

Texas Veterans Commission Meeting Minutes

Third Quarterly Meeting (FY 2010)
May 17, 2010

I. Call to order

Chair Rankin called to order the Third Quarterly Meeting of the Texas Veterans Commission at 8:30 a.m. on May 17, 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.

TVC Staff present:

Charles Buerschinger	Cruz Montemayor
Tina Carnes	David Nobles
Dianne Coy	Jim Richman
Shawn Deabay	Irma Rodriguez
Kathryn Hawkins	Freddy Ruiz
Connie Jacksits	Kevin Smith
Connie Lyssy	Lisa Waddell
Duncan McGhee	Bill Wilson
Alice Mehringer	

Also present: See the attached list.

Chair Rankin announced introductions of visitors and new employees.

Chair Rankin called on James Nier, Executive Director, to announce a special presentation to the Commission. Mr. Nier asked Fitness Challenge leader Alice Mehringer to present the Governor's Trophy for the 2010 Texas Roundup Governor's Fitness Initiative.

II. Approval of minutes from Special Meeting on February 19, 2010

The minutes of the Special Meeting held on February 19, 2010 were previously distributed to the Commissioners.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the Special Meeting as presented.

MADE BY: Secretary Cantu

SECONDED BY: Commissioner McKinney

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

III. Approval of minutes from Special Meeting on April 7, 2010

The minutes of the Special Meeting held on April 7, 2010 were previously distributed to the Commissioners.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the Special Meeting as presented.

MADE BY: Secretary Cantu

SECONDED BY: Commissioner McKinney

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Altarum VCAT Project Update

Chair Rankin asked Max Burke, Co-Project Director for the Veterans Community Action Teams (VCAT) to give an update on the Community Action Teams and the San Antonio Pilot Project. The concept of the project is to create a coordinated veterans system of care consisting of a network of service providers to ensure comprehensive care is given to veterans. The goal is to create a permanent organization in San Antonio and be a model for other cities, especially in the rural areas. Mr. Burke reported VCAT held a Veterans Leadership Forum in January 2010 in San Antonio at which there were over 100 provider participants. Mr. Burke attributes the success of the forum to the leadership of TVC along with Senator Van de Putte and Representative Corte. Strategic initiatives and 7 working groups were developed to address the priorities that have been identified.

Alliance for Veterans and Families is the name of the organization for the initiative in San Antonio which is chaired by Jim Cunningham. Mr. Burke expressed his appreciation for TVC's support.

V. Internal Audit on Information Resources Systems and Controls

Russell Gregorczyk, TVC Internal Auditor, presented the results and key recommendations noted during the internal audit of TVC's Information Resources Systems and Controls. Overall, the Information Resources (IR) Manager is doing a good

job but has no support staff. Mr. Gregorczyk recommended additional staffing. Typically an agency the size of TVC would employ 2 or 3 IR staff.

TVC has good backup and recovery of its IT systems in place, as well as security measures and procedures for security of automated information resources, including physical security. There were several areas noted where TVC needs improvement to meet all Department of Information Resources (DIR) requirements.

The Commissioners commended Steven Wilkins on the good job he is doing. Mr. Nier noted the audit information will be included in the Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR) workshops. Mr. Gregorczyk reported upcoming audit items include follow up from prior year audits, executive management, and the new grant fund.

MOTION: To approve the internal audit.

MADE BY: Commissioner Mc Kinney

SECONDED BY: Secretary Cantu

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Advisory Committee Reports

Communications Advisory Committee - Morgan Little, Member

Morgan Little provided an update on the March and April 2010 meetings. The committee is looking for a new member with military and public affairs experience. Mr. Little reported on items discussed and the activities the committee is undertaking, including the new TVC website. He also informed the Commissioners that the committee has decided to meet on a monthly basis rather than quarterly. The next meetings were scheduled for May 24, and June 21, 2010. Commissioner McKinney commended the committee for being so active, noting that the committee is comprised of volunteers. Vice Chairman O'Mahoney advised the committee to make it a top priority to help promote the lottery.

Employment and Training Advisory Committee - Richard Hatfield, Member

Richard Hatfield reported on items from the March 25, 2010 meeting. William Parry is resigning from the committee; he nominated Linda Christ to be his replacement. Ms. Christ is the program director for the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) at Fort Hood. The nomination was passed unanimously by the committee. Jim Brennan, Vice Chairman of the committee, will not be able to chair anymore, but wants to stay on the committee, and nominated Marianne Rogers to become Vice-Chair of the committee immediately.

Mr. Hatfield reported on the employment section of the new TVC website. The committee wants to ensure that employment information is readily available and easy to access for veterans, especially those who are newly transitioning from active duty into the workforce. The committee is keeping in contact with TVC Marketing, and Mr. Hatfield reported the new website is working very well.

Mr. Hatfield presented the committee's recommendation that TVC adopt an Employer of Veterans Award program to provide recognition to employers who have exemplary veteran hiring practices.

Award nominations, eligibility criteria and awards presentation details were discussed. Employers would be grouped into 4 categories: 1) Large = 251 or more employees; 2) Medium = 51 to 250 employees; 3) Small = 50 or less employees; and 4) Disabled Veterans Employer. The Employment and Training Advisory Committee would review nominations and recommend award winners to the TVC. Presentation of awards would take place at the Annual TVC Fall Conference, and locally TVC would help promote what the employer has done for Texas veterans. Nominations would come from TVC staff members, and the one who nominates the award winner would receive a \$500 award. Due to funding issues, the nominations would have to come from a TVC employment staff member, excluding headquarters staff from making nominations. Bill Wilson, Director of Veterans Employment Services, recommended the Commissioners approve the process as proposed, but exclude the monetary award for staff nominations. This would open up the field of nominators to anybody in TVC, and not limit it to TVC employment staff.

Discussion was held to modify the proposed award eligibility criteria. The Commissioners agreed to keep the proposed 4 categories of employers and add a fifth employer category titled, "National" to include larger, national employers who are doing business in Texas so they can have their own category and not compete against the smaller, Texas-only employers.

Discussion was held on the possibility of the Texas Workforce Investment Council (TWIC) creating a policy for veterans to earn more recognition for work accomplished and credit earned in the service toward certification in apprenticeship programs. Mr. Hatfield agreed the committee would present to the Commissioners on a future date an outline of a partnership plan between the TVC and TWIC to apply credits earned for life skills toward apprenticeship programs.

MOTION: To accept the recommendation of the Employment and Training Advisory Committee to implement a TVC Employer of Veterans Award, excluding the \$500 employee nomination award, and adding a National Award.

MADE BY: Commissioner McKinney

SECOND: Secretary Cantu

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

Fund for Veterans' Assistance - General Thomas Smith, Chair

General Thomas Smith provided an overview of current and upcoming events. Grant I funding was awarded to the VFW Foundation. The committee has been most recently focused on 41 applications for Grant II, and preparing applicant information for the Commissioners to review and approve funding for Grant II. In the future, the committee will be working closely with the Communications Advisory Committee to work on outreach to educate the general public on the Texas Veterans lottery tickets. The next Communications Advisory Committee meeting is May 24, 2010.

General Smith expressed his appreciation to all the committee members, and TVC staff and looks forward to continuing working together with the Commissioners. Chair Rankin thanked General Smith and the committee for their hard work and volunteering to help veterans.

VII. Report, presentation, and/or action regarding TVC Fund for Veterans' Assistance Grants

David Nobles, TVC Grant Coordinator, presented recommendations and a report of the Fund for Veterans' Assistance (FVA) Grant II submissions. TVC staff contacted all 15 applicants that were recommended for funding to gather additional information regarding budgets and deliverables, and provided the supplemental information to the Commissioners on May 12, 2010.

The Commissioners commented that the May 6, 2010 workshop was productive and thanked Mr. Nobles and the TVC staff for following up so quickly with the supplemental applicant information. All agreed this has been a learning process that will run more smoothly going forward.

After discussions were held on the applicants recommended for funding, the following motions were called for:

MOTION: To approve Vet Rides for \$90,230, with the provisions they hire veterans to do the driving, and reduce the hourly wage to \$10 per hour for the drivers.

MADE BY: Chair Rankin

SECOND: Secretary Cantu

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: To fund the United Way at \$267,830. This amount specifically excludes the \$25,000 salary line-item for the project director.

MADE BY: Chair Rankin

SECOND: Secretary Cantu

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: To approve the 13 grant applicants to which Commissioners made no amendments, and the funds as recommended.

MADE BY: Vice Chair O'Mahoney

SECOND: Secretary Cantu

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

Freddy Ruiz, Fund Accountant, verified the total amount funded for Grant II was \$2,613,127.

VIII. Advisory Committees New Business

Tina Carnes, General Counsel, presented the new nomination of Linda Christ to the Employment and Training Advisory Committee made by Mike Olen. Commissioners accepted the nomination as presented.

MOTION: To accept new member as presented.

MADE BY: Vice Chair O'Mahoney

SECOND: Secretary Cantu

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Strategic Plan 2011-2015

James Nier, Executive Director, reported the Strategic Plan has been updated with the changes requested by the Commissioners at the May 6, 2010 meeting. Mr. Nier asked the Commissioners to approve the Plan today to finalize, giving authority to staff to make necessary changes to finalize in time for the due date on June 18, 2010. There will be an opportunity to provide updates once more before it is due.

MOTION: To approve Strategic Plan, and allow staff to make administrative changes discussed as necessary before final compilation.

MADE BY: Secretary Cantu
SECOND: Commissioner McKinney
ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

X. Executive Director Report

Mr. Nier announced and welcomed new employees to TVC: Kathryn Hawkins, Travel Accountant; Paula Ornelas, Legal Assistant; and Freddy Ruiz, Fund Accountant. Mr. Nier reported on general information items, and on-going projects. Mr. Nier announced the dates for the TVC Fall Conference are September 27 through October 1, 2010. He concluded his report with an overview of upcoming dates of events for TVC and the Commissioners.

XI. Directors Reports

A. Charles Buerschinger, Deputy Executive Director

Mr. Buerschinger reported on the progress of the Action Plan.

B. Steven Wilkins, Information Resource Manager

Mr. Wilkins provided a handout of the amended Information Resources FY2010 Action Plan to the Commissioners that included the internal audit finding action. Mr. Wilkins reported and discussion was held on the internal audit, hiring an additional IT person, hiring a vendor to enhance the Veterans Education database program, and purchasing grant management software.

C. Bill Wilson, Director of Veterans Employment Services

Mr. Wilson first reported on performance. There is a decline in employment overall due to sustained economic conditions in Texas (8%) and nationally (10%). Texas remains a full 10 percentage points above the national average for veterans entering employment. Due to the economic toll on employment outcomes, TVC has requested a renegotiation of performance goals with the Department of Labor. Mr. Wilson continued his report with employer outreach. Since November, Kevin Smith, TVC Employment Outreach Coordinator, has obtained 78 jobs from 23 different employers who will use TVC's services to hire veterans exclusively. Mr. Wilson concluded his report with an update on the Department of Labor. TVC has received its FY2011 Planning Guidance and Funding Allocation. Texas will receive approximately \$300,000 less than the current year. Despite this decrease, he expects to maintain staffing levels, and to keep temporary staff on board through the end of the Fiscal Year. Discussion on funding formulas was held. Vice Chair O'Mahoney asked Mr. Wilson to keep the Commissioners updated on the status for request of relief on performance goals.

D. Jim Richman, Director of Claims Representation and Counseling

Mr. Richman began his report thanking General Rankin for her kind words about Delilah Washburn, highlighting her professional and personal accomplishments as a dedicated TVC employee, tireless veterans advocate and friend. Mr. Richman noted several other highly skilled employees that have recently left TVC due to retirement, or by resignation. Mr. Richman reported on various outreach events statewide. Mr. Richman and his team are actively involved in the Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans (TLTV) effort, assisting with training and setting up legal clinics at VA facilities around the state. An honorable mention was given to TVC Counselors Rita Brignon and Gale Walker of Corpus Christi who received recognition from the VA's Chief Medical Officer for going above and beyond to help a veteran receive treatment. Mr. Richman announced the VA is introducing a new pilot program wherein complete claims packets will be processed in 90 days. Progress of this program will be monitored. Waco has been designated as one of the 14 stations where Agent Orange claims will be processed. Instructions on how to process these claims are expected soon, and instructions on the 9 Gulf War and Afghanistan presumptive conditions are expected this summer. He concluded his report with the number of pending claims in Houston is 32,389 and in Waco 23,535; the number of appeals in Houston is 12,042 and in Waco 8,604.

E. Connie Jacksits, Director of Veterans Education

Ms. Jacksits announced 2 new employees to the Veterans Education program: Sarah Tillman, Program Specialist; and Taz Yilma, Administrative Assistant. Ms. Jacksits reported 3 of the newest program specialists will be attending the National Association of State Approving Agency Training at the National Training Institute in Kansas City, Missouri. Ms. Jacksits and Steven Wilkins have met with potential contractors to update and enhance the Vets Ed database. A contract will likely be finalized very soon, which will complete the last recommendation on the audit action plan. Ms. Jacksits reported the Vets Ed HQ employees whose offices are at the Travis Building are now scheduled to return to the Stephen F. Austin building in June 2011, rather than June 2010. Ms. Jacksits concluded her report on the processing of education claims stabilizing at 20 days for Post 9/11 students. The VA Waco staff is no longer processing education claims.

F. Irma Rodriguez, Chief Financial Officer

Ms. Rodriguez began by asking if the Commissioners had any questions on the Second Quarter Operating Budget that was previously provided to them. Commissioner McKinney inquired about the money received from the Governor's Office. Ms. Rodriguez responded it was included in the claims appropriation and reported in the Second Quarter column as an appropriation transfer. She indicated TVC will not spend the whole amount in AY2010, and some would be rolled into AY2011. Ms. Rodriguez stated that TVC is waiting for further instructions on the 5% reductions. She concluded her report by noting in January 2010 it was projected that the state would be facing an

\$11 to \$12 million deficit, but recently the deficit was projected to be as high as \$18 billion.

G. David Nobles, Grant Coordinator

Mr. Nobles reported the total award amount approved today was \$2,613,127 for Grant II. The next grant solicitation will be sent out and posted online tomorrow. Letters of Interest are due June 7, 2010 by 5:00 p.m. Mr. Nobles is working with Steven Wilkins on the new grants management system, and a decision will be made in the next month. Mr. Nobles thanked Irma Rodriguez and Freddy Ruiz for their help in drafting a grant monitoring plan. The final draft still needs approval. Mr. Ruiz is also working on indicators of financial stability for the nonprofit organizations who apply for grant funds to assist in determining their financial viability. Mr. Nobles reported the TRIAD Fund is having a statewide conference in June 2010 to which he was invited to do a presentation on the Fund for Veterans' Assistance, and to address the differences between working with private foundation funding and state government funding. Mr. Nobles concluded his report with the matter of grant contracts and amendments. He stated there would be no decrease or increase of dollar amounts of grant contracts made without Commission approval first. Amendments to grant contracts to move money around that do not require an increase or decrease in the total grant amount would be handled by TVC staff. After discussion, the Commissioners agreed they should approve all contract amendments.

H. Cruz Montemayor, Human Resources Director

Mr. Montemayor reported on The State Office of Risk Management audit conducted on January 22, 2010. TVC continues to stay well below the state average losses in property and workers compensation claims. The Agency Veteran Workforce summary for calendar year 2010, first quarter, has our agency at 82% veteran employees. TVC leads the state in percentage of veterans employed. Veterans Education office move date was pushed back to June 2011 because the renovation on the new floor Vets Ed will be located has been delayed to 2011. The Railroad Commission has doubled the amount of space at the Travis Building for the Vets Ed employees, and provided modular furniture at no cost to TVC. TVC obtained additional reserved parking spaces from DPS, and additional flexibility to accommodate members attending committee meetings.

I. Duncan McGhee, Director of Marketing and Training

Mr. McGhee reported on the launch of the new TVC website on April 16, 2010. Overall there has been a tremendous amount of positive response from the public and legislators. The new website also fulfills the internal audit requirements. Marketing is currently developing a Marketing 101 training session for personnel in the field. Mr. McGhee provided a brief description of Jeff Williford's legislative liaison outreach duties, which is expanding awareness of TVC at the Capitol. Mr. McGhee reported that a new marketing strategy is being executed within the next quarter that will provide metrics to measure the impact of dollars being spent, as tasked by the Sunset Advisory Committee. Marketing is also working with Veterans Education and Veterans Employment Services

programs to pursue more businesses, and coordinate outreach to maximize crossover marketing efforts.

XII. Public Comment

Morgan Little, Texas Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), provided an update of Guard and Reserve data for 2010. Peak mobilization for Guardsmen and Reservists for 2010 occurred in January at 143,863. Last week mobilization decreased to 132,011. Mr. Little continued with a comparison of Texas and national data for the Guard and Reserve. Ombudsmen: 129 cases closed out of 139 in Texas; 10 referred to DOL; nationally this is 8% of the active cases. Outreach: Texas has 1,660 Statements of Support; nationally this is about 6%. Awards: Texas has delivered 738 Patriot Awards; nationally this is 5%. Military Outreach: Texas briefed 15,624; nationally this is 7%. Volunteer hours: 6,064 in Texas; nationally this is 6%. Texas numbers are more current than national numbers by approximately 30 days.

Mr. Little concluded his report with an update on the Blue Water Sailors and Blue Sky Aviators.

Chair Rankin presented to Mr. Little the Agent Orange Resolution signed by the Texas Veterans Commission. Mr. Nier read the Resolution wherein the Texas Veterans Commission respectfully urges the Congress of the United States to restore the presumption of a service connection for Agent Orange exposure to Navy and Air Force veterans who served on the inland waterways, territorial waters, and in the airspace of the Republic of Vietnam, by passing the Agent Orange Equity Act of 2009. Chair Rankin and Mr. Nier thanked Mr. Little for his advocacy on behalf of Navy and Air Force veterans.

Chair Rankin adjourned the meeting to go into Executive Session at 11:35 a.m.

Chair Rankin reconvened the meeting at 12:09 p.m.

XIII. Date for Next Commission Meeting

The Fourth Quarterly Meeting for FY 2010 was scheduled for 8:30 a.m. on August 9, 2010 Room 170 at the Stephen F. Austin Building, Austin, Texas.

XIV. Discussion of Items for next meeting

Chair Rankin asked that any items for the next Commission Meeting be emailed to Mr. Nier and the Commissioners. Mr. Nier will provide an update regarding the Legislative Appropriation Request (LAR) when information is received. It was decided that June 9 or 10, 2010 would be the date for the first LAR workshop, depending on room availability.

The Strategic Plan was approved, and a final copy will be distributed to the Commissioners and stakeholders during the week of May 24, 2010.

XV. Discussion and take possible action on the items considered in Executive Session

None.

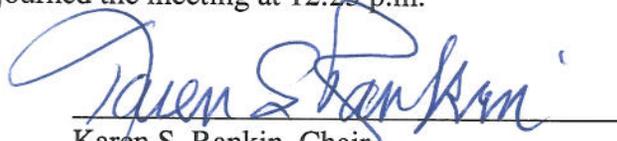
XVI. Commissioners' Closing Comments

None.

XVII. Adjournment

Chair Rankin adjourned the meeting at 12:25 p.m.

Minutes Approved by:



Karen S. Rankin, Chair



TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

3rd Quarterly Commission Meeting

Fiscal Year 2010

May 17, 2010

8:30 a.m.

Max Burke

Senior Systems Analyst

Co-Director

Veterans Communication Action Teams

Project Director

Altarum Institute

Carmen Cernosek

Office of the Lt. Governor

Jim Cunningham

Vice Chair, Texas Coalition of Veteran Organizations

Member, Veterans Communication Advisory Committee

State Legislative Representative, Texas Council of Chapters MOAA

Chair, Alliance for Veterans to Families

Jason Evans

Assistant State Director, U.S. Department of Labor

Veterans' Employment & Training Service

Russell Gregorczyk

CPA – Jansen & Gregorczyk

TVC - Internal Auditor

Roy Grona

VFW, Department of Texas, Adjutant/Quartermaster

Richard Hatfield
Member, Veterans Employment & Training Advisory Committee

Morgan Little
Employers Support of the Guard and Reserve
Legislative Affairs Chair
Chair, Texas Coalition of Veteran Organizations

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

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

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

Ken Wallingford
Veterans Liaison, Texas Veterans Land Board

David Weaver
Attorney, State Securities Board
Member, Fund for Veterans Assistance Advisory Committee