



## Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee

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August 15, 2016 – 11:00 am  
300 N. Campbell – CITY 1  
Council Chambers

### MINUTES

#### Members Present

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

#### Members Absent

Brian Kennedy  
Tommy Loyd

#### City Staff Present

Don Minton, Attorney Legal Dept  
Verónica R. Soto, AICP, Director  
Fernando Valdez, Research & Management Asst  
Raul Escobedo, Asst Director, Sun Metro  
Yolie Cedillo, Secretary

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 11:00 a.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Roll Call & Discussion and Action on Committee absences

Absent: Brian Kennedy and Tommy Loyd

4. Citizen Comment Period (individuals limited to 3 minutes; no specific action may be taken)

Aldina Rosales comments how disappointed she is that the transportation issue has not been resolved and feels city leadership is not taking the veteran community seriously. Some veterans are affected by the lack of transportation and it is a service the community truly needs.

5. Discussion and Action to approve minutes of June 6, 2016

Correction on a name in item 10 of the June 6 agenda: Daisy Romero should read Daisy Ramos. Minutes are approved after noted correction.

6. Update: Transportation Issues for Veterans – Sun Metro follow up

Raul Escobedo: The VAAC approved the item in March but did not provide direction until April. Sun Metro contacted the VA (Veterans' Administration) so they could approve requests for transportation or select agencies to work with but the VA is a federal agency that is not authorized to make those types of decisions. Sun Metro drew up an agreement for the agencies that will participate. It is under review by the legal

department. Sun Metro hopes to implement the program by September 1 or October 1. Sun Metro has advertised in the Ft. Bliss newspaper and run a few tv ads but will depend on the agencies to do most of the outreach. Passes, tokens and ID's are ready to be distributed to the participating agencies .

7. Discussion and Action: Identification of Housing Issues for Veterans and Possible Recommendations to address housing Issues for Veterans

Camille Castillo discloses survey results from the 2016 Mayor's Challenge meeting where they identify gaps in services for veterans according to homeless veterans and providers. Lack of dental services was reported so \$20,000 was granted to the Opportunity Center to provide dental benefits for the vets residing there. Housing for sexual offenders was discussed. Because of the restrictions placed on offenders the locations where they can reside are limited.

American GI Forum was awarded 3 million to end homelessness and the Homeless Coalition was asked to start the initiative. When a veteran comes into the system their needs are immediately identified and a plan is drawn up. There are some barriers that still need work but we will continue to move forward to combat homelessness.

Michael Flores: Top 3 issues identified in 2015 were housing for sex offenders, childcare and legal assistance. As a result of the working group formed after the challenge last year, childcare and legal services are now available. The responses on this years survey will tell us where/how services will be provided next year.

Bill Sparks: After dealing with the worst cases where veterans need assistance I am concerned that preventing homelessness doesn't seem to be a target issue. How would we deal with that?

Camille Castillo: Prevention dollars are an ineligible activity with these grants and when they run out most people turn to the County General Assistance. Case managers need to address the reason why the person is homeless at the beginning of the assessment for each individual.

Joe Fierro: After visiting the homeless campground site in Las Cruces I would like to know if anyone has considered something similar in El Paso and if possible could it be privatized?

Don Minton will research.

8. Discussion: Committee members report on upcoming Veterans events in the community

- 8/17 Emergence Health Network Grand Opening of El Paso Veterans One-Stop Center at 9565 Diana
- 8/21 Homerun for the Homeless
- 8/21 Job Fair at the Marriott sponsored by Borderplex Workforce Solutions
- 8/23 Job Fair at Judson F. Williams Convention Center sponsored by Southwest University
- 8/23 Veterans Business Conference at the Centennial Club
- 8/25 ACS (Army Community Services) Hiring Fair 9:00-1:00 p.m. at the Centennial Club in Ft. Bliss
- 8/25 Veterans Breakfast 4201 Skyline 8:00 a.m.(Last Thursday of every month)
- 8/27 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Women's Symposium at UTEP - Start time: 8:00 a.m.
- 8/27 Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Family Carnival & Movie at Southwest University Ball Park 6:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.
- 8/28 Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Parade downtown at 10:00 a.m.
- 8/28 Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Lunch Recognition - County Coliseum 1:00-7:00 p.m.
- 8/29 Closing Ceremonies for Welcome Home Veterans events at the Chihuahuas Baseball Game (Game starts at 7:05 p.m.)
- 9/21 Industry Hiring Fair 9:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. at the Marriott Hotel
- 11/17 Veterans Day Gala 7:00 p.m. at Centennial Business and Conference Center

In closing: Mr. Nevarez asks the members of the Transportation and Housing sub-committees to begin working on the quarterly report due to city council.

9. Adjourn

Motion made by Mr. Sparks and seconded by Ms. Rocha to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned at 12:00