

# Texas Veterans Commission Meeting Minutes

Third Quarterly Meeting (FY 2011)  
May 18, 2011

## I. Call to Order

Chairman O'Mahoney called to order the Third Quarterly Meeting of the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) at 8:00 a.m. on May 18, 2011 in Room 170 of the Stephen F. Austin Building, at 1700 North Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas 78701.

The following Commissioners were present:

T.P. O'Mahoney, Chairman  
Eliseo "Al" Cantu, Vice Chairman  
Richard A. McLeon, IV, Member  
Daniel P. Moran, Member  
James H. Scott, Member

Also present was Thomas P. Palladino, Executive Director.

Also present: See the attached list.

Vice Chairman Cantu gave the opening prayer. Commissioner Scott led the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag.

Chairman O'Mahoney briefly mentioned formalizing the designation of Commissioner James Scott as Secretary of the Commission. No further action was taken.

Chairman O'Mahoney welcomed visitors to the meeting. He thanked Morgan Little and John Miterko for their participation and support during the Legislative Session. He introduced new employee, Karen Fastenau, General Counsel, and announced the recent promotion of Shawn Deabay as Director of Veterans Employment Services.

## II. Approval of Minutes from Special Commission Meeting held April 13, 2011

The minutes were previously distributed to the Commissioners.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the Special Commission Meeting held on April 13, 2011, as presented.

MADE BY: Vice Chairman Cantu

SECONDED BY: Commissioner Scott

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

### **III. Advisory Committee Reports**

#### **Veterans Communications – John Miterko, Vice Chairman**

John Miterko reported on the status of members and current projects, including efforts to improve communications with the newest generation of veterans via the internet and online communications. Mr. Miterko announced the next meeting is scheduled to be held June 13, 2011, and welcomed anyone to attend.

#### **Veterans Employment and Training - Mike Olen, Past Chairman**

Mike Olen reported on the previous committee meeting held April 12, 2011. Mr. Olen reported on the status of current projects, including employer awards, committee appointments and renewals, and the College Credit 4 Heroes program which rewards veterans with college credits for their knowledge and skills. TVC and Texas Workforce Commission are working to better coordinate outreach efforts to enhance total services to veterans. Will coordinate with other committees to ensure any issues that overlap are being addressed. Mr. Olen announced the next meeting is scheduled for July 21, 2011, and welcomed anyone to attend.

#### **Fund for Veterans' Assistance - General Thomas G. Smith, Chairman**

General Thomas G. Smith provided an overview of the committee meeting held on April 27, 2011. He expressed appreciation to the Fund for Veterans' Assistance staff on behalf of the members for the new streamlined procedures for reviewing grant applications. General Smith reported on the status of current projects, including efforts to educate the general public about the veterans lottery scratch-off tickets, proposed legislation that will allow donations to the FVA on vehicle registration documents, and committee appointments and renewals. General Smith announced the next meeting is scheduled to be held June 22, 2011.

### **IV. Report, Presentation and/or Action regarding Executive Director Report**

Thomas Palladino, Executive Director, provided a review of events he has attended, meetings with various legislators, legislative budget items, accolades, and general information items. Mr. Palladino announced the recent restructuring of some agency programs, including the transition of Communications to Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, which will be headed by Rick Svatora. Central Administration, Human Resources, Finance and Information Resources will be considered next. Mr. Palladino mentioned upcoming meetings, noting plans for the General Counsel to visit and support Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans legal clinics, and Veterans Courts around the state. The current Texas and U.S. Casualty Report was provided to Commissioners.

### **V. Report, presentation and/or action regarding Legislative Update**

Rick Svatora, Manager, Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, presented the Legislative Update Report and the status of bills that are priorities for TVC during the 82nd Texas Legislature. He provided an overview of the timeline of the remainder of the regular session, the possibility of a special session, and the budget issues affecting TVC.

### **VI. Report, presentation and/or action regarding Commission Programs**

The Commissioners reviewed the Quarterly Program Reports and Program Snapshots that were previously provided. Directors were provided the opportunity to brief the Commission on any new items or highlight significant items.

Vice Chairman Cantu reported on the Department of Veterans Affairs VISN 17 Strategic Planning Retreat and Executive Leadership Council Meeting in Arlington, Texas on February 18-21, 2011. The meeting provided an opportunity to meet with the network directors from across the state and establish helpful contacts with others in the healthcare system.

Cruz Montemayor, Director of Human Resources, provided an update of the new office space on the fourth floor of the Stephen F. Austin building for Veterans Education. Staff will be moving into the new location on June 3, 2011. The Texas Facilities Commission will pay for moving expenses. Mr. Montemayor is currently looking for additional space in the Travis Building for FVA program staff.

**VII. Report, Presentation and/or Action on 2011 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Operating Budget**

Irma Rodriguez, Chief Financial Officer, presented the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2011 Operating Budget. Ms. Rodriguez noted the budget does not reflect House Bill 4 reductions for the current year which are approximately \$177,267.00 because House Bill 4 has not become law yet. The reductions have been calculated and set aside already and will be incorporated into the budget report at the next meeting.

**VIII. Report and Presentation regarding TVC 2011 Fall Conference**

Cruz Montemayor provided an update regarding the venue proposals for the TVC 2011 Fall Conference. Site visits were conducted, and the list was narrowed to the following three hotels: Dallas Sheraton, DFW Hyatt Regency, and Houston Westin Galleria Oaks Towers. Houston Westin Galleria was chosen and the dates for the 2011 Fall Conference are September 12-15, 2011. Staff has also begun working ahead on planning for the Spring 2012 and Fall 2012 conferences.

**IX. Report, Presentation and/or Action regarding Adoption of Rules concerning Chapter 454, Grants, and Chapter 460, Fund for Veterans' Assistance Program**

Bill Wilson, Director, Fund for Veterans' Assistance, presented the staff recommendation to approve to adopt new rules, 40 TAC Chapter 460 (§§460.1 - 460.53), Fund for Veterans' Assistance Program and to adopt the repeal of 40 TAC Chapter 454 (§§454.1 - 454.6), Grants, as published in the Texas Register, without changes.

MOTION: Adopt the rules as proposed without changes.

MADE BY: Vice Chairman Cantu

SECONDED BY: Commissioner McLeon

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

**X. Report, Presentation and/or Action regarding Adoption of Rules concerning §452.8, Employee Training and Education**

Karen Fastenau, presented the staff recommendation to approve the adoption of new rule, 40 TAC §452.8, Employee Training and Education, as published in the Texas Register, without changes.

MOTION: Adopt the rule as proposed without changes.

MADE BY: Vice Chairman Cantu

SECONDED BY: Commissioner McLeon

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

**XI. Report, Presentation and/or Action regarding Fiscal Year 2011 Internal Audit Plan**

Russell Gregorczyk, Internal Auditor, presented a revised draft of the Internal Audit Plan for the agency. The approved Internal Audit Plan for this year includes 3 audits: Purchasing, Training and the second portion of the Fund for Veterans' Assistance program (administration and monitoring of the funds). The revised plan will substitute Accounting and Payroll for Training. No additional cost will be incurred as a result of the change.

MOTION: To approve the revised Fiscal Year 2011 Internal Audit Plan as presented.

MADE BY: Vice Chairman Cantu

SECONDED BY: Commissioner Moran

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

**XII. Review and update of Action Plan**

Kyle Mitchell, Deputy Executive Director, presented the Action Plan that was previously provided to the Commissioners. The Commissioners requested to see a more detailed description of items in red, and target dates, included on future reports.

**XIII. Recommendations for Agenda Items for Next Meeting**

None.

**XIV. Discussion of Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The Fourth Quarterly Commission Meeting was scheduled for August 10, 2011, at 8:00 a.m. A workshop for the FVA was discussed for a future date to be determined.

Chairman O'Mahoney called for a recess at 9:20 a.m.

Chairman O'Mahoney reconvened the meeting at 10:43 a.m.

**XV. Report, Presentation and/or Action regarding Fund for Veterans' Assistance Grants**

Bill Wilson announced donations made to the FVA. The House Defense and Veterans Affairs Committee donated \$500 on behalf of Chairman Joe Pickett, which he matched, for a total of \$1,000. Texas.gov contractor, NICUSA, will also be donating \$2,500 online along with the launch of the online donation project next week.

Mr. Wilson presented the Grant Application Review Process document previously requested by Commissioners. He then presented a memorandum previously provided to Commissioners on Veterans Courts wherein staff made recommendations regarding the three Veterans Courts that reapplied for funding and requested input from the Commissioners regarding the amount of funding for all Veterans Courts in the future. The amount of funding for Veterans Courts was discussed and tabled for a future Commission meeting.

Chairman O'Mahoney clarified that it is allowable for a Veterans Court within a county and another part of the same county government to have a grant from the Fund for Veterans' Assistance at the same time.

Mr. Wilson presented the Advisory Committee's recommendations for funding, previously provided to Commissioners, totaling approximately \$6 million in funding.

The list of recommendations was reviewed and discussed. The following were not approved for funding for the current grant period: Harris County Veterans Court, Senior Transportation Services, Tarrant County Veterans Court, U.S. Veterans Chamber of Commerce, and West Central Texas Regional Foundation.

Awarding of funds to Councils of Government entities was discussed. This matter was tabled for a future Commission meeting.

Awarding the remainder of funds to other applicants, particularly those that provide direct financial assistance to Texas veterans was discussed. The Department of Texas VFW Foundation's application was discussed, but not included on the list of organizations recommended for funding.

The Commissioners agreed to roll over the remaining funds to the next grant cycle. The next solicitation for grant applicants will open in September 2011, with grants to be effective January 1, 2012. The following motion was called for:

MOTION: Approve the recommendations for funding as amended.

MADE BY: Vice Chairman Cantu

SECONDED BY: Commissioner Scott

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

Total funding approved for this grant period was \$5.4 million.

A complete list of the grants awarded by the TVC Commissioners is available on the Texas Veterans Commission website at: <http://www.tvc.state.tx.us/about/awards>.

**XVI. Public Comment**

Morgan Little, Texas Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) representative, provided Commissioners the ESGR National Committee 2010 Summary Report for their information. Mr. Little provided a brief overview of current events and an update regarding the Guard and Reserve. Texas ESGR has had 117 cases this year with an 89% success rate. Mr. Little asked if there were any questions from the Commissioners. Chairman O'Mahoney thanked Mr. Little for his support of the Commission at the Legislature and at other events.

Roy Grona, Department of Texas VFW Foundation, requested information regarding the denial of the VFW Foundation's grant application. Chairman O'Mahoney offered Mr. Grona the opportunity to discuss the issue after the conclusion of the meeting.

**XVII. Executive Session**

Chairman O'Mahoney adjourned into Executive Session at 11:45 a.m.

Chairman O'Mahoney reconvened in Open Meeting at 12:27 p.m.

**XVIII. Discuss and Take Possible Action on the Items Considered in Executive Session**

Chairman O'Mahoney reported there was no action taken in Executive Session.

**XIX. Commissioners' Closing Comments**

The Commissioners commended agency staff and advisory committees for all their work, and the time they spend in support of veterans.

**XX. Adjournment**

Chairman O'Mahoney adjourned the meeting at 12:33p.m.

Minutes Approved by:

  
T.P. O'Mahoney, Chairman



**TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION**  
3<sup>rd</sup> Quarterly Commission Meeting - Fiscal Year 2011  
May 18, 2011 8:00 a.m.  
SFA Bldg – Room 170

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**Chelsea Buccholtz**  
Governor's Advisor  
Office of the Governor

**Russell Gregorczyk**  
CPA – Jansen & Gregorczyk  
TVC - Internal Auditor

**Roy Grona**  
VFW, Department of Texas, Adjutant/Quartermaster

**Morgan Little**  
Chair, Texas Coalition of Veteran Organizations

**John Miterko**  
Legislative Liaison  
Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations

**James E. Nier**  
Former Texas Veterans Commission  
Executive Director

**Mike Olen**  
U.S. Army (Retired)  
Past Director – Texas State Veterans Employment Program  
Past Chair – Veterans Employment & Training Advisory Committee

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

**Ken Wallingford**  
Veterans Liaison, Texas Veterans Land Board