City of Santa Fe

Agenda

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Veteran's Advisory Board
July 8, 2015
City Hall
200 Lincoln Avenue
Councilor's Conference Room
4:30pm to 5:30pm

1. Roll Call

2. Approval of Agenda

3. New Business

   a. Review of Resolution and Discussion of the Role of the Board – Chris Calvert
   b. Election of Vice-Chair – Chris Calvert
   c. City Clerk Forms – Terrie Rodriguez

4. Communications from Staff

5. Communications from Committee

6. Next Meeting and Adjourn

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VETERAN'S ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING: July 8, 2015

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MINUTES OF THE

CITY OF SANTA FE

VETERAN'S ADVISORY BOARD

July 8, 2015

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the City of Santa Fe Veteran's Advisory Board was called to order by Chris Calvert, Chair at 4:30 p.m. on this date in the City Councilors' Conference Room, 200n Lincoln Avenue, 1st Floor, City Hall, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

ROLL CALL

Roll call indicated the presence of a quorum as follows:

MEMBERS PRESENT:
Chris Calvert, Chair
Chris Abeyta
Kevin Dettelbach
Hank Hughes
Jim McCormick
Frank Pearce
Carmen M. Rodriguez
Gregory Scargall

MEMBERS ABSENT:
None

STAFF PRESENT:
Terrie Rodriguez, Youth and Family Services Division Director

OTHERS PRESENT:
Patricia Boies, Santa Fe County Community Services Department
Chuck Zobac, visitor
Jo Ann G. Valdez, Stenographer

INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Calvert thanked everyone for volunteering their time to serve on this Committee. He said given that this is the first meeting, he would like everyone to introduce themselves and give a brief explanation or reason as to why they wanted to serve on this Committee, and a brief history of their respective backgrounds.

He noted that he is the Chair of this Committee. He said he was a pilot during the Vietnam War and flew C141 aircrafts. He was a City Councilor for eight years and his last year was in 2014. He presently serves on the Veterans Helping Homeless Veterans Committee along with Committee Member, Hank Hughes. This Committee is a subcommittee of the New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness.

Chair Calvert said while he served on City Council, they were able to secure funding that is dedicated to veterans' services and this Committee will have access to the funding. He spoke about this later in the meeting.

Kevin Dettlebach is with Gateway Marketing. He served in the Vietnam War in the 60's. He is a member of the Vietnam Veterans of America Committee and the advisory group for the American Legion. He is also on the Committee of the Santa Fe Community College Foundation and works in the Resource Center of the Community College.

Gregory Scargall is a veteran Navy corpsman who served with the Marine Corps First Wing Division. He currently runs the Veterans' Resource Center at the Santa Fe Community College and serves on the New Mexico Council for the Navy League as the Vice President. They oversee all three of the nuclear-powered submarines; the USS Santa Fe; the USS New Mexico and the USS Albuquerque. He previously served on the Committee for the VFW and the American Legion. He said he is motivated to try and do all that we can to increase resources and awareness for our veterans and their family members here in Santa Fe. He said he is honored that the Mayor has taken the action he has most recently by expanding the fitness centers and offering free bus passes for veterans.

Jim McCormick is currently with Century Bank as the Senior Vice President and will be retiring on Friday. He was in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969 with the 1st Infantry Division. He said the reason he is here is that he wants to see if we can do more for the veterans and think outside of the box from what we have been doing because a lot of it is

not working. He is here to try and bring some new ideas and he could assist with obtaining funding.

Carmen M. Rodriguez said it is a pleasure to be here. She would like to tell the Mayor that we are happy to have this Committee.

Ms. Rodriguez acknowledged and complimented Gregory Scargall for the Santa Fe Community College for being ranked number one in the nation for a 2-year career technical institution.

Ms. Rodriguez said she represents a couple of things; she represents the businesses in the community and is with the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserves organization. ESGR is a volunteer organization that reports to Albuquerque on how they can support the employer and the guard and reserve individuals when they have to find a job or they are having problems with their employer, or the employer is having trouble with the employee. ESGR meets once a month on the first Thursday of the month. Ms. Rodriguez invited the Committee Members to attend a meeting and said she looks forward to working with all of the Committee Members.

Hank Hughes is the Executive Director of the New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness, which is a coalition of approximately 60 agencies that work with homeless people in various capacities in trying to get them into housing. Along with Mr. Calvert, he is on the Veterans Helping Homeless Veterans Committee, which is a group that was formed about four years ago to raise seed funding for groups around the state, primarily northern New Mexico, that work specifically with homeless veterans in trying to get them housed.

Mr. Hughes noted that the Coalition decided to be part of an initiative to try and end veteran homelessness in our state by the end of this year. They would like to get homeless veterans connected to housing within a month and their goal is to house about 800 veterans this year.

Frank Pearce is retired from Los Alamos National Laboratory after 30 years as a Senior Security Specialist and Emergency Manager. He also retired in 1981 from the Marine Corps as a Major and spent a lot of time working with the Navy. He served in Vietnam in the 80's as an advisor to a Vietnamese Army unit.

Mr. Pearce said from what he has personally experienced, it is not easy for a retired military veteran in Santa Fe to find out where the contacts are; and he thinks that

this Committee, as a group, can bring this forward and improve this situation. He noted that a lot of veterans do not know about the VA's office that is located here in Santa Fe.

Mr. Pearce mentioned that he just received a booklet on benefits/coverage for veterans (under Obama Care) but it is not very clear. He said there are a lot of things that this Committee can do to bring the experts in - to attend various meetings and explain the benefits and coverage to the veterans.

Chris Abeyta said he is "homegrown" and taught at Santa Fe Community College in the GED courses. He worked for the GED Committee of Directors' for the State of New Mexico for 10 years. He also served six years on the Committee of the Santa Fe Community College. While on the Committee, he focused his energy on getting a Veterans Resource Center at the Community College.

Mr. Abeyta served in Vietnam in the Navy and worked with electronic warfare. He said he goes to the Veterans Center, which is located by St. Michaels High School, and they really helped him. He also attends meetings at the Veterans Center and goes to the VA Hospital on a regular basis. When Mr. Abeyta applied for benefits, he did not receive a lot of benefits because he worked with classified jobs/information while in Vietnam and they do not count this.

Mr. Abeyta said he agreed with Mr. Pearce that we need to reach out a little more to veterans, not just Vietnam vets but the younger veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq as well. He said he has cried enough and wants to do something for veterans. He said it bothers him to hear that 20 veterans a day commit suicide. These are the people that we really need to reach out to.

Terrie Rodriguez is the Division Director for the Youth and Family Services Division and the staff liaison for this Committee but unfortunately, will not be the staff liaison for long because she will be retiring in 20 some days.

Ms. Rodriguez said she was happy to see that this Committee was created because this has been such an important initiative that staff saw coming forth when Chris Calvert was on City Council. She is pleased to see that funds have been allocated for veterans' services and this Committee to see the things they want to happen, which does not happen a lot with committees and Committees.

Ms. Rodriguez introduced Chuck Zobac noting that he contacted her today because he heard that the Mayor put together this Committee. He also has a radio show and Ms. Rodriguez asked him to tell the Committee about this.

Mr. Zobac said he is also on the Committee of the Vietnam Veterans of America and is also a member. He served in Vietnam in 1967 and 1968. He noted that he has had people on his talk show like Gregory Scargall. He started a show about two months ago that is called "Calling All Vets" and the show airs on Wednesdays from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. on KVSF-101.5. He has had people like the head of the VA Regional Office; the head of the VA Medical Center; representatives from the Veterans Center and the former Deputy Secretary (John Garcia) of the VA itself, on this show. Today's guest was Chuck Howell, President of the New Mexico Veterans Wellness and Healing Center in Angel Fire. Mr. Zobac is on the Committee of Directors for the New Mexico Veterans Wellness and Healing Center.

Mr. Zobac said he is not here because of the radio show but because he would like to see some positive things happen for veterans. He referred to a recent article that was in the *Albuquerque Journal* last Sunday that talked about the fact that the City of Las Cruces is very close to not having any homeless veterans. He noted that he tried contacting someone from Las Cruces but was not successful.

Mr. Zobac said he is 100% disabled mostly because of agent-orange cancer. He said he too would like to seriously make a difference for our younger veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. He personally does not want to see them go through what he has experienced, as a Vietnam vet. In his opinion, the most successful program the VA has put together was the Vietnam Veterans Drop-In Centers. He agreed that there are so many people who do not know where to go or where the resources are.

Chair Calvert said Mr. Zobac could be a great asset for this Committee in getting information out and publicizing things.

Mr. Zobac said he is interested in the vacancy on the Committee.

Terrie Rodriguez noted that there is a vacancy on the Committee and two people have been approached to serve on the Committee based on the different positions on the Committee. She informed Mr. Zobac that they need a letter of interest that will go to the Mayor and a resume. She thinks Mr. Zobac will be helpful to the Committee to report on the things that are going on throughout our community.

Mr. Zobac was invited to attend these monthly meetings whether or not he is appointed to the Committee.

Patricia Boies is with the Santa Fe County Community Services Department. She is the staff liaison for the County Health Policy and Planning Commission. She said the Commission, as well as other people at the County, have been interested in finding out more about what is available for veterans and what the gaps are. She noted that she has done her own research on what is available for vets by making phone calls, looking on-line and talking to people but it was so hard to get a "road map" on what is available and where. She said the veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq have to start from scratch because there is nowhere to go - and imagine how hard this is and adding on the diagnosis of PTSD, a brain injury and other things that make it difficult for veterans.

Ms. Boies said in the course of her research, she spoke to Bruce Brunson of the Department of Health and he has done something called "A Network of Care", which is a 1-place stop for where all the resources are. She said in talking with him, she found out that the Department of Health Behavioral Health Division is contracting with A Network of Care to do a portal here in the State for behavioral health services that could be broken down by counties and cities. The State will be paying for a behavioral health website.

Ms. Boies said substance abuse and mental health issues in the veteran population can be very much linked.

She mentioned that the Department of Veterans' Services will be doing a similar network of care specifically for veterans. They will be rolling out the "Veterans Portal" for the network of care. Ms. Boies thinks it is important for everybody on this Committee and all veterans to help inform on what should show up on that portal. It should include resources for benefits; for housing, etc. She offered to email Terrie Rodriguez the contact information and emails about this online service.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Dettelbach moved to approve the Agenda as published. Ms. Carmen M. Rodriquez seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Review of Resolution and Discussion of the Role of the Committee

(Copies of the Resolution were distributed in the Committee Members' packets.)

Chair Calvert asked if everybody had a chance to review the Resolution that authorized this Committee.

Ms. Carmen M. Rodriguez asked if they could make any editorial changes.

Chair Calvert said no, the Resolution has already been approved. He explained that things that are listed as things the Committee should work on are suggestions and does not mean that the Committee is limited to those things.

b. Election of Vice Chair

Chair Calvert said according the Resolution, he is supposed to appoint a Vice-Chair but he is not going to do this right away because he is going to ask for volunteers, and he thought the people should have a little time to see how the Committee is operating before they volunteer to do this. He noted that the Vice Chair will serve when the Chair is not available. He suggested that appointment of the Vice Chair be done at the next meeting.

c. City Clerk Forms

Ms. Rodriguez informed the Committee Members that they could park in the Convention Center Parking Garage and staff will validate the ticket.

Ms. Rodriguez asked the Committee Members to sign and send back the package that they received from the City Clerk's office. She noted that the Committee Members have been appointed in staggered terms, some for a two-year term and some for a one-year term. She asked the Committee to discuss the time that they want to meet; if they want to change the agenda; or if they want to have an executive committee, etc. She said the Committee should provide a report to the Governing Body on the progress that is being made. She noted that the City Clerk's office pays for a Stenographer to do minutes and these minutes are posted on-line on the City's website.

Chair Calvert said the Committee will be meeting once a month unless there is some extraordinary circumstance; however, they can meet more often if they have things to do or take care of.

He said in going back to Section 3 of the Resolution (*Duties and Responsibilities of the Committee*), he would like the Committee to discuss this. He said they do not want to compete with, or duplicate efforts of other organizations. He said one of the things we

are here to do is to inform and connect veterans with existing resources; access to information and how to access the information. However, this does not mean that the Committee cannot coordinate with these organizations and assist them in getting people to the resources/services. Possibly, the Committee can assist in filling the gaps in services; things like transportation, getting people to the VA for appointments, etc.

He referred to an article that was printed in the *USAA Magazine* noting that the article was about a veterans' organization in San Antonio. It states: "*Today the coalition has served more than 12,000 veterans and families by connecting them with local service providers*". He said this will probably be a key aspect that the Committee will be doing.

Chair Calvert distributed a handout on the "*Suggested Roles*" for the Committee-things that the Committee might work on. He said the first one he listed is housing because a lot of veterans need help, but they need to be in a stable situation before addressing the other problems. The remaining suggested roles are not listed in any particular order.

Chair Calvert said housing is one issue that the Committee could work with because the City is involved in helping people get housing vouchers that are provided by the Veterans Administration.

Mr. Hughes said this is right and they also have the Rapid Rehousing Rental Assistance through the VA and now through the City.

Mr. McCormick said he was not sure where Chair Calvert is going with this because these are already out there and he really does not see this Committee being this. He said he did not have time to sit here and talk about all of these (suggested roles). He thinks the Committee's picture has to be much bigger than these and the Committee needs to resolve some of the issues that are not being resolved. He would like to see the Committee come up with brand new ideas that will make something happen out of this group, and the Committee will make some kind of statement that the veterans will say that these guys really did something. He said, frankly, this is what Mr. Zobac's show is all about. He said he needs a clear mission and he wants to know what this group is going to do to fix the vet problems. For example, maybe the Committee can research what vacant buildings the City of Santa Fe has available to put a resource center - where there are free modern touch-screen computers that the veterans could use. The Committee could staff the resource center.

Mr. Dettelbach mentioned that there is a comprehensive website called e-benefits. He said he deals with veterans every day and a couple of things that he sees are: 1) it is a great idea to create pathways for veterans to resources 2) the wives of veterans have just as many problems as the veterans do. 3) In regards to jobs, we need sustainable programs and mentorships outside the circle of veterans. 3) The housing issue is extremely important. He was in agreement with Jim McCormick that the Committee needs to fix the low-hanging fruit, make it happen, and build on that to gain the confidence of the vets. The insecurity issue and barriers of the veterans out there is 100%.

Mr. Scargall said as he looks down this list, he checked off numbers 2, 9, 10 and 12 because he thinks these are all really strong areas to focus on. However, he also hears what these gentlemen are saying. He said there is frustration out there and we just came through the VA crisis last year. He thinks this Committee has a huge opportunity. He explained that the Resource Center is not out there to duplicate or replicate what anyone else is doing. They are there to advocate, identify and to build stronger bridges. He said the communication between the veterans' service organizations throughout the community is almost non-existent. Mr. Scargall said he knocks on doors all the time in trying to build that bridge but it is difficult to sustain it.

He said the Committee needs to have patience because there are a lot of issues out there and they are all important. He thinks that the Committee needs to sit down, prioritize the roles and be an "action committee" and get things done. The Committee can reach out to the veteran organizations and tell them about the problems.

Mr. Scargall mentioned that they tried to put in for a homeless veterans grant that is called the "Homeless Veteran Reintegration" program through the Department of Labor; however, they did not get the grant.

He said he saw that a city on the east coast took an initiative to say that they are tired of waiting on the "other guys", so they went door-to-door to assist their veterans and started to make a real difference in people's lives. He noted that there are over 16,000 veterans who live here in New Mexico but we don't see or know where they all are. He thinks that it is up to the Committee's leadership and minds to come together and make something happen that is going to help the veterans.

Mr. Pearce said communications is our biggest problem and a major factor. He noted that he reads the *New Mexican* every day and there are special sections once or twice a week that is devoted to animals and other subjects. He thinks the Committee

could look into whether there could be a section for veterans, at least once a week, to get the word out.

Mr. Dettelbach said there is also the Mayor's Newsletter. He said there are 16,000 veterans in Santa Fe County and 5600 veterans who own homes. There are also a number of veterans who own businesses. Mr. Dettelbach thinks the Committee needs to get the business community involved because the business community is the key to the future of Santa Fe, whether it is going to be veterans or otherwise. The businesses could get involved in having internship programs that are mentored and get the veterans into the workforce and get them out of their medical or education cycles.

Mr. McCormick suggested that a representative from the *New Mexican* be invited to the next meeting and possibly the Committee can get some public service announcements from them. If not, the Committee will need to spend some money to get some visibility out there that this Committee is active in helping the veterans.

Ms. Carmen M. Rodriguez said this is an excellent suggestion. She thinks that the *New Mexican* has to offer some free public service announcements to non-profit organizations.

Mr. Abeyta said knowledge is power and he thinks it is very critical to look at things that affect the local Hispanic veterans and families. He noted that his son-in-law is part of Que Suave Radio (8.10 AM) and many people listen to the program and it would be a good idea for the Committee to have a weekly program on this radio station.

Mr. Abeyta mentioned that he is involved with the Santa Fe Bandstand and he could make announcements there to inform the veterans.

Chair Calvert said social media is also important and the Committee needs to look at a spectrum of communications, in terms of how the Committee approaches this. He said he thinks he is hearing the same thing from everyone, and that is a lot of people do not know where to go or how to get started, so the Committee needs to pull together all the resources in an organized fashion, so that they can make sure that the information is correct and the Committee is as comprehensive as they can be. Then the Committee can look at how to get his out to the media.

Ms. Carmen M. Rodriguez said the Committee needs to pay attention to Section 3 of the Resolution (*Duties and Responsibilities*) and what it is saying, if they want to try and fulfill these. She said everyone has all kinds of information but people do not know

how to gather it and she is visualizing some kind of book that would include all the resource contact numbers that can be distributed.

Mr. McCormick said this is the age-old way of the government doing this and he thinks it has been done. He said this could be volumes and he is not sure this gets into the veterans' hands. In terms of the sustainable part of getting information out, Facebook would be great because you can do pops every day; therefore having a Facebook page would be essential for this Committee.

Mr. Zobac asked Chair Calvert if he has had any communications or references with the City of Albuquerque. He said the person that is in charge of the Veteran's liaison for the City of Albuquerque is a good friend of his. He offered to provide his contact information to the Committee. He said we don't need to build on something if they have already built it. He noted that suicide prevention is not listed on the Suggested Goals of the Committee and he thinks this is a tragedy among veterans.

Mr. Hughes said maybe the Committee needs to strengthen some sort of peer support system because those people who have trouble accessing services need someone personally to help them get through the system and the red-tape.

Chair Calvert said there is the information and then there is the media and how to get the information out to people. The Committee needs to look at who they are trying to serve, pull the information together and figure out how this information is sent out through the media.

Mr. Scargall said he is thinking about the two portals that are being worked out that Ms. Boies reported on, so there could be some redundancy there.

Mr. Scargall asked if there was a press release done when the City formed this Committee.

In response, Chair Calvert said he was trying to get the City Public Information Officer to attend this meeting to get more information out about the Committee. He thinks this is one of the things that the Committee can ask for - that the City assists in getting this information out.

Ms. Terrie Rodriguez added that she sent information to the Public Information Officer about the meeting.

Mr. Scargall mentioned that he spoke to the Mayor last Veterans' Day about some ideas that he had, and one of them was access for veterans to the fitness centers, and the other one was helping to complete the public corridor of getting veterans free bus passes. He also met with the Mayor last January and was thankful how receptive the Mayor was to the two ideas. The free bus passes for veterans was covered; however, the access to the fitness centers was not covered. He thanked the Mayor for getting the resolution through that authorizes the Parks and Recreation Department to establish a fee schedule for Santa Fe Veterans who use the City of Santa Fe recreation facilities but this has not been announced to the public. The fee schedule is comparable to the "senior citizen rate" with the exception for disabled veterans who would be allowed to use the recreation facilities free of charge. Mr. Scargall said they need to publicize this and have an event at the Genoveva Chavez Center maybe on a Saturday to get the word out, and possibly talk about the Committee. He thinks that the City of Santa Fe is the first city in the nation to extend that level access to veterans and that is huge.

Chair Calvert said this is included in the Suggested Roles under #12 (*Veteran publicity and recognition*).

Ms. Carmen M. Rodriguez noted that the Genoveva Chavez Center is going to be closed until September and this will give the Committee time to plan an event.

Mr. Dettelbach mentioned that the Community College is going to start an Auto-Tech Program starting in the fall. This will be "shovel-ready" jobs for veterans and there will be scholarships for books and tools. They are going to try to get sponsorships from Toyota and Ford.

Ms. Carmen M. Rodriguez said the Workforce Solutions has a program going on for veterans to get certified to be an 18-wheeler driver and they need to let the veterans know about this.

Mr. McCormick asked if the City had a van that the Board could have a wrap-around advertisement that would say "Veterans Resource Center" and make it mobile. They could park it at the homeless center and show that the City of Santa Fe is serious about getting the information to the veterans. The van could have touch-screen computers that could be donated that would assist veterans in getting a job, housing, a car, etc. It could be staffed with a real person that the veterans can communicate with and get assistance in obtaining services. Possibly, the Board can get corporate sponsors.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM STAFF

Terrie Rodriguez said housing is one of the biggest obstacle in this town and the City Housing Department is working on coming up with a housing initiative for special needs people, at the request of the Santa Fe Behavioral Health Alliance. There will be a meeting on Wednesday, July 15th from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Market Station office at the Railyard, 500 Market Station. All Committee Members were invited to attend.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM COMMITTEE

The Committee discussed the meeting dates for future meetings and there was consensus to continue meeting on the second Wednesday of the month at 4:30 p.m.

NEXT MEETING AND ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting is scheduled for August 12, 2015 at 4:30 p.m., possibly at the Market Station office at the Railyard on 500 Market Station, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Having no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Approved by:

_____

Chris Calvert, Chair

Respectfully submitted by:

Jo Ann G. Valdez, Stenographer