

Carlos Gonzalez, Chair
Mike Shaknovich, Vice Chair
Ryan Antes, Commissioner
Sylvia Contreras, Commissioner



Juanita Doplemore, Commissioner
Ricky Fernandez, Commissioner
Gustavo Orozco, Commissioner
Josh Smith, Commissioner
Kiniko Willingham, Commissioner

FINISHED AGENDA & MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Gonzalez called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Sylvia Contreras, Juanita Doplemore, Josh Smith, Mike

Present: Shaknovich and Carlos Gonzalez

Commissioners Ryan Antes and Gustavo Orozco

Excused:

Commissioners Ricky Fernandez and Kiniko Willingham

Absent:

17-029VA Recommendation to approve the minutes for Veterans Affairs
Commission meeting on October 11, 2017.

This item moved to the December meeting.

This VA-Agenda Item was withdrawn.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Randy Zarn, Executive Director of Partners of Parks, was in attendance. For more than 40 years, Partners of Parks, a non-profit organization, has raised funds to support various Parks, Recreation and Marine activities and facilities. Partners of Parks operates a Veterans memorial brick program at Bluff Park, where the Lone Sailor memorial resides. This memorial currently contains 500 bricks filled in with names and tributes to Veterans from the Navy, Coast Guard, Merchant Marines and

Marines. It just added 400 blank bricks to the Bluff Park site and became the fiscal agent for Rosie the Riveter Park, another space where Veterans may be recognized through a plaques program. Finally, Mr. Zarn indicated that he has reached out to the 9th district to explore the possibility of recognizing Veterans at the new Veterans Valor Plaza in Houghton Park.

REGULAR AGENDA

17-025VA Recommendation to discuss Tibor Rubin VAMC Women Veterans Program, Laurie Rudisill, RN, Acting Women Veterans Program Manager

Laurie Rudisill, Acting Women’s Program Director for the Tibor Rubin VAMC (also referred to as the Long Beach VA) and its community clinics in Anaheim, Laguna Hills, Santa Ana, Santa Fe Springs and the Villages at Cabrillo in Long Beach, presented to the Commission. As program director, Rudisill advocates for all VA programs for female Veterans. She explained that women Veterans experience barriers to care for various reasons. Many don’t know they are eligible for such care or they perceive the VA as male-dominated and don’t know the VA has easily accessible, gender-specific medical and mental health care.

An estimated 14,000 female Veterans reside within the Long Beach VA’s catchment area that encompasses South Los Angeles County and Orange County. Of this population, close to 5,000 women enroll in the VA, and 4,000 women Veterans avail themselves of VA medical services. A question and answer session followed Ms. Rudisill’s presentation.

This VA-Agenda Item was received and filed.

17-026VA Recommendation to discuss Veterans Day Celebration update - Juanita Doplemore and Gus Orozco

Commissioner Doplemore updated the Commission on the Veterans Day Parade and Celebration on November 11. Two new activities have been added: a community service project and a ribbon cutting for the new Veterans Valor Plaza in Houghton Park. The community service project is scheduled for Friday, November 10, and focuses on cleaning up the park and the new plaza.

Vice Mayor Rex Richardson (District 9) invited the Commission to attend the ribbon cutting, which will take place at 9 a.m. Richardson’s office asked the

Commission chair to speak briefly at the event and Chair Gonzalez agreed to speak. The Commission also discussed participating in the parade as a group or as individual Commissioners riding with their respective Council members.

Commissioner Doplemore made a motion for the Commission to participate in the parade as individuals and as a group, which was not seconded.

Commissioner Smith made a motion to make the ribbon cutting the official activity in which the Commission will participate. Commissioner Contreras seconded.

Yes: 5 - Sylvia Contreras, Juanita Doplemore, Josh Smith, Mike Shaknovich and Carlos Gonzalez

Excused: 2 - Ryan Antes and Gustavo Orozco

Absent: 2 - Ricky Fernandez and Kiniko Willingham

17-027VA Recommendation to discuss Marketing and Website (Social Media) Subcommittee Update - Ryan Antes and Mike Shaknovich

Commissioner Shaknovich reported that the logo and cover photo for the Facebook group page have been finalized. The group page as well as the Commission's landing page are now live. Our focus now is on engaging followers with content for the page and designing a look and feel for this content. In general, page content will align with the Commission's goals. He asked the Commissioners for their ideas and suggestions. He also proposed that the Commissioners introduce themselves through brief profiles on the page.

So far, Commission staffperson, Gina Overholt, has focused on promoting the Veterans Day Celebration on the group page. This resulted in a coordinated campaign by the City to promote the event on its Facebook page.

Commissioner Contreras inquired about the number of branches in the Armed Forces represented as five stars on the Commission's logo. On some Veterans Day Celebration-related websites and flyers, six or seven seals represent the military branches. Staff will research this item and report back to the Commission.

This VA-Agenda Item was received and filed.

17-028VA Recommendation to discuss Veterans Commission's Annual Report

Ms. Overholt indicated a draft of the report is not ready to share with the Commission. Overholt set the arbitrary deadline of November for the report based on the City's fiscal year end (September 30). Chair Gonzalez suggested that the report be drafted by January and due in February so that it will cover a full year of the Commission's activities, which commenced in January 2017.

This VA-Agenda Item was received and filed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Staff announced that the City Council approved a recommendation at last night's meeting (November 7) for the Commission to work with the City Manager's office and the Health Department to produce a Veterans Affairs Strategic Plan. Vice Mayor Rex Richardson's office put forth the recommendation and Council member Roberto Uranga co-sponsored it. The City Manager's office asked Commission staff to report on the costs, staffing impacts and timeline involved in completing the strategic plan. This item will be placed on the agenda for the December meeting so the Commission may discuss it in detail.

Staff noted that Commissioner Doplemore will send an email about a holiday potluck at the December meeting.

Commissioner Smith announced that tomorrow, November 9, is the Marine Corps' birthday. A cake cutting ceremony will take place at the VA Long Beach at noon in the learning auditorium, also known as "The Egg." Commissioner Smith announced that many restaurants will offer Veterans free meals on Veterans Day itself or on other days throughout the week. He will send a link for posting on the Facebook group page.

Commissioner Contreras announced that, Ivan J. Houston, author of *Black Warriors: the Buffalo Soldiers of World War II* and the military grand marshal for the Long Beach Veterans Day Parade, will be speaking the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at Cal State Dominguez Hills on November 9. She distributed flyers for this event.

Commissioner Shaknovich reminded the Commissioners to keep the Facebook group page in mind and to take photos of events like the cake cutting (as allowed) and the Buffalo Soldiers lecture whenever possible and to post photos or forward them to staff to post.

Chair Gonzalez reminded Commissioners to reach out to staff with agenda items well in advance of Commission meetings. Staff added that providing agenda items at least two weeks in advance is ideal to allow enough time for mailing and public posting.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Gonzalez moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:26 p.m.