



Minutes Tempe Veterans Commission April 10, 2024

Minutes of the TEMPE VETERANS COMMISSION held on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.,
via Microsoft Teams and Tempe Public

(MEMBERS) Present:

Juan R. Garcia
Beno Thomas, Chair
William D. Gorman
Melanie A. James, Secretary
José Moreno
Gwendolyn “Gwen” DeNeal
Jim Lange, Vice-Chair

(MEMBERS) Absent:

Aaron McBride
Ryan E. Swearingen
Phillip Kraft
Romaldo Gonzales

City Staff Present:

Abe McCann, Veteran Services Coordinator
Paul Bently, Deputy Human Services Director
Jorge Benavente, Admin Assistant

Public Appearances

There were no public appearances.

Guest Appearances

There were no guest appearances.

Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order

MOTION: Commissioner Garcia moved to START the meeting

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner James; Motion passed unanimously.

ABSENT: Aaron McBride, Ryan E. Swearingen, Phillip Kraft, Gwen DeNeal

Agenda Item 2 – Attendance

Commissioners Kraft, Swearingen, Gonzales, and McBride could not attend this meeting. Commissioner DeNeal arrived after the motion to start the meeting had passed.

Agenda Item 3 – Public Appearances

There were no public appearances.

Agenda Item 4 – Chair’s Remarks

Chairperson Thomas conveyed his gratitude and humility regarding his recent appointment as the Chair of the Commission, along with the appointments of Vice-Chair and Secretary. He emphasized his commitment to fostering proactive discussions and healthy exchanges of ideas, reiterating his belief that every member of the Commission possesses leadership qualities.

Agenda Item 5 – Review of March meeting minutes

MOTION: Motion to approve the minutes

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Chair Thomas

AYES: Vice-chair Lange, Commissioners Garcia, Gorman, James, and Moreno

ABSENT: Commissioners McBride, Swearingen, Kraft, and Gonzales

Agenda Item 6 – “Veteran Town Hall” Planning Assignments/Date Choice

After initial discussions and clarifications from VSC McCann, Commissioner Garcia proposed October 9 as a potential date for the 'Veteran Town Hall.' Commissioners Gorman and Moreno continued the discussion, adding crucial considerations regarding potential attendance and expert availability. The consensus was that holding the town hall over the weekend, specifically on October 12 from morning to afternoon, would be preferable as it would coincide with other veterans' organization meetings at ASU.

The Commission established a goal of 100 attendees and assigned specific responsibilities to each commissioner. These responsibilities included verifying the availability of the venue, organizing refreshments, contacting experts in toxic exposure, conducting media outreach, and communicating with interested organizations and individuals throughout the greater valley. Additionally, the Commission was committed to informing as many veterans as possible, recognizing the significant benefit this event would provide to the veteran community in Arizona.

Agenda Item 7 – Veteran Services Department Report out -Diablo/HVRP/Care 7

The "Community Salutes" event is scheduled for May 6 at the Tempe Center for the Arts, from 6 to 7 p.m.

The Tempe Veteran Service Office has successfully obtained a \$10,000 grant from the Tempe Diablos, specifically aimed at preventing, mitigating, and assisting veterans currently experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This grant has already helped several veterans, placing them in a better position today.

Similar efforts have been made through the use of the HVRP Grant. This initial grant, worth half a million dollars, has a scale and scope that allows for more significant assistance across the valley. Like the Diablos grant, the HVRP grant has been used to support services for veterans facing various challenges.

To qualify for these services, veterans must meet specific criteria and be willing to collaborate with the city's coordinators. Additionally, while utilizing these grants, the office has partnered with numerous organizations across the valley to enhance existing services and collaborate on various initiatives. The office has assisted over 100 veterans in the valley with multiple issues and continues to expand its outreach to other interested organizations.

These efforts could not have been achieved without the continued support from Veterans 5-9

Agenda Item 8 – Abe McCann -Announcement

In a bittersweet development, VSC McCann announced that this would be his last meeting as the city liaison for the Veterans Commission, as he is leaving the city to take on a position at the nonprofit HomeBase. He reaffirmed his commitment to the City of Tempe, the veterans community in Arizona, and the Commission. All ongoing projects will continue until the missions are completed, no men will be left behind.

Commission members expressed their deepest gratitude and admiration for VSC McCann.

Agenda Item 9 – Commission Member Updates/Announcements

Commissioner Garcia highlighted an upcoming First Command event in June, with the goal of fostering networks across the valley.

Agenda Item 10 – Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Moreno highlighted the organization 'Veterans Inspiring Patriotism' has a potential guest for upcoming meetings

Agenda Item 11 – Adjournment

MOTION: Commission Member James

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Dennis Forman

AYES: Commissioners Juan R. Garcia, Romaldo Gonzales, Beno Thomas, William D. Gorman, José Moreno, Gwendolyn “Gwen” DeNeal, Jim Lange

ABSENT: Aaron McBride, Ryan E. Swearingen, Phillip Kraft

The next meeting will be on May 8, 2024.

Minutes Prepared by: Jorge Benavente

Reviewed by: Abe McCann

Beno Thomas, Chair
Tempe Veteran Commission