

Texas Veterans Commission Meeting Minutes

Special Meeting (FY 2010)
January 28, 2010

I. Call to order

Chair Rankin called to order the Special Meeting of the Texas Veterans Commission at 10:01 a.m. on January 28, 2010, in Room 170 of the Stephen F. Austin Building, 1700 N. Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas 78701.

The following Commissioners were present:

Karen S. Rankin, Chair
T.P. O'Mahoney, Vice-Chairman
Eliseo "Al" Cantu, Secretary
John B. McKinney, Member

Also present was James E. Nier, Executive Director.

Also present: See the attached list.

II. Approval of minutes from last meeting

The minutes of Second Quarterly Meeting held on December 8, 2009 were previously distributed to the Commissioners.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the Second Quarterly Meeting as presented.

MADE BY: Commissioner Cantu

SECONDED BY: Commissioner McKinney

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

III. Presentation by representatives of the Texas Lottery Commission

Melissa Villaseñor, Governmental Affairs Representative for the Texas Lottery Commission (TLC), opened the presentation with introductions of her colleagues, Kathy Pyka, Controller, and Robert Tirloni, Products Manager. Together they will provide the Commissioners with an overview and update on the Veterans Cash scratch-off ticket, current status on the Veterans Cash instant ticket, ticket distributions and subsequent

estimated timelines. In addition, Mrs. Pyka will provide current sales and revenue transfers.

Robert Tirloni, Products Manager for TLC, reported on the Veterans Cash scratch-off ticket. He reported that Veterans Cash sales started on Monday, November 9, two days before Veterans Day. The game has now been out for approximately 11 weeks and it is just under 69% sold. Mr. Tirloni stated there are over 18,000 packs of the Veterans Cash game currently at Texas Lottery retailer locations around the State; however, TLC no longer has any inventory of this game available for distribution.

The second veterans' lottery game, Veterans Winnings, was delivered to TLC warehouse last week. Veterans Winnings has cleared all internal tests and as of yesterday, January 27, TLC released the game for sale and distribution to those lottery retailers around the state who do not currently have the first veterans' game in stock.

Mr. Tirloni added that staff is working with the printing vendor on ticket artwork designs for the next two or three versions of the game. The proposed artwork will be sent to the Fund for Veterans' Assistance (FVA) advisory committee for review. The artwork should be delivered to the advisory committee within the next two weeks.

Kathy Pyka, Controller for the TLC, provided a report on Sales and Revenue Transfers for the Veterans' Cash Instant Ticket game. Cumulative sales of the Veterans' Cash game from the inception of the game on November 9, 2009 through Saturday, January 23, 2010 are \$11.2 million. The TLC provides a transfer of revenue to TVC on a monthly basis no later than the 15th of the month. The revenue transfer reflects the balance remaining from the sales of tickets, after the payment of prizes and the cost of the operation and administration of the lottery (12%).

To date, TLC has made two revenue transfers to TVC. The first transfer in the amount of \$1,023,096 was made on December 11, 2009 for sales from November 9, 2009 through November 30, 2009. The second transfer, in the amount of \$993,949, was made on January 11, 2010 for December sales. Cumulative revenue transfers to date are \$2,017,045.

Mr. Nier thanked TLC for their attendance and for their support.

IV. **Report, presentation and/or action regarding TVC Fund for Veterans' Assistance Grant**

David Nobles, Grant Coordinator for the FVA, reported that at the December 8, 2009, Commission meeting the TVC Commissioners approved a competitive process for awarding the initial grant(s) from the FVA. Pending commission approval, a grant or grants, totaling an estimated \$1,000,000 will be awarded to provide for the emergency financial needs of veterans and their families. Mr. Nobles then updated the commissioners on the application process. TVC received a total of eight letters of interest (LOI) and staff evaluated each LOI using objective criteria. At their January 19,

2010 meeting, the FVA advisory committee discussed LOI staff evaluation results and determined three organizations will receive an "invitation to apply" for grant funds. The invitations and grant applications were emailed January 20, 2010 and are due back by 5:00 p.m. on February 3, 2010. The FVA advisory committee will meet on February 10, 2010 to evaluate and score applications. Staff will then send grant application rankings and summary information to the Commissioners by February 12, 2010 and make a recommendation for award at the Special Meeting of the TVC on Friday, February 19, 2010.

V. **Report, presentation and/or action by representatives of the Advisory Committees**

Morgan Little, represented the Communication Advisory Committee and updated the Commissioners on the January 11, 2010 meeting. He reported on items discussed and the activities the committee is undertaking. The next meeting is scheduled for February 22, 2010 at 10:00 a.m.

Mike Olen reported on the meeting of the Employment and Training Advisory Committee held December 10, 2009 and thanked General Rankin for her attendance and her overview of the claims, education and employment programs of the Commission. He mentioned that Bill Wilson introduced Kevin Smith (Business Outreach Coordinator), who was hired in direct response to the committee's recommendation. Mr. Smith gave a brief description of his responsibilities. Mr. Smith will also replace Shawn Deabay as the TVC staff liaison. Mr. Olen gave an overview of REALifelines and made a suggestion that TVC look into an employer awards program. The next meeting of the committee will be March 25, 2010.

General Smith updated the Commissioners on the FVA Advisory Committee, stating the committee has met 17 times since its inception and the sub-committee on grant writing has met at least 6 additional times working on the grant application package. Special mention was made of the efforts of Roy Grona and Bob Cole. General Smith also noted the tremendous efforts of the grant writing subcommittee headed by Dr. Jennifer Cernoch. He outlined the structure of the FVA Advisory Committee and informed the Commission that a slate preparation panel will be formed to draw up a list of persons who can serve on the subcommittees. He concluded his report stating that the committee has started to move on the preparation of the second grant project and will continue to press this very key item until its completion. He commended every member of this committee and the TVC staff, stating the one common objective is to provide all the support we can to the many deserving veterans of this great State.

VI. **Tina Carnes, TVC General Counsel, reported on advisory committee new business.**

Tina Carnes, General Counsel, presented the new nomination of Colonel Donald Gentry to the Communications Advisory Commission. Commissioners accepted the nomination as presented.

MOTION: To accept new member as presented.

MADE BY: Commissioner Cantu
SECONDED BY: Commissioner O'Mahoney
ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Receipt and possible discussion of Staff Reports

Mr. Nier began his report pointing out the letter he received from Ms. Fowler on the extraordinary performance by our marketing team and the presentation to the Austin Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). The marketing team did an excellent job.

He also reported on the very successful Veterans' Summit and thanked the American Legion and the VFW for co-hosting our luncheon. He also thanked the Commissioners and staff for their attendance and all their hard work. He concluded his report with general information items.

A. Charles Buerschinger, Deputy Executive Director

Mr. Buerschinger reported on the progress of the Action Plan stating the update is only for the items that have changed.

B. Steven Wilkins, Information Resource Manager

Mr. Wilkins reported on the need to add grant tracking software and vets education system enhancements to the Strategic Plan. He reported that Information Resources is undergoing an internal audit and the Case Management System for Veterans Employment is on target for completion by March 31, 2010. Mr. Wilkins said that Texas Department of Information Resources is performing a network security assessment on the TVC website in February 2010, and that he is working on the technical requirements for the new website.

C. Bill Wilson, Director of Veterans Employment Services (VES)

Mr. Wilson opened his report congratulating everyone on a successful Summit and introduction of Regional Veterans Employment Representatives (RVERs). He continued reporting on performance and employment facts for the year 2009 from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), showing a record 4.2 million jobs were lost during 2009, national unemployment in December was 10%, Texas unemployment in December was 8.3% and the government's Job Openings and Labor Turnover survey showed there were nearly 6.4 unemployed workers for each available job. He told the Commissioners this data (these facts) presented have now begun to take their toll on our performance. With the lack of jobs available in the labor market, he doesn't expect things to improve in the area of performance. Mr. Wilson stated that VES has taken some steps to improve the quality of our services to increase the likelihood of success for veterans who receive our services.

Mr. Wilson added that action taken now will not truly be reflected in performance outcomes for another 9-12 months. He reported that our state funded initiative of outreach employers is already yielding some success. Since starting in November 2009, Kevin has 31 jobs from 14 employers who will hire veterans that use our services exclusively. Mr. Wilson concluded by stating that VES was taking steps in the right direction.

D. Jim Richman, Director of Claims Representation and Counseling

Mr. Richman began his report informing TVC of the retirement of a long time employee, Mr. Mike Mendoza. Mr. Mendoza was the office supervisor at the Audie Murphy VA Medical Center and has been with the agency for over 32 years. He continued his report stating that objectives are being met and that numerous briefings are taking place all across the state. Mr. Richman and Mr. Nier spoke to the Lone Star Chapter of Korean War Veterans and expressed to them the importance of representation in their claims and offered TVC assistance. He stated that the VA has finally developed a process for verification of participation in "Special Operations" incidents. He also mentioned that as discussed before, the VA has granted presumptive status to hairy cell leukemia, ischemic heart disease and Parkinson's disease as attributable to agent orange exposure, but they are still not processing those claims as central office has not provided instructions yet. He concluded his report by stating that claims pending in Houston are 30,664 and 20,270 in Waco, and appeals in Houston are 7,420 and 8,224 in Waco.

E. Connie Jacksits, Director of Veterans Education

Ms. Jacksits briefed the Commissioners on the current activities for the Veterans Education Division. She reported that Christopher Davis, a Program Specialist, is in the Reserves and has been called up to help with the Haitian relief efforts. His orders indicate that he could possibly be away for up to six months. She mentioned that in the Vets Ed action plan, all of the Internal Audit recommendations have been included in the Plan. Three items are being finalized and should be completed by the end of February. The only item that has not been addressed is the update to the Vets Ed database. Funds have been budgeted for this project and she is hopeful that this project will be worked into the TVC Information Resource Plan in the near future. She stated her concerns about the VA's backlog of education claims and their inability to field phone calls and e-mails. According to the VA's Monday Morning Workload report, the Muskogee Regional Processing Office currently has 51,635 pending education claims. Of these, 11,423 are Post-9/11 GI Bill claims. She concluded her report requesting approval to begin providing the Vets Ed reports quarterly rather than monthly and the Commissioners approved the request.

F. Irma Rodriguez, Chief Financial Officer

Ms. Rodriguez reported on the final report for appropriation year 2009 and the first quarter report of appropriation year 2010. She said that agency wide, for the first quarter of 2010 we spent 81.5% on salaries & wage and benefits. She discussed charging costs

to the FVA and to Central Administration. General Rankin urged the Commissioners to set the example and adhere to the travel policy. Ms. Rodriguez concluded by reporting that TVC received the calculation from Legislative Budget Board (LBB) and our 5% reduction is calculated to be \$712,573.50.

G. Duncan McGhee, Director of Marketing and Training

Mr. McGhee began his report with the TVC website overview. He discussed current status, recent challenges, technical and personnel updates and proposed Phase I "Go Live" date. He continued by reporting on outreach and links to media events. He discussed the tentative schedule for Town Hall events, press releases, PSAs and Benefit Fairs.

VIII. Agenda items for next meeting

Chair Rankin requested that Commissioners email agenda items for the next meeting to either herself or Jim Nier.

IX. Date and time of next meeting

A Special Meeting of the Texas Veterans Commission for FY 2010 was scheduled for 8:30 a.m. on Friday, February 19, 2010 in Room 170 at the Stephen F. Austin Building, Austin, Texas.

X. Public Comment

Morgan Little, Texas Committee for Employer Support of the Guard & Reserve, discussed his handout "ESGR by the Numbers".

XI. Commissioners' Closing Comments

None

XII. Adjournment

Chair Rankin adjourned the meeting at 12:06 p.m.

Minutes Approved by:



Karen S. Rankin, Chair



TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

Special Commission Meeting

Fiscal Year 2010

January 28, 2010

10:00 a.m.

Jimmy DeFoor

Taylor County VCSO and

Member, Fund for Veterans Assistance Advisory Committee

Matt Geske

District Director

Office of Representative Chris Turner

Jenee Margo Gonzales

Director, Senate Committee on

Veterans Affairs & Military Installations

Senator Leticia Van De Putte Office

Mark Kerssemakers

Region 3 – Regional Veterans Employment Representative

Texas Veterans Commission

Morgan Little

Employers Support of the Guard and Reserve

Legislative Affairs Chair

Coy Martin

Region 8 – Regional Veterans Employment Representative

Texas Veterans Commission

Kyle Mitchell

Governor's Advisor, Office of the Budget, Planning & Policy

Mike Olen

U.S. Army (Retired)

Past Director – Texas State Veterans Employment Program

Chair – Veterans Employment & Training Advisory Committee

Jim K. Palmer
Senior Policy Analyst
Veterans Communication Action Teams
Project Coordinator
Altarum Institute

Kathy Pyka
Controller
Texas Lottery Commission

General Thomas G. Smith
Chair, Fund for Veterans Assistance Advisory Committee

Robert Tirloni
Online Products Manager
Texas Lottery Commission

Ernest Torres
Region 1 – Regional Veterans Employment Representative
Texas Veterans Commission

Tim Vasquez
President, Veterans County Service Officer Association of Texas

Melissa Villasenor
Governmental Affairs Representative
Texas Lottery Commission

Ken Wallingford
Veterans Liaison, Texas Veterans Land Board

Greg White
REALifelines – VR & E
Texas Veterans Commission