



VETERANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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

Minutes of the Meeting March 23, 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, Paul Marsh, Clint Miller, Terry Porter, and recording Secretary Johnna Yuhas were present. Michael Rector and James Willingham were absent. Guest Frank Forbes was in attendance via Zoom and Guest Jeremy Ristow attended in person.

CALL TO ORDER – The meeting was called to order at 3:03 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.

PRESENTATION

Presentation provided by Jeremy Ristow regarding the program he is establishing: Veteran Reintegration Support Program (VRSP). Mr. Ristow is seeking support and guidance from the committee. Presentation materials are available upon request.

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 was signed into law last month by Governor Newsom and will take effect on January 1, 2027. SB 1407 is being tracked. This bill will remove the \$20,000 limit on income tax exclusion for military retirement pay and survivor benefits. AB 2022 would exempt 100% of the value of principal residents for a 100% disabled veteran or their surviving spouse. AB 2203 aims to expand priority registration to veterans and their dependents who are using their education benefits.
- The department has applied for a CalVet Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) grant in the amount of \$100,000 over a two-year period and is hoping for a response soon.
- Department Staffing - The department is currently fully staffed with all Veterans Service Officer (VSO) positions. The only vacancy is for an office assistant that is being held for reclassification to a Veterans Service Technician (VST). These positions have been approved for accreditation by CalVet. The department is requesting two new VSO positions for Fiscal Year 26/27, with those positions focusing on outreach.

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

- February 9-13 – Matt Knox attended the CACVSO winter conference in Sacramento
- February 17 – Matt Knox spoke at the Chino Rotary Club.
- February 18 – The department attended Shelter Court in Rialto
- March 5 – Attended the homeless Summit

The department will be attending these upcoming events:

- April 23 – Take your Child to Work Day
- 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

- There are some upcoming groundbreaking and ground openings. On March 25 US Vets is opening a supportive housing facility on E Street in San Bernardino. Liberty Lane will be having their grand opening on April 1.
- The department is continuing to work on a resource guide that will be provided to veterans. This guide will have information on various services and resources that may be available to them.
- The department is also continuing to work with CalVet to get approval to share data with other county departments through the Homeless Multi-Disciplinary Team. Sharing this data would open doors to resources that may not have been previously known.

Minutes of the Meeting

Monday, March 23, 2026

Page 2

FROM THE MEMBERS

Paul Marsh – Nothing to Report

Jim Lona – On January 28, attended a lunch and learn at Bear Valley Community Hospital. Mountain Transit provided a presentation to close to 50 people in attendance. On February 5, Jim spoke with Deputy Sandoval to provide contact information for Veterans Affairs in case any contact is made with veterans in need, especially with the upcoming events. On February 6, he attended a mountain homeless coalition meeting. On February 11, Jim participated in the Big Bear City Council meeting. On February 13, Jim attended a Fill the Bus event at Goodwin's Market in Crestline. February 23, Jim began to collaborate with Mountains Community Hospital regarding the community care network. On February 27, Mountain Transit asked for letters of support for a new veteran specific initiative, and several were able to be obtained. March 9 began collaborative talks with the ex-commodore of the Marine Corps Leage in the rim area to discuss how more vets can be reached.

Clint Miller – One of our largest job fairs of the year is coming up on April 15 and will be held at the Ontario Airport. March 5 in Chino Hills American Legion Post 299 held a resource fair. There were 20-22 resources available with about 150 attendees. The event was also a ribbon cutting for the newly renovated post.

Ralph Figueroa – At the end of January traveled to DC for Armed Services Arts Partnership. On February 20, participated in the Waterworld event at Cal State San Bernardino which was a Water Industry Career Expo. February 21 Ralph attended the Bob Hope 100 Year Gala and met some members of the LA County Veterans Advisory Committee (VAC). March 2-4 attended for Student Veterans of America Washington Week and sat in on 15 meetings on Capital Hill. On March 27 at Cal Poly Pomona will be attending and speaking at the Everyday is Veterans Day Event. Boots On Ground Alliance (BOGA) will be holding a Welcome Back Vietnam Veterans Day on March 28. Cal State San Bernardino will be holding "Defining the Future National Conference" April 15-16, and Ralph will be hosting the event. The Redlands Veteran Housing Project is being held on April 1. CSUSB is holding its Grad Slam Competition on April 8, and their Veteran Grad Mixer on April 22.

Roundtable - Jim Frost applauds the enthusiasm that has been shown in the VAC lately. Jim would like to start a campaign to bring a memorial wall back to the Inland Empire. Jim and his wife are looking to get a group of interested individuals and organizations to start the process of bringing one of the three walls back again. It will most likely be expensive so finding sponsors and organizations to support the effort will be necessary. Terry Porter agrees with Jim and recognizes the renewed effort going into the committee and would also like to see a wall return.

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 4:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Ralph Figueroa
Chair