

Minutes Tempe Veterans Commission June 12, 2024

Minutes of the TEMPE VETERANS COMMISSION held on Wednesday, June 12, 2024, at 6:00 PM. – 7:30 PM.,
via Microsoft Teams and Tempe Public

(MEMBERS) Present:

Juan Garcia
Romaldo Gonzales
Beno Thomas, Chair
William “Dennis” Gorman
Melanie James, Secretary
Jose Moreno
Jim Lange, Vice-chair
Ryan Swearingen
Phillip Kraft
Aaron McBride
Gwendolyn “Gwen” DeNeal

(MEMBERS) Absent:

City Staff Present:

Octavia Harris, Deputy CHHS Director

Public Appearances

There were no public appearances.

Guest Appearances

There were no guest appearances.

Agenda Item 1 – Call to Order

MOTION: Commissioner Juan Garcia moved to START the meeting

SECOND: The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moreno, and the motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 2 – Attendance

All members were in attendance.

Agenda Item 3 – Public Appearances

There were no public appearances.

Agenda Item 4 – Chair’s Remarks (7 min)

The Chair recognized Commissioner Gorman's previous efforts and advocacy for US personnel who were victims of Agent Orange and their families. Commissioner Gorman produced and distributed information on the history, effects, and usage of Agent Orange by the US armed forces. To increase awareness of this highly toxic herbicide, Commissioner Gorman believes that the city should officially recognize Agent Orange Awareness Day (August 10)

After an initial suggestion from the Chair, Vice-Chair Lange, along with Commissioners Garcia, Moreno, Gonzales, and Kraft, all expressed keen interest and willingness to participate in developing a subcommittee to streamline these efforts.

The Chair then proposed a vote to establish such a subcommittee.

MOTION: Commissioner Kraft moved to CREATE subcommittee for the Recognition of Agent Orange Awareness day

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner Garcia

AYES: the motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 5 – Review of March 2024 meeting minutes (5 min)

MOTION: The Commission moved to APPROVE the March 13, 2024 minutes

AYES: the motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 6 – “Veteran Town Hall” Planning Assignments/Date choice – (30 min)

*** occurred before approving agenda item 5*

Commissioner DeNeal asked the commission if proper documentation could be provided to her to demonstrate the commission's status as a public nonprofit committee to food providers. City Liaison Harris informed the Commission that, although the Commission is not a 501(c)(3) organization, its establishment by and direct association with the City of Tempe allows for other forms of appropriate documentation that the Commission can provide to businesses. **

-Commissioner Gorman informed the committee that the previously agreed-upon date of October 12 was already booked. However, the following Saturday, October 19th, was available. The commissioner opted to book it.

The Chair reviewed and discussed previous informal conversations about the Commission's October town hall meeting. The event aims to gather veterans from across the valley to share and disseminate information about the PACT Act.

{The PACT Act of 2022 is a congressional act allocating \$797 billion to enhance healthcare access and funding for veterans exposed to toxic substances during military service.}

-Commissioner Moreno has taken it upon himself to collaborate with VSO and promote the town hall through various channels, including the VFW

-Commissioner Garcia addressed the need for clarity regarding 'assistance.' He suggested that the commission should specify how the town hall will aid veterans. Garcia, along with Commissioners Gonzales and Gorman, discussed the benefits of offering direct help with filling out applications and handling official documentation.

-Vice Chair Lange noted that, through his contacts, he could arrange for physical advertisements to identify Post 2.

-The topic of speakers and a moderator was highlighted, Commissioner DeNeal volunteered as a potential moderator and Commissioner Gorman offered to contact experts on the issues for speakers.

- Regarding extending invitations to elected officials, the Commission believes veterans exposed to toxic chemicals should be the primary focus, and ultimate beneficiaries, of all agenda items created. While this is a public town hall and no one will be excluded from attending, the Commission will ensure that no particular guest is prioritized or privileged over the official agenda.

The chair noted that updates and additional details will be included in next month's agenda

Agenda Item 7 – Mobile Commission Meetings Discussion (10 min)

-The Chair, Commissioners DeNeal, McBride, and City Liaison Harris discussed official channels to promote future mobile meetings.

-Commissioner Gonzales highlighted the September 11 memorial walk at Tempe Town Lake as a potential venue for a mobile meeting. Since the day coincides with the second Wednesday of the month, the Chair saw it as an excellent opportunity to align official duties with outreach efforts.

- The Chair highlighted a "Vet the Vote" event scheduled for June 22nd, which led to an extensive discussion about the roles and responsibilities of commissioners to each other and to the Commission itself. City Liaison Harris emphasized that any instance where two or more Commission members attend an event could be considered official, necessitating public notification.

-Vice Chair Lange briefly discussed the proposal to recite the Pledge of Allegiance at every meeting. However, due to time constraints and the abrupt nature of the discussion, the decision was postponed to a later date.

MOTION: Commissioner Moreno to MAKE the Vet the Vote's June 22nd an official public appearance

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner McBride

AYES: Commissioners Gonzales, Gorman, James, Moreno, Swearingen, Kraft, McBride and DeNeal. Along with Chair Thomas and Vice-Chair Lange.

NYAS: Commissioner Garcia

MOTION: Commissioner Garcia to MAKE the September 11 Tempe Town Lake an official mobile meeting

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commissioner Gorman

AYES: the motion passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 8 –Commission Member Update/Announcements

-Commissioner Garcia Mentioned Military First will be hosting a mixer on June 18th in Tempe at Four Peaks. Moreover, a recently retired police officer, a veteran, has a voice interest in potentially joining the Commission and/or being a guest at the meetings

Agenda Item 9 – Future Agenda

-Subcommittee updates

-Pledge of Allegiance discussion

-Attendance roster(?)

Agenda Item 10 – Adjournment

MOTION: Commissioner DeNeal to MOTION Adjourn the meeting

SECOND: Motion Seconded by Commission McBride

AYES: Motion passed unanimously.

The next meeting will be on July 10, 2024.

Minutes Prepared by: Jorge Benavente

Reviewed by: Octavia Harris

Beno Thomas, Chair
Tempe Veteran Commission