



VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

Minutes of the Meeting

May 19, 2025, 3:00 p.m.

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

CALL TO ORDER – The meeting was called to order at 3:02 p.m.

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

REVIEW MINUTES OF LAST MEETING – Minutes from the meeting held on March 24, 2025, were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously.

DEPARTMENT UPDATE – San Bernardino County Veterans Affairs Director, Matt Knox, provides an update.

- The department's previous director, Frank Guevara, passed away. Services will be held on May 28, 2025, at the Bakersfield National Cemetery.
- The state budget was revised, and Cal Vet had a reduction of \$17 million over what was initially proposed. The details on how that will be handled haven't been shared yet. There has been a proposal to increase the subvention money available, and with these cuts the increase may not occur. The budgeting is being tracked closely.
- AB 53, the bill that would exempt \$20,000 of military retirement or survivor benefits passed and is at the appropriation committee. SB 23 would exempt the full value of property taxes for disabled veterans. This bill will not be moving forward because an identical bill was proposed by a senator in San Diego and is deferring to that bill, SB 296, which passed senate revenue and tax committee and has gone to senate appropriations and was placed on suspense.
- The department is in the process of launching an advertising campaign to raise awareness among veterans that our services are available and free of charge.
- In July there will be a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed to improve data sharing among departments that can assist with providing services to the unhoused population. The department doesn't provide those services but is a touchpoint and may be able to assist more unhoused veterans in receiving assistance.
- On Fridays, in person Veterans Service Officer services will be by appointment only. Veterans can still receive services over the phone on Fridays. If the veterans prefer in person services, they are available on a walk-in basis Mon. – Thur. 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.
- Since the last meeting the department has attended the following events:
 - March 28 – Benefits presentation at Ft. Irwin
 - April 12 – Veterans Community Resource Fair
 - April 24 – Take Your Child to Work Day (County Employee Event)
- The department will be attending these upcoming events:
 - May 21 – Shelter Treatment Court in Fontana
 - May 28 – Supervisor Hagman's Hiring Fair and Expungement event in Ontario
 - June 7 – Arrowhead United Way in San Bernardino
 - June 25 – Veterans Treatment Court hearing in Rancho Cucamonga
 - June 29 – Working Dogs for Warriors in Fontana (rescheduled from May 17)

FROM THE MEMBERS

Vote to elect a Chair and Vice Chair – With no further nominations, a vote is taken for the chair position. Ralph Figueroa is unanimously elected as the Chair. A vote is taken for the Vice-Chair position, and Jimmy Lona is unanimously elected as the Vice-Chair.

ROUNDTABLE

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Ralph Figueroa— California State University San Bernardino (CSUSB) had their Veterans graduation ceremony on April 11 at the Elks lodge and was attended by local and state politicians. On April 24 Operation Town Hall, hosted by Congressman Pete Aguilar, was held in Redlands and moderated by Mr. Figueroa. CSUSB is working to identify younger student veterans and get them more involved with local veteran organizations to collaborate. On May 26 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. having veteran memorial celebration in Rialto Park Cemetery.

Jimmy Lona – Mr. Lona met with the University of Redlands and has a meeting with Barstow Community College coming up to establish relationships with their veterans' services offices and let the student veterans know what resources are available. Mr. Lona is working on developing relationships and partnerships with many local cities and colleges. On May 26 there will be a Memorial Day event at Veterans Park in the city of Big Bear Lake. Since the last meeting there was a Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Luncheon and pin presentation by Congressman Obernolte. Every quarter Bear Valley Hospital partners to provide a Community Care Lunch and Learn. A veteran guitar build event is coming up. There are some ongoing events: Shoestring City Ranch which has brought in more horses, American Patriot Music Project, and Operation Dirt Bike Freedom.

Clint Miller – Supervisor Hagman will be holding an open house on May 21, there will be some community resources available. Mr. Miller will also be attending the job fair event on May 28 at Ontario Airport. There will be several employers including Ontario Airport and the Ontario Airport vendors.

Michael Rector – Nothing to report.

Paul Marsh – Nothing to report.

Terry Porter – Nothing to report.

Jeff Allen - Suggests that the department may want to produce some smaller, poster size, versions of the billboards that are part of the marketing campaign to provide local government entities to share and post in their offices. Grand Terrace will be having a Memorial Day activity at the Veterans' Wall of Freedom. Committee members are reminded of the mandatory ethics training that needs to be completed every two years.

FROM THE FLOOR

Frank Forbes – Thanks the Veterans Affairs department for the great job they are doing.

DATE/TIME/LOCATION OF NEXT MEETINGS

Monday, July 28, 2025, at 3 p.m. in the Veterans Affairs conference room, and via Zoom.

Monday, September 29, 2025, at 3 p.m. in the Veterans Affairs conference room, and via Zoom.

ADJOURNMENT - Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Ralph Figueroa
Chair