

LAURA KOERNER
US Navy Veteran
Chairwoman

MARY LOPEZ DALE
US Army Veteran
Secretary

MIKE P. HERNANDEZ
Corporal, US Marine Corps (Retired)
Member



KEVIN BARBER
US Army Veteran
Member

CHUCK WRIGHT
US Marine Corps Veteran
Member

THOMAS P. PALLADINO
Colonel, US Army (Retired)
Executive Director

TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

Veteran Services Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda

Monday, February 12, 2024

10:00 a.m.

George H.W. Bush Building

1801 Congress Ave., Suite 14.100, Austin, Texas 78701

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88525916539?pwd=ZXEWNEVraURjZmpjVTNXMWpsa01aZz09>

I. Call to order.

- Chair Earl Newsome called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

II. Roll call of Committee members.

- Earl Newsome present held roll call. Sara Henly: present. Lee Rivas: absent. Greg Gomel: present. Jim Cunningham: present. Jim Brennan: present. Larry Wallace: absent, joined at 10:06 a.m. Shelly Mencacci: resigned from committee. Kitty Meyers: present

III. Public comment.

- Pat Patterson had signed up for public comment. He had not arrived yet, but Chair Newsome suggested, and members agreed, to have him speak when he arrived.
- At 10:46 a.m., the speaker arrived. Veteran County Service Officer Pat Patterson addressed the committee. He expressed concerns that prisoners of war (POWs) and their spouses are not receiving all the benefits they are entitled to. He referenced the VBA guidebook and VHA numbers do not match. He suggests various government agencies push with VA to make presentations to nursing homes and assisted living homes where most of these POWs and spouses would be. Patterson referenced there are bad actors out there as well pretending to be former POWs. He referenced outreach and push with the VA to confirm identities.
 - Larry Wallace referenced this topic is similar to the focus point the committee had been discussing earlier in the meeting.

- Chair Newsome referenced another committee he chairs and the efforts to scrub who is in receipt of benefits. Encouraged Patterson to submit request to committee.

IV. Approve the minutes of the VSAC meeting held Aug. 9, 2023.

- Mr. Newsome referenced the approval of the May 8, 2023, minutes. Motion to approve made by Jim Brennan, seconded by Jim Cunningham and unanimously approved.
- Five minutes into the meeting, Mr. Newsome referenced the Aug. 9, 2023, minutes, and the need for an “e” at the end of his name.

V. Announcement of Committee Chair.

- This agenda item was inadvertently skipped.

VI. Election of Committee Vice Chair.

- This agenda item was inadvertently skipped and returned to this agenda item later in the meeting.
- At 10:44, we returned to the Election of the Committee Vice Chair.
- Chair Newsome asked Jim Brennan, who responded that his time constraints make that commitment difficult.
- ACTION: Jim Cunningham nominated Larry Wallace as the Vice Chair. Jim Brennan seconded the nomination. All voted in favor of Larry Wallace as Vice Chair.

VII. Review TVC’s Veteran Entrepreneur Program (VEP) verification letter backlog.

- Megan Tamez, Entrepreneur Director, provided an update in Item VIII.
- At 11:05 a.m., Tamez requested the committee return to items from the Aug. 9, 2023, agenda, Item V: Update of Veteran Entrepreneur Program. Tamez referenced that their full update has never been given to the committee as they continue to make updates.
- Chair Newsome referenced notes from subcommittee meetings with VEP were meant to be discussed on the Aug. 9, 2023.
- Member Kitty Meyers confirmed the meeting was cut off by the video conferencing. Said the subcommittee report should be in minutes.
- Chair Newsome requested the Agenda for the May 15, 2024, meeting include an item for Update of Veteran Entrepreneur Program.

- Tamez referenced they mail two stickers and embossed certificates to VOBs.
 - Vice Chair Larry Wallace asked if there is a plan to reach out to those already registered to get the certificate.
 - Tamez said they've certified about 6,500 since 2021. Explained difficulty with funding and staff size to reach out to all of them.
 - Chair Newsome asked if there was a way on the website to have a list of all VOB certified. Communications Director addressed difficulty of a list like that on the website.
 - Greg Gomel suggested reaching out to veteran business outreach centers at school campuses.
 - Tamez said they are operating at 24-48 turnaround with all five of them working on certifying with the letters and logos. Said they are working with UT Arlington on consulting piece.
 - Vice Chair Wallace suggested a Veterans Education conference in Dallas, and asked if this is meant to be an outreach effort with the certificate.
 - Tamez referenced the state benefit that could run out in 2025, and the small team in reference to increasing outreach.
 - Chair Newsome asked if there is a requirement for the state to run their contractor bids by their VOB list for veteran preference program.
 - Tamez said after TVC assists them in creating business and getting verification letter.
 - General Counsel raised concern the Committee is going off agenda.

VIII. Communication Update - Website resources and trademark logo.

- Tamez informed the committee they are working with General Counsel Kathy Cordova and South Texas College of Law to get logo trademark completed. All information sent to college. TVC logo has been trademarked quickly.
- Tamez then returned to agenda item VII.
- After discussion on VII, Tamez informed the committee that there is no backlog and they have a full team of four people overseeing a newly established four districts.
 - Before Jan. 1, 2024, all VEP staff became accredited small business consultants through AASBC

- At 11:12, Tamez returned to this item to reference they mail two stickers and embossed certificates to VOBs.
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 - Chair Newsome asked if there was a way on the website to have a list of all VOB certified. Communications Director addressed difficulty of a list like that on the website.
 - Greg Gomel suggested reaching out to veteran business outreach centers at school campuses.
 - Tamez said they are operating at 24-48 turnaround with all five of them working on certifying with the letters and logos. Said they are working with UT Arlington on consulting piece.
 - Vice Chair Wallace suggested Veterans Education conference in Dallas, and asked if this is meant to be an outreach effort with the certificate.

IX. Discussion – Areas of focus for FY24.

- Chair Newsome referenced news article sent before meeting for consideration which references the story of how a veteran with “less than honorable” discharge, and was ultimately allowed to get VA care, and how others may be eligible too.
- Chair Newsome referenced news article sent before meeting for consideration referencing the number of POWs and the difference in numbers by VA.
- Chair Newsome proposed a possible topic for FY24 as targeted outreach to senior veterans, 55 and up. He referenced the fear of disability rating being reduced and how the 20 year mark is a benchmark.
 - TVC Executive Director Tom Palladino visited the advisory committee in person and welcomed and thanked the advisory committee members.
 - Member Jim Brennan provided feedback on potential focus including a potential survey of Veteran Service Organizations like American Legion for their input.
 - Member Jim Cunningham provided comment referencing how he just recently applied to the VA, and how this makes a good focus for FY24.
 - Member Sara Henly provided comment on difficulty of process for veterans.

- At 11:02 a.m., Member James Cunningham provided more feedback on combat related disability and changes in the system.
- Chair Newsome asked members if there were any other areas where the committee should explore this year.
- Chair Newsome asked TVC Communications Director Angela Woellner if they could create a YouTube video or marketing video. Woellner confirmed.
- Chair Newsome suggested asking about working with incarcerated veterans for upgrading discharges.
- Chair Newsome asked about an update on two Claims employees selected to work after normal business hours.

X. Discussion – Agenda items; date/time and location for next VSAC or Subcommittee meeting.

- At 11:24, Chair Newsome requested that the next meeting include two primary agenda items for discussion:
 - Veteran Entrepreneur Program Update
 - Subcommittee comments and report
 - General discussion on program
 - Targeted Outreach to Veterans Over the Age of 55
- Chair Newsome scheduled the next meeting for 10 a.m. on May 15, 2024.

XI. Adjournment.

- Motion to adjourn meeting made by James Cunningham, seconded by Jim Brennan. All in favor. Meeting adjourned.



 Signed – Chair Earl S. Newsome III

16 MAY 2024

 Date