Texas Veterans Commission
Meeting Minutes

First Quarterly Meeting (FY 2010)
October 19, 2009

I. Call to order

Vice-Chair O'Mahoney called to order the regular First Quarterly Meeting of the Texas Veterans Commission at 10:01 a.m. on October 19, 2009, in Room 170 of the Stephen F. Austin Building, 1700 N. Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas 78701.

II. Roll call

The following Commissioners were present:

Karen S. Rankin, Chair (present at 10:46 a.m. after Press Conference)
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.

III. Approval of minutes from last meeting

The minutes of Fourth Quarterly Meeting held on August 10, 2009 were previously distributed to the Commissioners.

MOTION:	To approve the minutes of the Fourth Quarterly Meeting as presented.
MADE BY:	Commissioner Cantu
SECONDED BY:	Commissioner McKinney
ACTION:	The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Approval of TVC Internal Audit of the Marketing and Outreach Programs

The Internal Audit of the Marketing and Outreach Programs was previously distributed to the Commissioners.

MOTION: Approve the Internal Audit of the Marketing and Outreach Programs.

MADE BY: Commissioner McKinney

SECONDED BY: Commissioner Cantu

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

V. Selection of Internal Auditor

The selection of Internal Auditor was presented to the Commissioners.

MOTION: To approve the selection of Internal Auditor as presented.

MADE BY: Commissioner Cantu

SECONDED BY: Commissioner McKinney

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Report, presentation and/or action on Appropriation Year 2010 Operating Budget

The presentation of the Appropriation Year 2010 Operating Budget was presented by Irma Rodriguez, Chief Financial Officer, and previously distributed to the Commissioners.

MOTION: To approve the Appropriation Year 2010 Operating Budget as presented.

MADE BY: Commissioner Cantu

SECONDED BY: Commissioner McKinney

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Altarum Institute Project Update

Jim Palmer presented update of the project. He reported how Altarum plans to capture the younger veterans using focus group sessions and stated that Altarum is engaging community contacts at every level including Bexar County legislators and how their support will influence the rest of the community.

VIII. Election of Vice-Chair of Commission

Nomination was made and seconded on election of Vice-Chair of the Commission.

MOTION: Elect Commissioner O'Mahoney, as Vice-Chair.

MADE BY: Commissioner McKinney

SECONDED BY: Chair Rankin

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Election of Secretary of Commission

Nomination was made and seconded on election of Secretary of the Commission.

MOTION: Elect Commissioner Eliseo "Al" Cantu, as Secretary.

MADE BY: Vice-Chair O'Mahoney

SECONDED BY: Chair Rankin

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

X. Reports on Advisory Committees

Employment and Training Advisory Committee – Mike Olen, Chair

Mr. Olen updated the Commissioners on the August 13 meeting. He reported on the job bank for veterans and federal contract job listings and how TWC and TVC could place quick launch buttons on their websites sending viewers to WorkInTexas, which would be a great benefit in assisting veterans to find employment. He mentioned that the advisory committee proposed that TVC has a need for point of contact with other state agencies and recommended that TVC establish that position. The next meeting of the advisory committee is scheduled for December 10, 2009 in San Antonio, Texas.

Communication Advisory Committee – General Sanchez, Chair

General Sanchez, reported on two major points that emerged from the Communications Advisory Committee's discussion of the Marketing Strategies. First, it is crucial to garner input and support from the key decision makers, i.e., the Commission and its executive leadership. Ideally, this support would include conceptual support for the overall marketing concept and strategy and appropriate resources to implement that strategy and accomplish the program goals. Second, a successful marketing program will require the removal of certain roadblocks, and the creation of a culture of cooperation. He concluded stating that it also means linking with strategic partners outside of TVC, such as the Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Labor (DOL), members of the Texas Legislature, etc. The next meeting of the advisory committee is scheduled for November 9, 2009 at TVC headquarters.

Fund for Veterans' Assistance – Roy Grona, Chair

Mr. Grona reported on the Press Conference of the unveiling of the Veterans Cash lotto ticket. He reported that the Grant Sub-Committee met on October 8 and 15 and reviewed drafts of the Grant Agreement, instructions and other documents for the grant packets. He stated the advisory committee will meet to review the packet so that it may be presented to the Commissioners at the December meeting.

He further reported that the check-off box on the license registration has no mechanism in place and that maybe speaking with the Governor's office and to the authors might be favorable. He also stated that the Fund for Veterans' Assistance is officially on the list of SECC.

Mr. Grona further reported that member General Smith attended a meeting with the American Lung Association and summarized the meeting for the committee. General Smith noted that ALA was not looking for grant assistance and was impressed with ALA's resources and desire to help veterans. Mr. Grona reported that Irma Rodriguez, TVC's CFO, will be joining this Advisory Committee.

He concluded his report stating that the next scheduled sub-committee meeting is November 3, 2009 and the next advisory committee meeting is November 17, 2009.

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

Ms. Carnes reported that no new members were being recommended at this time but possible nominations could be presented at the December meeting. She continued with the new developments within the advisory committee and reported that she and Allen Bergeron attended a meeting at TWC and presented information on the Fund for Veterans' Assistance for the SECC.

She continued her report outlining what responsibilities we have in connection with the Fund for Veterans' Assistance as an agency, commission and advisory committee. She addressed concerns the Commissioners had on communication, procedures and financial reports and stated the advisory committee will handle these situations in an efficient, timely and workable manner that is respected by all but mostly to help our Texas veterans.

XI. Report by Executive Director

James Nier, Executive Director, introduced new employees in Veterans Education, Finance, Human Resources and Marketing, and welcomed them to the agency.

He continued his report, briefing the Commissioners on the Fall Conference and commended the staff on their outstanding performance. He stated that the Lottery ticket and grant packet should be our main focus and assured the Commissioners with everyone's cooperation TVC will get it right. He also reported on the Veterans' Summit and concluded his report with general information items.

XII. Staff Reports

A. Charles Buerschinger, Deputy Executive Director

Mr. Buerschinger reported that payments of Compensation and Pension to veterans represented by TVC exceeded $1.9 Billion in State Fiscal Year 2009. He also commended all of the staff for their hard work and singled out Steven Wilkins for his work in the IT contract management on the Case Management System (CMS) and John House for his work on the Fall Conference and marketing. He concluded by presenting two Action Plans: the first was a closeout for FY 2009; the second was the new Action Plan for FY 2010.

B. Steven Wilkins, System Analyst V

Mr. Wilkins reported on the three ongoing significant projects. He stated that we continue to enhance the CMS and the imaging system (Neubus) and reported that the Veterans Employment database will be in production by the end of March 2010.

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

Mr. Wilson reported on the success of the Fall Conference and offered his thanks to all the TVC staff involved. He also reported on the CMS for VES. He received official approval from DOL to move forward and implementation will be with the same company used by the Claims program, McLane Technologies. He concluded his report with the Workforce Development Board contracts stating we've received 21 out of 28 contracts to date and that the Boards are charging $60,000 less than last year and last year was a reduction of nearly $100,000 from the year before.

D. Jim Richman, Director of Claims Representation and Counseling

Mr. Richman began his report stating the positions authorized by the legislative session have been filled and also that based on the agreement between TVC and the VFW Department of Texas, Claims Counselors are being provided to the VFW. He continued his report thanking the staff for all their efforts with the Fall Conference. Mr. Richman believes the training provided this year was the best yet. The conference provided an initial training module for newly appointed CSO's and new TVC Counselors, numerous selected classes for the non accredited CSO's, and the computer lab for the accredited CSO's and TVC staff that has not had the opportunity for in-depth training on the VA computer programs. He continued stating that TVC Claims Counselors have again participated in many briefings and seminars, and the groundbreaking ceremony for the Poly Trauma Center at Audie Murphy VAMC. He further reported on the NASDVA Conference in Ashville, North Carolina and that Gary Ivy and staff from McLane Technologies were on hand to demonstrate our CMS. He concluded his report with VA highlights stating that VA Secretary Shinseki ordered emergency checks to students awaiting education benefits. Both RO's in Texas set up procedures to pay vets "on the spot" payments of $3,000 until their

regular monthly payments could be established. Over 1,000 veterans in Texas took advantage of this opportunity.

E. Connie Jacksits, Director of Veterans Education

Ms. Jacksits briefed the Commissioners on the activities of the Veterans Education department for the 2008-2009 State Fiscal Year. During this period, the staff received and responded to 4,592 inquiries regarding education benefits; reviewed, processed, and submitted 920 approval packets to the VA; conducted 928 visits; reviewed and approved 21,928 individual programs of education and training for veterans; received and responded to 4,864 mail items and followed up on 477 denial of benefit letters sent to veterans by the VA. She also reported that TVC has 1,111 facilities with approved programs. This represents a 9.78% increase since September 1st of last year, and finally as of last week, the VA had 246,867 pending education claims and of these, 68,506 were at the Muskogee Regional Processing Office which handles the Texas education claims.

F. Irma Rodriguez, Chief Financial Officer

Ms. Rodriguez provided the 2009 Fourth Quarter Operating Budget to the Commissioners. The final report which will have some changes but not significant changes will be presented at the January 2010 Commission Meeting. She also provided the Commissioners Travel Report noting that in the last legislative session, the reimbursement rates for in-state travel changed. Texas now follows the federal rates for lodging and meal reimbursements. Ms. Rodriguez attached the federal rates for Texas to the Travel Report which became effective October 1, 2009, also noting that if a city or county is not listed, Texas will continue to reimburse lodging at $85 and meals at $36.

G. Cruz Montemayor, Director of Human Resources

Mr. Montemayor reported on the Veteran Report for Third Quarter of CY 2009: 83.50% are veterans and 97.95% of new hires were veterans. He also reported on the Survey of Employee Engagement, formerly the Survey of Organizational Excellence. He stated the survey will be starting November 13, 2009. This survey acts as a report card for the agency gauging the agency's morale and the effectiveness of the leadership. Mr. Montemayor also stated that the Veterans Education move to the William B. Travis Building is complete. This space will house Vets Education until the build-out on the 4th floor of this building is complete. He concluded his report stating that minor construction will begin on our floor to make two more hard offices to house our growing programs in the Headquarters office.

H. John House, Director of Marketing and Training

Mr. House began his report briefing the Commissioners on upcoming events which included Oct. 24 -- Veteran Town Hall in San Antonio; Oct. 31 -- Veterans Benefits

Fair in Corpus Christi and Nov. 7 -- Veterans Benefits Fair in El Paso. He concluded his report discussing marketing activities and plans.

XIII. Public Comment

Morgan Little, Department of Texas Reserve Officers Association, discussed his handout "ESGR by the Numbers".

XIV. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The Second Quarterly Meeting for FY 2010 was scheduled for 8:30 a.m. on December 8, 2009 Room 170 at the Stephen F. Austin Building, Austin, Texas.

An additional quarterly meeting was tentatively scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on January 28, 2010.

XV. Commissioners' Closing Comments

The Commissioners agreed that the Fall Conference was a huge success and expressed their appreciation to TVC staff for all their hard work.

XVI. Adjournment

Chair Rankin adjourned the meeting at 1:09 p.m.

Minutes Approved by: _____
Karen S. Rankin, Chair

TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

First Quarterly Commission Meeting
Fiscal Year 2010
October 19, 2009
10:00 a.m.

Jim Cunningham
Member – Veterans Communication Advisory Committee

Russell Gregorczyk
CPA – Jansen & Gregorczyk
TVC - Internal Auditor

Roy Grona
VFW, Department of Texas, Adjutant/Quartermaster
Chair – Fund for Veterans Assistance Advisory Committee

Morgan Little
Reserve Officers Association, Department of Texas, National Councilman

John McKinny
State Director, U.S. Department of Labor
Veterans' Employment & Training Service

John Miterko
Legislative Liaison
Texas Coalition of Veterans Organizations

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

George Ruiz
Veterans Service Officer, Travis County

Lt. General Ricardo S. Sanchez
Chair – Veterans Communication Advisory Committee

Ken Wallingford
Veterans Liaison, Texas Veterans Land Board