



VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

222 W. Hospitality Ln., 3rd Floor, San Bernardino, CA 92415-0470

Minutes of the Meeting January 22, 2024, 3:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE –Members: Ralph Duarte (Board Liaison), Jeff Allen, Jim Frost, Paul Marsh, Terry Porter, Michael Rector, James Willingham, and recording Secretary Johnna Yuhas were present. Kelly Maxwell, Octavio Sanchez, and George Valenzuela were absent. Guest(s): Rachel Hay

CALL TO ORDER – The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Those present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

REVIEW MINUTES OF LAST MEETING – Minutes from the meeting held on September 25, 2023, were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes with the correction that Jeff Allen was in attendance. The motion passed unanimously.

DEPARTMENT UPDATE – Ralph Duarte provided an update.

- Ralph Duarte is the Director of the San Bernardino County Department of Veterans Affairs, effective November 18, 2023. He provided background on himself, including his military career and his history working for Riverside County Veterans Services.
- The department is working on creating a Clinical Therapist II position that will assist with Veterans Treatment Court. This position is scheduled to go to the Board of Supervisors on February 6, 2024.
- An MOU between the San Bernardino County Veterans Affairs Department and the Sheriff's Department has come up for review and it is being viewed as an opportunity to connect with the community on another level. Ralph will be attending the unclaimed veteran remains ceremony at Riverside National Cemetery on Thursday, January 25 which is scheduled from 8 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

FROM THE MEMBERS

James Willingham – Assisted with the annual dinner for Goldstar Mothers at the Elks Lodge.

Jim Frost – Has been participating in the unclaimed veteran remains services for the last 12-13 years. Will be participating in "Run for the Wall" in May. He is also a part of an outreach team that is going to be meeting with Gold Star families and families of missing veterans.

Terry Porter – Has been working to get a regular group of veterans together to meet for coffee every Friday at 9 a.m. It is a place for veterans to exchange stories and touch base. Terry says that he refers everyone to the county, and they always come back with positive things to say. The Veteran ID cards are also popular with the veterans that he knows, and the card is accepted at the commissary and store on March Air Force Base.

Michael Rector – Nothing to report.

Paul Marsh – Paul asks about expungements at job resource fairs and their effectiveness with the veteran population in particular. Is there a way to create a record of the successes? The Department utilizes the Veterans Legal Institute to assist veterans with expungements, as well as other legal services, and we could provide the number that are successful in getting their records expunged but whether or not that results in gainful employment is to be determined.

Jeff Allen – Thanks Paul Marsh for his question, and understands the valuable information it could provide, but cautions there could be privacy concerns. There have been notices sent regarding a change to the VA life insurance policy and the offering of Term Life Insurance. Ralph would have to do some research, but his understanding is that the term life is optional.

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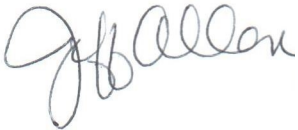
DATE/TIME/LOCATION OF NEXT MEETINGS

Monday, March 25, at 3:00 p.m. in the SB County VA conference room and via Zoom.

Monday, May 20, at 3:00 p.m. in the SB County VA conference room and via Zoom.

ADJOURNMENT - Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Allen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "J" and "A".

Jeff Allen
Chair