



## VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

222 W. Hospitality Ln., 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, San Bernardino, CA 92415-0470

### Minutes of the Meeting Cisco WebEx March 29, 2021, 3:00 p.m.

**ATTENDANCE** –Members Frank Guevara (Board Liaison), James Willingham, Jim Frost, Kelly Maxwell, Terry Porter, George Valenzuela, Danny Marquez and recording secretary Johnna Yuhas were present. Octavio Sanchez, Joseph Mena, and Ramona Evey were absent.

**CALL TO ORDER** – Meeting was called to order at 3:03 p.m.

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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING** – Minutes of the meeting held January 25, 2021 were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes as written. Motion passed unanimously.

**DEPARTMENT UPDATE** – Frank Guevara gave an overview of County VA events:

- Introduction of the new Veterans Affairs Executive Secretary Johnna Yuhas.
- The California Association of County Veteran Service Officers Annual Report has been released. Hard copies will be distributed once it is received by San Bernardino County Veterans Affairs. Highlights from the report are as follows:
  - San Bernardino County Veterans Affairs ranked highest in the state for total new cash awards in FY 19-20.
  - More than \$67 million in new monetary benefits was awarded to local veterans. This is \$20 million more than the previous year.
  - Riverside County was second with \$39 million awarded, followed by Los Angeles County with \$37 million.
- Teleworkers have started to reintegrate into the office. Employees are coming in to the office on every third day. This schedule will remain until San Bernardino County moves into the next tier.
  - All services have been able to be provided to veterans over the phone. As the restrictions ease, the lobby areas will be able to reopen with restrictions on capacity. It is important to develop a plan to offer face to face services both in person and over video to accommodate those who are uncomfortable over the phone or don't have access. Safety measures including Plexiglas barriers will remain to keep everyone safe.
- The covid vaccine is now available to county employees, and the names of those who requested to receive it have been submitted
- The final Veteran Service Officer (VSO) position has been released to be filled, and the hiring process has begun. A new VSO Trainee, Adrian Sosa, started today.

#### FROM THE MEMBERS

**Jim Frost** – The biggest challenge prior to covid was locating and bringing in veterans, now it is even harder. Outreach helped, but now that isn't an option. A discussion is had among members regarding options to get information into the hands of veterans. Frank Guevara and the department will look into options such as sending flyers with property tax notifications as well as other suggestions discussed and how to implement them.

**Kelly Maxwell** – Kelly is continuing research into small homes built with alternative building materials and design that would be affordable for veterans.

**Danny Marquez** – The Veterans Health and Wellness Fair was originally scheduled for April 10, 2021, however large gatherings are still not permitted. A vaccination clinic will be held in its place. Vaccines will be given based on current state guidelines, and veteran status will be confirmed through collaboration with county Veterans Affairs.

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**Terry Porter** – Reminds the Committee that March 29<sup>th</sup> is National Vietnam War Veterans Day, March 30<sup>th</sup> is the National Welcome Home day. A marine veteran from the Big Bear area recently passed away. However, approximately one year ago, Terry worked with his wife to give him the push needed to file a claim. The marine was awarded 75%, which will help his wife. Another gentleman applied a few years ago and had a bad experience. He was finally convinced to try again, and he received his award at the beginning of the month along with \$265 thousand in back pay. Being in the mountains makes access difficult, so outreach feels like one person at a time, but as long as people are getting help then good work is being done.

**George Valenzuela** – Currently working to set up outreach through Valley College and Chaffey College and their Veteran Resources Centers (VRC). There are people getting out of the military and they don't know where to turn. The VRC at Chaffey College was the first organization outside of the VA and the military that put George on the path to find access to benefits.

**Frank Guevara** – County Veterans Affairs has a "Welcome Home" brochure that goes over the benefits and provides a link to get more information. A PDF copy of the brochure will be provided to members of the Committee.

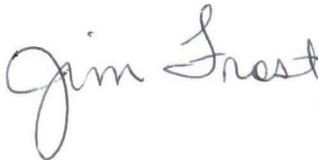
**Jim Frost** – The annual Run for the Wall trip has been cancelled again this year. There are a few spin-off groups that will still hold their events under a different name. Many of these groups take the same basic route. This will continue the run which recognizes those who may still be Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action, and to honor the memory of those Killed in Action from all wars, and to support military personnel all over the world.

**DATE/TIME/LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING**

The next VAC meeting is scheduled for Monday 5/17/21 at 3:00 p.m. via WebEx.

**ADJOURNMENT** - Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted



Jim Frost  
Vice Chair

/jy