



Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee

June 17, 2022 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
Bruce Biegel
Melissa Harcrow
Rodney Washington

Members Absent

Victor Casas
Justin Rotti

District 2 Vacant

1. **Call to Order. Meeting started at 10:01AM**
2. **Roll Call.** Quorum. 7 of 9
3. **Discussion and Action to Approve Minutes of:** May 20, 2022. Approved
4. **Citizen Comment Period:** Individuals limited to 3 minutes; no specific action may be taken. No citizen comments.
5. **El Paso VA Health Care Clinic Update Interim Director –Tracey L. Arensmann**
 - a. The new Executive Director Mr. Froy Garza started on June 6th.
 - b. There is progress with the new facility, preparing to put the solicitation for bids out and will send update by email to Paul and everyone. Yes, this is a design - build with one vendor, it will be unique. Need to bring over the lines and everything from Beaumont and loop. Permits and everything in place, progressing nicely.
6. **El Paso County Veterans Assistance Program Manager – Carl Dwyer.**
 - a. El Paso County – Thanks for all that participated and involved on this month's Women's veteran's recognition across the county and the city. Spotlights women veteran and how El Paso putting minds together can recognize veterans.
 - b. Providing financial assistance, currently in the closing of 2022 grant year, applications for financial hardships or assistance were submitted on Monday.
 - c. Have received from TVC award for fiscal year 2023, one of eleven counties in Texas.

- d. Next year grant changes: Limited Transportation and vehicle repair assistance will be provided for those that justify the vehicle is their primary mean of transportation to provide for their family, go to work, and medical care things. Concern that veterans are using reputable automobile repair companies.
- e. Veteran suicide, had quarterly meeting this past Wednesday, had a brief informative presentation from the Sheriff's office. Continue to try to grow initiative so that we can get after preventing, eliminating and eradicating veterans' suicide. Welcome anyone to join this team.
- f. Supporting VA veteran standout believe in September. Planning meeting this afternoon at 3:00 pm at the veterans one stop.
- g. Currently one of the top two veteran county service officers running grant, with modifications being made, no doubt will be number one next year with TVC, when it comes down to what is being done.
- h. New Facebook page El Paso County Veterans Assistance Office with lots of information. Drive for Telehealth and looking to close the digital device for veteran issue free tables in order to attend their medical appointments virtually and for the claim slot to attend BBA virtually and appeal cases.
- i. Pact Act passed by the house and the senate yesterday, signed or will be signed by the President. Further information on Facebook page: claims, list of presumptive from the Gulf War, the burn pits, etc.
- j. Office open, need assistance call 915-875-8570.

7. Community Update:

- a. El Paso County Veterans Advisory Board Chair update - Alexis McCray.
 - i. County closed on Monday in celebration of Juneteenth.
 - ii. Had Brunch on Friday for Women's veteran's day at Ascarate Park. Next year, looking to expand and either be a weekend or an actual women veteran's day week. For those people that were wanting to participate and were not able to, vendors wanting to do vendor tables. Trying to get a formal banquet together in the evening done by commission stout. Saturday ceremony state and city does will remain in place. Would like women veteran's expo or women's conference. Those wanting to take part in the planning starting in the next two to three months, please call her at 915-383-5180.
 - iii. The County Veterans Advisory Board did not meet on Tuesday and rescheduled for upcoming Tuesday in person at Cuntly Courthouse, 3rd Floor, suite 301.
 - iv. Nominations open for the El Paso County Veteran of the Year. For further questions, contact Veterans Assistance Office at 915875-8570, extension 1. Will have judges board to identify what nominees actually have the time and can be committed to actually fulfilling this role.
- b. El Paso Coalition for the Homeless update- Camille Castillo – Not present. Email sent to Melissa Harcrow with updates.
 - i. On June 10th: 66 homeless veterans, 22 unsheltered veterans, 44 sheltered veterans.
 - ii. Past 90 days: 46 veterans exited to permanent housing.

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

- a. September/October briefing need to focus on moving forward from where we are at, to getting after the things we really want to do in the future and taking a look at strategic plan and see where needed to be plug in.

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

- a. Bruce Biegel – Employment- Achieved most all goals that have been presented to the City. Currently working to share these with other employers in El Paso. Tentative plan that consists of five main parts
 - i. Leveraging the states - hiring vets, recognition award and digital sticker. Will ask state for more local engagement visibility. Will recommend representative to be local under TVC or TWC
 - ii. Attractive Vet through friendly businesses to the El Paso area - VAC should partner with Borderplex to assist in attracting veteran military spouse friendly from the employers. Partner with TX Veterans Commission, TWC and workforce solution to assist with veteran hiring, virtual or in person at different facilities.
 - iii. Training program for hiring managers – in person or virtually
 - iv. Public recognition by the mayor and/or City Council to employers that are being successful in the hiring and retention of veterans to military spouses. Can use the states hired veteran's recognition program as a benchmark done either cities' annual veterans' luncheon or city council meeting.
 - v. Ensure veterans' spouse are part of any outreach and veteran employment focus due to the rate of unemployment among military spouses.

Bruce, Laura and Rodney will talk about how the city can affect as part of the overall plan in the next meeting. Lance will work to get the mayor to approve for the luncheon and the city council meeting, council would be more powerful and second to get into the luncheon. Need to breakthrough to employers to understand that it is thinking they are going to leave in two, three years, it is the skills and abilities that they will bring to the business.

- b. Melissa Harcrow – Homelessness- the Subcommittee had a great meeting, Victor Casas attended and a quick rundown was given on mission and goals; the attendance to the Master list meeting. He should be attending next month. Jonathan will attend this month's meeting. Jonathan brought up the homelessness stand down and its one meeting a month. Rodney attends and Melissa will try to attend. Alexis McCray would like to schedule a roundtable with elected officials, head of agencies, trying to make our leaders aware of these hardships that are in place and slowing down our progress. Currently unaware of how many homeless veterans we have, not only VA qualified. Hand on VA's requirement, policies and procedures from 2017. Get together and fine tune these requirements and discuss How we can further make progress in our homelessness? Abraham Gutierrez, assistant director from Community and Development, would like to setup meeting with homelessness subcommittee, include Ms. McCray. Need to get consistency and clarification for the master list. CD would be able to facilitate virtual meeting. Meeting will be setup by CD, requested email from Ms. McCray, Melissa will attend. Jonathan, agrees great

meeting to include crisis intercept mapping, if there is a gap a flow chart could be given.

- c. Rodney Washington – Marketing and Outreach- Last month event, two weeks of 20+ employers to include Microsoft, Oracle, OHS, Park and Wildlife and several top-rated employers state, local and international. They did showcases trying to help us connect people in El Paso area to include West Texas with new job opportunities. Had over 1,300 people that participated. Way to get these events out there to the local community so that we can have more people to attend. There were people at job fairs attended to include the Women's veteran's day on Saturday and a lot of people were not aware of the veteran's committees. How to make the community aware. Not sure if can be done on Facebook or Instagram. Lance agrees there has to be advertising beyond our website or Facebook, the city will do this for us. Mr. Albright has requested funding for advertising. Subcommittee needs to concentrate on how to get the word out, with lowest cost and the most return of investment that we can get. Best role and how do we team up with people that want to support: Borderplex, County, City? How do we pull a team together? Bruce suggested the City in 5 done by the city, maybe a 30 second to have the VAC speak a week before the set meeting. Jonathan, regarding the job/career portion and transitioning, VA has started a sponsorship program for transition service members that will help with the transition of service members and their families. Not available in El Paso yet, only Dallas or Austin. Sun City Bliss has been the way that been advertising. Rodney contact city to get 32 second on City on 5. Carl Dwyer thank everyone for what you are doing and take care of yourself, family as you continue to do this work that you do. Lance shared "I work for my family but I volunteer for others"

10. Division of Veteran and Military Affairs Update. – no updates.

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

- a. Rodney – Sunday, Dads Day Out Ernie's Show and Shine Car show at Bassett Center Mall from 12:00 pm to 6:00 pm. TX Veterans committee will be there. July 13th, American Legion having virtual job fair for veterans transitioning service members and military spouses from 9 am to 2 pm.
- b. Jonathan – Standout meeting on 9565 Diana Dr. at 3:00 pm.
- c. Laura – no announcements.
- d. Bruce – July 19th – Expo, training day for job seekers. Centennial military alliance wants a class and at end of training HR experts and TBC to assist on peoples resumes. July 20th – CST skills program is presented, air stream learning how to climb up those big wind mills safely, HBI for construction or Phoenix Trucking how to drive a truck. Computer classes available for finishing service members first and vacant seats available to veterans, allowed by Fort Bliss. TWC and Borderplex have the dollars to assist these veterans with classes. July 20th is also Industry day, there will be someone out to assist military and veterans on questions in what industry to pursue. Evening, meet and greet. July 21st – Hiring Fair from 9 am to 2 pm at the Centennial, anyone that can get into Fort Bliss is allowed to attend the hiring fair and register. Would like to have 11b to bring up anything else that is not on the agenda.
- e. Melissa – Team RWB (Red, White and Blue) part of this organization. Tomorrow evening at Rubiks Arcade will have a social from 7 pm to 11 pm. Get to know

more about the Team. Main mission is to encourage and enrich each other's lives, host parts of other organization events and community events.

- f. Lance - Ms. Brito, we will not do any discussion that we are not supposed to. Anything for next agenda or open forum is what Bruce was trying to. Ms. Brito - Issues cannot be discussed if not on agenda. Nickole – next VAC meeting place discussion and action for future agenda items. Will talk to Paul about setting on agenda. Brito – that would work.
- g. Bruce – discuss moving the date for meetings on Friday, add to next meeting agenda.

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

13. Adjourn. 11:19AM

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.