

Texas Veterans Commission Meeting Minutes

First Quarterly Meeting (FY 2011)
November 15, 2010

I. Call to Order

Chairman O'Mahoney called to order the First Quarterly Meeting of the Texas Veterans Commission at 8:35 a.m. on November 15, 2010, in Room 170 of the Stephen F. Austin Building, 1700 N. Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas 78701.

The following Commissioners were present:

T.P. O'Mahoney, Chairman
Eliseo "Al" Cantu, Secretary
John B. McKinney, Member
Richard A. McLeon, IV, Member
James H. Scott, Member

Also present was Thomas P. Palladino, Executive Director.

Also present: See the attached list.

Commissioner McKinney led the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. Secretary Cantu gave the opening prayer.

Chairman O'Mahoney opened the meeting with an introduction of new Commissioners Richard A. McLeon, IV and James H. Scott. Chairman O'Mahoney thanked former Chair Rankin for her leadership and over six years of service with the Commission. Chairman O'Mahoney then welcomed visitors, and introduced new employees Bonnie Fletcher, and Rick Svatora.

II. Approval of Minutes from Previous Commission Meetings

The meeting minutes were previously distributed to the Commissioners.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the Special Meeting held on August 12, 2010 as presented.

MADE BY: Secretary Cantu

SECONDED BY: Commissioner McKinney

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the Fourth Quarterly Commission Meeting held on August 13, 2010 as presented.

MADE BY: Secretary Cantu

SECONDED BY: Commissioner McKinney

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the Special Meeting held on September 8, 2010 as presented.

MADE BY: Secretary Cantu

SECONDED BY: Commissioner McKinney

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the Special Meeting held on September 28, 2010 as presented.

MADE BY: Secretary Cantu

SECONDED BY: Commissioner McKinney

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

III. Election of Officers

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

MOTION: To elect Eliseo "Al" Cantu as Vice Chairman.

MADE BY: Commissioner McKinney

SECONDED BY: Commissioner McLeon

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

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

MOTION: To elect John McKinney as Secretary.

MADE BY: Vice Chairman Cantu
SECONDED BY: Commissioner Scott
ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

IV. Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Presentation

Jan Scruggs, founder and President of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF), gave a presentation on VVMF's efforts to build the Education Center at The Wall at the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

V. Report, presentation and/or action on FY 2011 Operating Budget

Irma Rodriguez, Chief Financial Officer, presented the FY 2011 Operating Budget which was previously distributed to the Commissioners.

MOTION: Approve the Fiscal Year 2011 Operating Budget as presented.

MADE BY: Secretary McKinney

SECONDED BY: Vice Chairman Cantu

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

VI. Report regarding Mission Statement, Vision and Goals of Advisory Committees

Jim Richman presented the mission statement, vision and goals for each of the Advisory Committees. The Commissioners offered their continuing support of the Advisory Committees.

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

Employment and Training Advisory Committee – Marianne Rogers, Chair

Ms. Rogers noted one of the main projects the committee will take on this coming year is to work on having college credits earned for military training received. Recent federal and upcoming state legislation affecting employment and education issues was discussed.

Veterans Communications Advisory Committee - Morgan Little, Member

Mr. Little provided an overview of previous committee meetings held on August 30, September 20, and October 25, 2010. Mr. Little reported 3 members that were considered for renewal, and noted the retirement of Colonel Gentry in June 2011. One of the main projects of the committee during the upcoming legislative session will be to get disabled veterans added to the Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) list. The Commissioners applauded the committee for their dedication and all the work they do. The next meetings will be held on November 22, 2010, and on January 10, 2011.

Fund for Veterans' Assistance Advisory Committee

Committee report will be provided at the Special Meeting on November 16, 2010.

VIII. Report, presentation and/or action regarding Advisory Committee new business, and acceptance of gifts

Tina Carnes, General Counsel, presented the nomination of Larry Todd as a new member of the Communication Advisory Committee.

MOTION: To accept the nomination of Larry Todd as a member of the Communication Advisory Committee as presented.

MADE BY: Vice Chairman Cantu

SECONDED BY: Secretary McKinney

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Carnes presented for consideration a gift from the VFW, the donation of a room valued at \$2,500.00 to be used at the January 2011 Texas Veterans Commission Summit Meeting.

MOTION: To accept the gift from the VFW as presented.

MADE BY: Commissioner McLeon

SECONDED BY: Commissioner Scott

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

IX. Report, presentation and/or action regarding Readoption of Agency Rules

Tina Carnes, General Counsel, requested approval from the Commissioners to readopt Title 40, Part 15, Chapters 450 through 459 of the agency's rules as presented. The proposed review of rules was previously published in the Texas Register. No comments were received.

MOTION: Approve the agency's rules for readoption as presented.

MADE BY: Commissioner McLeon

SECONDED BY: Commissioner Scott

ACTION: The motion passed unanimously.

X. Discussion and/or action regarding Findings and Recommendations from the FY 2010 Annual Internal Audit Report

Russell Gregorczyk, Internal Auditor, presented an overview of the FY 2010 Internal Audit Report that was previously distributed to the Commissioners.

XI. Executive Director's Report

Thomas Palladino, Executive Director, reported on general information items, accolades, and on-going projects of the agency, and recent events he had attended on behalf of the agency.

XII. Update regarding Action Plan

Jim Richman presented two Action Plans: the first was a closeout for FY 2010; the second was the new Action Plan for FY 2011. He concluded by noting there would be a correlation of items in the Action Plan with items in the bi-weekly snapshot reports that are provided to Commissioners.

XIII. Report, presentation and/or action regarding Staff Reports

A. Jim Richman, Director of Claims Representation and Counseling

Mr. Richman reported three (3) counselors and one (1) admin staff have moved into the new office space in the VA Outpatient Clinic in Fort Worth. The Claims Processing Assistance Team (CPAT) has completed 10,204 cases to hand back to the VA ready for decision or award action, exceeding CPAT's performance standard of 10,000 cases. Budgetary concerns in the counties have resulted in County Service Offices (CSO) reducing office locations and office hours. The CSO in Victoria is scheduled to work on reduced hours for up to 4 years, and then will close permanently. Mr. Richman listed recent hearings at which he provided testimony, and upcoming events he will be attending. The VA Regional Office in Houston has hired a Director, Pritsz Navaratnasingam. Mr. Richman concluded his report with the number of pending claims in Houston is 41,203, and in Waco is 28,166; the number of pending appeals in Houston is 13,540, and in Waco is 10,045. Secretary McKinney noted how the reduction of CSOs will impact TVC's Claims Representation and Counseling group.

B. Duncan McGhee, Director of Communications

Mr. McGhee provided statistics of homelessness and suicides among veterans. He then gave examples of success stories where veterans who communicated with the agency via Facebook and TVC's website were helped by the agency's programs. Mr. McGhee reported on the traffic on TVC's website and Facebook, and announced the recent launching of TVC on Twitter. TVC continues to have a brand awareness problem being distinguished from the VA and other veterans organizations. Continue working to raise awareness of the agency. Mr. McGhee also reported the response rate of TVC's radio and television PSAs is favorable.

C. Irma Rodriguez, Chief Financial Officer

Ms. Rodriguez presented the 2010 4th Quarter Operating Statement. She also noted that the \$18 billion state deficit previously reported for the 2012-2013 biennium has increased to \$25 billion. In the August 2010 Cash Report published by the Comptroller's Office, it reported a deficit of \$3.5 billion for budget year 2010 in General Revenue. This was due to the state not meeting the sales tax revenue projections. A similar deficit is expected for budget year 2011.

D. David Nobles, Director of Fund for Veterans' Assistance

Mr. Nobles reported as of September 2010 the Fund for Veterans' Assistance has awarded 29 grants for a total of \$6.69 million, and 2,817 veterans have been served by these grants. Mr. Nobles reported on events he has attended. The current grant cycle opened on November 1, and closes this afternoon. Three (3) applications have been received so far, and he expects approximately 12 more before the deadline.

E. Cruz Montemayor, Director of Human Resources and Administration

Mr. Montemayor reported he is working on incentive awards for employees to boost morale within the agency. He is also working on training for Executive Management, and first-line managers. There were 17 vacancies reported at the last meeting, and an update will be provided soon.

F. Steven Wilkins, Information Resources Manager

Mr. Wilkins reported on the updating of procedures. His goal is to complete automation of the FVA grant program by January 2011. Clint Riddell will be auditing the field offices which receive computer support from TVC. The security audit will not include home offices at this time. Mr. Wilkins is planning to do a survey of employees and their needs to ensure he is meeting needs of the agency statewide. The biggest challenge next year will be scheduling projects based on the projected budget for next year. Security of laptops while traveling was discussed.

G. Tina Carnes, General Counsel

Ms. Carnes reported on the agency's continued support of the Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans initiative of State Bar Association President to provide pro-bono legal services for veterans across the state. Ms. Carnes also reported on the success and agency's continued support of the Veterans Court program passed by the 81st Legislature. Ms. Carnes noted the loss of several members of the Veteran Affairs and Military Installations Senate Committee as a result of the recent elections, and highlighted the filing of Senate Bill 34 for a Women's Veteran Coordinator that would provide for a statutory employee at TVC to dedicate their time solely to women's veterans issues.

H. Rufus Coburn, Veterans Education Manager

Mr. Coburn reported during the past quarter Veterans Education has completed and submitted to the US Department of Veterans Affairs its Annual Self-Evaluation, and also the Fourth Quarter FY 2010 Report. Veterans Education expects to receive its FY 2011 funding allocation from the Department of Veterans Affairs within the next 30 days.

I. Bill Wilson, Director of Veterans Employment Services

Mr. Wilson opened by providing a brief overview of the Veterans Employment Services program for the new Commissioners. Mr. Wilson noted the program is meeting or exceeding all performance measures. Employer Outreach reported 322 job openings presented to TVC to fill. The Commissioners asked if the availability of jobs across the board was in decline or increasing. Mr. Wilson noted there are no Texas-specific unemployment numbers, but the unemployment rate and job creation rates will show the trend. Secretary McKinney complimented the Veterans Employment Services employees on the excellent job they did coordinating and presenting at a recent event sponsored by TVC in El Paso.

XIV. Discussion of January Texas Veterans Commission Summit date, location and agenda

The Texas Veterans Commission Summit will be held on Wednesday, January 26, 2011 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Austin, and will coincide with the timing of the VFW's annual conference. Speakers and meeting details are still being worked out.

XV. Public Comment

Morgan Little, ESGR Representative, presented a handout to Commissioners, "ESGR Insider."

XVI. Executive Session

Chairman O'Mahoney adjourned into Executive Session at 10:57 a.m.

Chairman O'Mahoney reconvened in Open Meeting at 12:01 p.m.

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

XVII. Recommendations for agenda items for next meeting

Chairman O'Mahoney requested any items for the next meeting be sent via email.

XVIII. Discussion of date, time and location of next meeting

The Second Quarterly Commission Meeting was scheduled for January 25, 2011 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Austin, Texas.

XIX. Commissioners' Closing Comments

Vice Chairman Cantu and Secretary McKinney each welcomed the new Commissioners. Vice Chairman Cantu expressed his appreciation to former Chair, Karen Rankin for her service and leadership over the years.

Commissioners Scott and McLeon thanked TVC staff for their support and assistance, and expressed what an honor it is to serve as Commissioner for the agency.

XX. Adjournment

Chairman O'Mahoney adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m.

Minutes Approved by:


T.P. O'Mahoney, Chairman



TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

1st Quarterly Commission Meeting - Fiscal Year 2011

November 15, 2010 8:30 a.m.

SFA Bldg. – Room 170 - Austin, Texas

Charles Buerschinger

Past Texas Veterans Commission
Deputy Executive Director

Ad E. Frank

AMVET Department Commander
(2010-2011)

Thomas Graham

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund
Texas Outreach Communications Coordinator
for the Education Center

Russell Gregorczyk

CPA – Jansen & Gregorczyk
TVC - Internal Auditor

Richard Hatfield

Member, Veterans Employment & Training Advisory Committee

Braden Jarnagin

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund
Texas Outreach Advisor for the Education Center

Jay Kimbrough

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund
Texas Outreach Coordinator
for the Education Center

Morgan Little

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

Kyle Mitchell

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

James E. Nier
Former Texas Veterans Commission
Executive Director

Marianne Rogers
Chair - Veterans Employment & Training Advisory Committee

Jan Scruggs
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Founder & President

Ken Wallingford
Veterans Liaison, Texas Veterans Land Board