



VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

Minutes of the Meeting January 26, 2026, 3:00 p.m.

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

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Those present recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Ralph Figueroa led the committee in a moment of silence for veteran suicide awareness.

REVIEW MINUTES OF LAST MEETING – Minutes from the meeting held on September 22, 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.

- Legislative Updates: SB 694 by Senator Archuleta is the claim shark bill. It wasn't passed by the legislature, but it should be voted on this month, and we will be tracking that.
- The Department is applying for a CalVet Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) grant in the amount of \$100,000 over a two-year period. The department currently receives this grant in the amount of \$80,000 which funds legal aid services. The current grant ends in June. The department would like to split the \$100,000 to continue to fund the legal services as well as pay for an annual Veterans Stand Down event similar to what was held in October. Other counties have used the funding to cover stand-down events so the department is hopeful that the grant will be awarded.
- The department continues to collaborate with the Homeless Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT), and we expect to have the database up and running by the first quarter of next year. This will allow the department to identify veterans that may need assistance not only from our department but from other departments throughout the county.
- The CalVet Subvention Program helps fund the department. This program is \$11 million that gets divided up amongst the County Veteran Service Offices throughout the state. Our department has once again received the largest share of funding in the state. The funding amounts are based on workload units, and our department completes nearly three to one to the next closest county.
- Department Staffing – The Veterans Service Officer (VSO) Vacancy that was mentioned at the last meeting has since been filled, which means the department has no vacant VSO positions. The department will be requesting a reclassification of one of the vacant Office Assistant positions for a Veterans Service Technician position. The department also request two new VSO positions which will focus on outreach efforts.

Since the last meeting the department has attended the following events:

- October 8 – Veteran Standdown and Shelter Court at the Rialto City Park
- November 3-5 – Deputy Director Demarius Carmichael attended the CalVet Leadership Summit
- November 8 – Claims Event hosted by Supervisor Hagman in Chino
- November 10 – Director, Matt Knox, attended the Arrowhead Regional Medical Center Veterans Day celebration
- January 21 – Demarius presented to the Workforce Development Board's Special Population Committee
- January 22 – Demarius participated in the Point in Time Count

The department will be attending these upcoming events:

- February 9 – 13 – Matt will be attending the California Association of Veteran Service Officers (CACVSO) Winter Conference
- February 17 – Presentation to the Chino Rotary Club
- Out station office hours – The second Wednesday of every month at the Joshua Tree District Courthouse and the third Thursday of every month at the Barstow Department of Aging and Adult Services office.

Updates from the department Deputy Director – Demarius Carmichael

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- Since June 20, 2025, the department has assisted 100 plus veterans facing housing insecurity. The department continues to partner with Semper-Fi and America's Fund which are homeless prevention programs. The department recently began connecting with Nation of Patriots which works like the other programs; however, a veteran must be 50% service connected with a dependent. Nation of Patriots will also help with food and clothing rather than just rent or mortgage. Veterans will need to be referred by the department for Semper-Fi and America's fund but can contact Nation of Patriots directly.
- Liberty Lane will be doing a grand opening soon. The facility has 67 beds available for veterans and approximately 13 available for other low-income individuals/families. There may still be a few apartments available.
- The department is beginning to create a social media presence and now has accounts on X, Facebook and Instagram.
- Demarius attended the West Valley Continuum of Care Steering Committee on January 14th.
- There will be another Shelter Court event on February 18th.

FROM THE MEMBERS

Jim Lona – Attended the Point in Time count with the Mountain Homeless Coalition. There will be a "Fill the bus" event at Goodwins in Crestline of February 13th from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Local government officials have been invited to attend. The current challenge is to find a place to take the donations once the bus is filled. Ultimately the supplies will be distributed to the local American Legion and Rim Vets. Continue to attend the Big Bear City Council meetings to remind them about the services provided by the San Bernardino Veterans Affairs department. There is a "Lunch and Learn" event coming up at Bear Valley Community Hospital. Mountain Transit is working on a grant to try to get a bus that will be dedicated to veterans to get them down to Loma Linda once or twice a week.

Clint Miller – Supervisor Hagman has had several events since the last meeting. There have been a couple of job fairs throughout the Chino area and there is another one coming up on February 11th. The VFW in Rancho Cucamonga was heavily involved in Thanksgiving and Christmas activities. For Christmas, 40 families were assisted with food and gifts for approximately 70 children were distributed toys and gifts.

Ralph Figueroa – October 16-18 was selected as a senior fellow for Student Veterans in America Leadership Institute. Throughout the fall semester Ralph has been guest lecturing at Cal State San Bernardino for both undergrad and graduate level programs. On November 13th DAV Chapter 12 gave away over 250 turkeys to veterans and their families for Thanksgiving. Cal State San Bernardino has been working on a program for veterans in emerging tech industries and fields, and obtaining a quantum computer is looking promising. Attended the 18th Annual Student Veterans of America National Convention in Colorado Springs. Upcoming events that Ralph will be attending - January 27 from 3 p.m. – 5 p.m.: Student Veterans Listening Session with Congresswoman Sydney Kamlager-Dove with the Student Veterans Association at USC, January 30-31: Armed Services Arts Partnership Teaching Artist Training in Washington D.C., March 2-5: Student Veterans Association Washington Week in Washington DC, April 15-16: Defining the Future National Conference at Cal State San Bernardino (Registration: <https://www.definingthefuture.org/>), and April 22: CSUSB Veteran Graduate Mixer at Cal State San Bernardino. There are also some employment opportunities right now through the VA, they're looking for vocational rehabilitation counselors and VOC rehab specialists. These opportunities can be found at USAjobs.com

Discussion & Vote for Presentation by the Veteran Reintegration Support Program – The Veteran Reintegration Program would like to have time to present the committee with information on services that they provide to the veteran community. There is a motion to allow the organization to provide a 10-minute presentation at the next meeting, it is seconded and passed unanimously with no abstention.

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DATE/TIME/LOCATION OF NEXT MEETINGS

Monday, May 18, 2026, at 3 p.m. in the Veterans Affairs conference room, and via Zoom.

Monday, July 27, 2026, at 3 p.m. in the Veterans Affairs conference room, and via Zoom.

ADJOURNMENT - Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Figueroa', written in a cursive style.

Ralph Figueroa
Chair