

**CITY OF LONG BEACH
VETERANS AFFAIRS
COMMISSION MINUTES**

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 2018
HEALTH DEPARTMENT MAIN BUILDING
2525 GRAND AVENUE, ROOM 204, 5:00 PM**

Gustavo Orozco, Chair
Juanita Doplemore, Vice Chair
Ryan Antes, Commissioner
Sylvia Contreras, Commissioner
Ricky Fernandez, Commissioner



Carlos Gonzalez, Commissioner
Mike Shaknovich, Commissioner
Josh Smith, Commissioner
Kiniko Willingham, Commissioner

FINISHED AGENDA & DRAFT MINUTES

1. ROLL CALL

Commissioners Ryan Antes, Ricky Fernandez, Josh Smith, Kiniko Willingham

Present: and Gustavo Orozco

Commissioners Sylvia Contreras, Carlos Gonzalez, Mike Shaknovich and

Excused: Juanita Doplemore

2. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Orozco called the meeting to order at 5:04 p.m.

- 3. 18-031VA** Recommendation to approve minutes for the Veterans Affairs
Commission meeting on March 14, 2018.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Antes, seconded by
Commissioner Smith, to approve recommendation. The motion
carried by the following vote:**

Yes: 5 - Ryan Antes, Ricky Fernandez, Josh Smith, Kiniko
Willingham and Gustavo Orozco

Excused: 4 - Sylvia Contreras, Carlos Gonzalez, Mike Shaknovich and
Juanita Doplemore

4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public were present.

REGULAR AGENDA

5. GUEST SPEAKER

The guest speaker cancelled.

6. 18-032VA Recommendation to discuss economic development *ad hoc* subcommittee report - Commissioners Fernandez and Doplemore

The subcommittee did not meet. Commissioner Fernandez looks forward to organizing a mixer to bring Veterans and potential employers together and continues to build relationships with small business owners in Orange County and Long Beach.

7. 18-033VA Recommendation to discuss under-represented groups *ad hoc* subcommittee report - Commissioners Willingham and Smith

The subcommittee reported on its meeting and activities. May is Mental Health Awareness month; mental health is an important Veterans' issue. Commissioner Smith provided a link to a Veterans' suicide awareness video, produced by the VA, and now posted on the Commission's Facebook group page. The subcommittee plans to focus initially on the LGBTQ community. The Department of Defense does not keep specific statistics on the number of LGBTQ Veteran suicides, but it is generally known that they are at higher risk. Long Beach City College will hold its annual Walk of Remembrance on observance of Memorial Day on May 24. LBCC needs 22 pairs of soldiers' boots for their display representing the average number of Veteran suicides per day. LGBTQ Veterans will be commemorated in some way within the display. The subcommittee plans to reach out to the Long Beach Municipal Band about furthering awareness of Veterans mental health issues at its "Salute to the Military" themed concert this summer.

8. 18-034VA Recommendation to discuss information, resources and social support *ad hoc* subcommittee report - Commissioners Shakhovich and Ryan

This subcommittee did not meet.

9. 18-035VA Recommendation to discuss awareness and recognition *ad hoc* subcommittee report - Commissioners Orozco and Contreras

This subcommittee met with Vice Mayor Richardson to discuss the Commission's role in any future Veterans' memorials or commemorations in Houghton Park. The subcommittee may assist with research on what currently exists in Long Beach and in other, nearby cities, developing a plan and identifying who the stakeholders are, including Parks and Rec., and a process for collaboration among stakeholders.

10. 18-036VA Recommendation to discuss Strategic Plan - Ginger Lee

Commission staff Ginger Lee, DHHS Collective Impact and Operations Bureau Manager, and Gina Overholt, Commission Coordinator, facilitated a presentation and discussion on the steps involved in developing a strategic plan. The strategic plan essentially answers the question: what may the City do to serve and support Veterans over the next two to three years? The strategic plan lays out specific recommendations that serve as a blueprint for taking action. Accordingly, these recommendations are supported by data and thoroughly vetted.

The Commission has already identified four core goals or strategic priorities: Veterans economic development; under-represented groups; information, resources and social support and awareness and recognition. The focus now is on developing a data-gathering plan. What data needs to be collected? Where do we access data that already exists? What data can the Commission collect and how? Without a consultant to assist with research and focus groups, Commissioners will need to be creative and strategic and bring to the table their own knowledge, experience and observations. Commissioners' relationships with both large and small local Veterans-related groups and Veterans Service Organizations will be important.

Possible sources for existing data include the VA Long Beach and the City's Multi Service Center (MSC). What data does the VA collect and how may the Commission access that data? MSC collects data on the homeless population in Long Beach and this data includes Veteran, LGBTQ, age, and ethnicity data points. The Commission will also consider whether non-paid versions of online resources like Survey Monkey may be used to conduct surveys with stakeholder groups. A draft table of contents for a strategic plan will help to frame the discussion on data gathering and other steps involved in developing the plan at the next meeting.

11. SPECIAL RECOGNITION

This item was tabled.

12. CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Orozco reported on the success of the first panel co-hosted by the Commission and US VETS and held on May 5. At least 40 people attended the panel discussion on Veterans education and employment; roughly half of the attendees were Veterans in US VETS programs. The Commission may consider hosting more panels on a semi-annual basis. Orozco also encouraged the subcommittees to continue their important work via email and telephone, especially when they are not able to meet in-person.

The chair also reported on his meeting with Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Director Kelly Colopy. Colopy is interested in meeting on a quarterly basis with the chairs of the various Commissions that fall under DHHS. In this initial meeting, Colopy reviewed Commission communications protocol. Commissions communicate with the Mayor and Council members via Commission (City) staff who report to the City Manager's Office. The Mayor and Council members, in turn, communicate with Commission staff via the City Manager's office. The DHHS Director needs to be apprised of any meetings between Commissioners or Commission and Council members.

Colopy also advised the Awareness and Recognition subcommittee to meet with Parks, Recreation and Marine Department (PRM) staff regarding discussion of any potential Veterans memorials and commemorations in PRM properties in Long Beach, including Houghton Park and the Belmont Veterans Memorial Pier. Finally, the possibility of meeting with individual Council members to obtain their input for the Veterans Affairs Commission Strategic Plan was discussed. The Commission has drafted a Council letter which asks for the opportunity to present the Annual Report as an agenda item at the Council meeting on July 3. Meetings with Council members would be scheduled thereafter.

13. STAFF REPORT

Staff is more regularly researching, vetting and posting items on the Commission's Facebook group page, which now has more than 130 followers.

14. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Orozco announced the 5K/10K Walk, Run, Roll fundraiser for US VETS, which will take place

on June 23, 2018. The event will be promoted on the Facebook group page.

15. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Another strategic planning session will be agendized for the next meeting on June 13, 2018.

16. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Gonzalez moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:21 p.m.