hired 2 more Bridge fellows - Anthony Dekaiser as Assist Director of Transportation, and Brian Lake as Parking Meter Supervisor for International Bridges.
  - d. June 12 – Senator Blanco is hosting Texas Women’s Veterans Day at the Old Glory Memorial. The memorial is still looking for funds to replace flagpole.
  - e. City of El Paso is hosting a business seminar: Help Grow Your Business (May 26 at 2PM).
  - f. Intergovernmental Support Agreements with Bliss should be completed in the next month, and finalizing a DEAAG for simpler access to WBAMC.
- 13. Announcements:** Limited to Veteran and Military Events pertinent to the El Paso Region.
- a. Bruce: Fort Bliss Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program is having the Expo July 13-15.
  - b. Laura: Onward to Opportunity (O2O) cohort announcement for June. Includes Python. Will share new flyers.
  - c. Virtual meetings continue, not announced yet, but likely will stop end of summer. Paul will contact for sub meetings
- 14. Next VAAC Meeting:** June 18, 2021 at 10:00 AM MDT Virtual Meeting online.
- 15. Adjourn.** 11:44AM MDT

**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 \_\_\_\_\_ DAY OF \_\_\_\_\_ AT \_\_\_\_\_ BY PAUL ALBRIGHT.**