



**TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION
FOURTH QUARTER COMMISSION MEETING (FY 2024)
Thursday, August 15, 2024, 9:00 a.m.
1801 Congress Ave, Board Room 4.300, Austin, TX 78701**

MINUTES

I. OPENING

- A. Chairwoman Laura Koerner calls the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.
- B. Roll call:

Secretary Barber informs Chairwoman Koerner that there is a quorum.

Chairwoman Laura Koerner, Vice-Chair Mary Dale, Secretary Kevin Barber, Commissioner Mike Hernandez (via zoom), and Commissioner Chuck Wright.
Executive Director Thomas P. Palladino was also present.

- C. Vice Chair Mary Dale led the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag, and Secretary Kevin Barber led the Pledge to the Texas Flag.
- D. Chip Osborne led the Commission in prayer.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

- A. Jon Allman, Warm Springs Foundation, Financial Assistance Renewal.
- B. Judge John Roach, Collin County Courthouse, North Texas Veterans Court and Valor. Equine therapy for veterans started on the prison property. **1. Request to increase the maximum grant amount for the Regional Veterans Courts. 2. Get a grantee focus group to work with TVC to improve the processes for the grantees.**

III. CONSENT AGENDA

Action regarding approval of the Consent Agenda. She asked if any commissioner wanted to remove anything from the consent agenda and place it on the FY 24, 4Q Commission Meeting agenda. No items were moved to the FY24, 4Q Commission Meeting agenda.

Chairwoman Koerner removed Item B, Acceptance of Gifts, from the Consent Agenda since no gifts were received.

- A. FY24, 2Q Commission Meeting Minutes, May 16, 2024.
- B. Acceptance of Gifts - Removed
- C. Adopt Agency Rules Review and Repeal of Chapter 455, TAPS Program, and Readoption of Chapter 456, Contract Negotiation and Mediation, with Amendments, in Title 40, Part 15 of the Texas Administrative Code.
- D. Adopt Agency Rules Review and Readoption of Chapter 461, Veterans Education, with Amendments, in Title 40, Part 15 of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC).

- E. Adopt repeal of Title 40, Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Part 15, Chapter 455, TAPS Program.
- F. Adopt amendments to Title 40, TAC, Part 15, Chapter 456, Contract Negotiation and Mediation, §456.8, Negotiation Timetable, and 456.13, Request for Contested Case Hearing.

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Kevin Barber and seconded by Secretary Mary Dale to approve the items on the Consent Agenda.

VOTE: 5-0: Motion Passed.

IV. PRESENTATIONS

- A. **“We Hire Vets” Employer Recognition Presentation** – Commissioner Joe Esparza presented the award.
- B. **Public Policy Research Institute - Texas Veterans Needs Assessment Study** – PhD Nandita Chaudhuri and Andrea Sesock presented the results from the needs assessment.
- C. **Quarterly Presentations from Advisory Committees.**
 - 1. VCSO Advisory Committee Chair Report. – no quorum, so the meeting was canceled.
 - 2. Veteran Services Advisory Committee Chair Report. – Earl Newsome presented.

V. REPORTS

- A. **FY 2024 Internal Audit Update and Report.**

Mr. Daniel Graves presented the report. The rating for this report was “strong.”

 - 1. Finding – finalizing policies and procedures, reviewing, approving, and publishing policies.
 - 2. Annual Internal Audit Report — there is no significant departure.
 - B. **Report on Agency Departments and Programs.**
 - 1. **Program Operations Division.** Charles Catoe, Division Director of Program Operations, provided the Commissioners with the training updates for VES – Employment vacancies within the division, Vets Ed update, HCAD recognition.
 - 2. **Resource Management Division.** Chip Osborne, Division Director of Resource Management, provided the Commissioners with department updates.
 - a. HR Employee Engagement Survey – moved agenda item to November 2024 meeting.
 - b. VEP Director, Megan Tamez – Highlight Veteran Business, Owner: Wreaths by Nicole
 - c. Finance – Stephanie Robinson, Chief Financial Officer - Appropriation Year 2024 Third Quarter Operating Statement, gave the Commissioners a detailed brief on the Appropriation Year 2024 Third Quarter Operating Statement.
 - C. **Deputy Executive Director Report.** Shawn Deabay, Deputy Executive Director, provided updates.
 - 1. TCCVS final report – Aug 28th
 - 2. House DVAC interim hearing – Aug 20th, the following will be briefing:
 - a. Dr. Blake Harris, Director, Veteran Mental Health Department – Veteran Suicide Prevention Campaign and Military Cultural Competency
 - b. Elaine Zavala, Director, Fund for Veterans’ Assistance – Service Dog Program
 - c. Angela Woellner, Director Communications and Outreach – Identification and Support of Texas Veterans.
 - 3. Women Veterans Program four WVD events across the state, attended other WVD events
 - 4. Communications – new graphic design for Grants Across Texas
 - 5. East Texas Veterans Resource Fair – Tyler, TX, held Aug 10, 2024
- Upcoming events**
- 6. Inaugural Kerr County Veterans Benefits Fair – September 5, 2024

7. Bexar County Heroes Veterans Festival – September 14, 2024

- D. **Executive Director Report.** Thomas Palladino, Executive Director, provided a report on the agency's upcoming priorities
1. 89th Legislative session starts in January 2025.
 2. New RFA – 2025-2026 cycle.
 3. Check Presentations starting September 4th through October 10th, 2024.
 4. Veteran Benefit Fairs coming up every few months.
 5. AY 2025, 2d half of Biennial budget briefed by Stephanie Robinson, 5% salary increase, operating budget, begin briefing on LAR with final submission date to LBB, September 6, 2024.
 6. Needs Assessment incorporating into the Exceptional Items
 7. Employee Engagement Survey—Anything over 350 is good; most areas are over 400. One item that needs more attention is Pay and Benefits.

BREAK 10:23 am – 10:36 am

VI. CONSIDERATIONS

- A. ***Action regarding the City of El Paso's Amendment request to Increase the FVA Grant Amount.*** Elaine Zavala, Director, Fund for Veterans' Assistance, presented this agenda item.

MOTION: Made by Secretary Kevin Barber and seconded by Commissioner Mike Hernandez to approve the amendment to increase the GY 2024-2025 City of El Paso's Transportation grant by \$50,000 for a total of \$100,000.

VOTE: 5-0: Motion Passed.

- B. ***Action regarding the Proposed Amendments to Title 40, Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 461.*** Charlie Catoe, Division Director, Program Operations, presented this agenda item

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Chuck Wright and seconded by Vice Chair Mary Dale to approve the proposed amendments to Title 40, Texas Administrative Code, and Chapter 461.

VOTE: 5-0: Motion Passed.

- C. ***Action regarding the approval of the 2024 Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA).*** David Salgado, Director, Veterans Education, presented this agenda item.

MOTION: Made by Vice Chair Mary Dale and seconded by Commissioner Mike Hernandez to approve the 2024 Veteran Education Excellence Recognition Award (VEERA).

VOTE: 5-0: Motion Passed.

- D. ***Action regarding the approval of the 2024 TVC Advisory Committee's Evaluation and Recommendations.*** Shawn Deabay, Deputy Executive Director, presented this agenda item.

MOTION: Made by Vice Chair Mary Dale and seconded by Commissioner Chuck Wright to approve the 2024 TVC Advisory Committee's Evaluation and Recommendations.

VOTE: 5-0: Motion Passed.

- E. ***Action regarding the approval of the Fund for Veterans' Assistance 2025-2026 Request for Application (RFA).*** Elaine Zavala, Director, Fund for Veterans' Assistance, presented this agenda item.

MOTION: Made by Vice Chair Mary Dale and seconded by Secretary Kevin Barber to approve the 2025-2026 Request for Application (RFA).

VOTE: 5-0: Motion Passed.

DISCUSSION: Commission Chuck Wright would like to increase Regional and Statewide courts to increase their upper limit to \$750, 000.

AMENDED MOTION: Made by Chairwoman Laura Koerner on behalf of Commissioner Chuck Wright. I request that the motion be amended to change the funding amount increase found on page 13 from \$400,000 to \$600,000 for the Veteran Treatment Court category to \$400,000 to \$750,000.

SECONDED BY: Commissioner Chuck Wright

VOTE: 1-4: Motion Failed. Nay: Chairwoman Laura Koerner, Vice Chair Mary Dale, Secretary Kevin Barber, Commissioner Mike Hernandez.

REVERTS TO ORIGINAL MOTION: 5-0: Motion Passed.

- F. ***Action regarding the approval of the Appropriation Year 2025 Operating Budget and the Executive Director's Salary Increase.*** Stephanie Robinson, Chief Financial Officer, presented this agenda item.

MOTION: Made by Commissioner Chuck Wright and seconded by Vice Chair Mary Dale to approve the Appropriation Year 2025 Operating Budget and the Executive Director's Salary Increase.

VOTE: 5-0. Motion Passed.

- G. ***Action regarding the 2026-2027 Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR); will be deferred to the Special Commission meeting. Presentation and guidance regarding the approval of the 2026 Exceptional Items and the order they are prioritized.*** Stephanie Robinson, Chief Financial Officer, presented this agenda item (2:09)

VII. Executive Session. None.

VIII. Discuss and take action on the items considered in Executive Session. There were no items to act on.

IX. Discussion about setting the date, time, and location of the next Commission Meeting

The Commission agreed that the Special Commission meeting will be held August 29, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. F.Y. 2025, 1st Quarterly Commission Meeting of will be held on Thursday, November 14, 2024,

at 9:00 a.m. HQ Austin TX, George H.W. Bush building, 4th floor board room.

X. Adjournment.

Chairwoman Koerner asked each Commissioner for any closing remarks.

Each Commissioner and the Executive Director extended their gratitude to the Texas Veterans Commission staff, Chairwoman Koerner, and the participating organizations for their support and hard work in serving Texas Veterans. Chairwoman Koerner provided closing remarks as well.

Chairwoman Koerner adjourned the meeting at 11:42 a.m.

Approved by:



Laura Koerner, Chairwoman