



VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

Minutes of the Meeting January 27, 2025, 3:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE –Members: Matt Knox (Board Liaison), Demarius Carmichael (Deputy Director, San Bernardino County VA) Jeff Allen, Jim Frost, Paul Marsh, Michael Rector, James Willingham, and recording Secretary Johnna Yuhas were present. Terry Porter, Octavio Sanchez, and George Valenzuela were absent. Guests: Frank Forbes and Jimmy Lona

CALL TO ORDER – The meeting was called to order at 3:22 p.m.

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

REVIEW MINUTES OF LAST MEETING – Minutes from the meeting held on September 23, 2024, were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

DEPARTMENT UPDATE – Matt Knox introduced himself as the new Director of San Bernardino County Veterans Affairs, appointed September 24, 2024. Matt also introduced Demarius Carmichael as the new Deputy Director.

- The Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution recognizing November 4 – November 11 as Veterans' Week. This includes participation in Operation Green Light. Operation Green Light is a national resolution supported by the National Association of Counties and the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers to let veterans know that they are seen, appreciated and supported. The County Government Center, the VA office, and the district offices for all the Supervisors (it should be noted that Supervisor Baca's office is housed within the Government Center) participated by lighting the outside of the buildings green.
- The Department has attended the following events:
 - September 26 – Twenty-Nine Palms Expo
 - October 24 – Barstow Resource Fair
 - November 2 – Fourth District Supervisor Curt Hagman's Veterans Resource Fair
 - November 7 – Fifth District Supervisor Joe Baca's Veterans Resource Fair
 - November 9 – Apple Valley Resource Fair
 - December 12 – Veterans Diploma Project
 - January 7 – Presentation at the Yucaipa Rotary club
- The Department will be attending these upcoming events:
 - March 19 – Needles Resource Fair
 - March 21 – Speaking at the Military Officers Association of America dinner in Redlands
- The Department will be announcing availability in Barstow. The Department will be partnering with Barstow DAAS to provide VA services at their office on the Third Thursday of each month.
- The Clinical Therapist II position that the Department was looking to fill is being managed by the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) and is recommending that it be deleted from the department budget and DBH will continue to manage and keep moving forward with the Veterans Treatment Court.

FROM THE MEMBERS

Jeff Allen – There was a bill (pulled out of committee) that would raise the upper limit of property exemption for disabled veterans. The upper limit would be raised to approximately \$830,000 and would cost \$145 million out of the budget. This would mean that not only would it assist veterans in keeping their housing, but it would give them additional income to spend within the community. Please follow up on this piece of legislation with your elected officials. Matt adds that there is another bill that is very similar (California Senate Bill 23) that will be getting introduced. Jeff's term ends at the end of the month and would like to thank the committee for a great 18 years.

Jim Frost – There is a local non-profit that provides necessary medical equipment to Veterans, The Sunny Ontiveros "Veterans Fund." They collect donations, monetary as well as new/lightly used medical equipment (ex. Walkers, wheelchairs, etc.). There are no restrictions, or cost, for items to be issued to the veterans. Would like to recommend that Jeff Allen and James Willingham (who's term also ends at the end of the month) transition to "At Large" members of the committee. This will be added to the March Agenda for the committee to vote on.

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James Willingham – Thanks the department for the Certificates of Recognition that were provided. The veterans who received them were appreciative. MyHealthyVet is going to be transitioning to a 2-factor sign on and this may upset some veterans since it may make the process more difficult. There is also the option of using ID.me that would allow veterans to log in easier.

Paul Marsh – Nothing to report.

Michael Rector – Nothing to report.

FROM THE FLOOR

Jimmy Lona – Mr. Lona introduces himself; he will be the Third District Board Appointed member. Mr. Lona was with the USMC for 14 years and is involved with many veteran outreach events/programs in the Big Bear Lake area as well as with various non-profits.

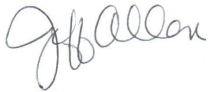
DATE/TIME/LOCATION OF NEXT MEETINGS

Monday, March 24, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. in the Veterans Affairs conference room and via Zoom.

Monday, May 19, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. in the Veterans Affairs conference room and via Zoom.

ADJOURNMENT - Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jeff Allen".

Jeff Allen
Chair