

MINUTES**WAR MEMORIAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES****VETERANS COMMITTEE / SPECIAL BOARD MEETING****Thursday, January 8, 2026**

The Veterans Committee of the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco met on Thursday, January 8, 2026, at 1:00 p.m., in the Trustees' Board Room, War Memorial Opera House, Chair Kopp presiding.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Kopp, Trustee Rocco, Trustee Wright, President Wilsey *ex officio*, and Vice President Horn, *ex officio*

Absent: Trustee Gatti and Trustee Newstat

Staff Present: Kate Sofis, Managing Director and Francesca Cicero, Board Secretary

REGULAR ITEMS

Notice of Space Allocation from American Legion War Memorial Commission for Veterans Organizations seeking to occupy space in the Veterans Building: Managing Director Kate Sofis explained that under the War Memorial Trust Agreement, the American Legion War Memorial Commission may install certain types of patriotic organizations to occupy space rent-free in the Veterans Building, subject to approval by the War Memorial Board of Trustees. Mario Benfield, Chair of the American Legion War Memorial Commission, explained that the Commission recently voted to approve the list of occupants submitted to the Board, and noted that many of the organizations have a small footprint, a desk or mailbox within a Post's office on the second floor of the Veterans Building. Director Sofis noted the difference between these small organizations and an organization like Swords to Plowshares, which occupy a much larger space in the building with a separate lease agreement with the City. She also remarked on the richness of the organizations and their service to and on behalf of veterans. There were questions about a few of the organizations on the list who were missing their tax identification information and Sponsoring Post information. Trustee Rocco stated that if the Board were to approve the list it would be important to have their organizational status 501(c)3 or (c)19 via their tax ID and which Post was sponsoring the organization for liability and insurance purposes.

Following discussion, and on motion of Vice President Wilsey seconded by Trustee Rocco, the following recommendation was unanimously adopted:

RECOMMENDED, To the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco that it approve the proposed allocation of space in the Veterans Building for the veterans organizations submitted by the American Legion War Memorial Commission, contingent upon staff receiving any outstanding organizational and tax ID information within 30 days.

Proposed Resolution to Waive Rental Costs for American Legion War Memorial Commission-sponsored Veterans Service Organizations Occupying Second Floor Office Space in the Veterans Building: Director Sofis explained to the Board that these veterans service organizations are permitted to occupy space in the Veterans Building rent-free. However, the organizations must pay annualized Occupancy Fees per square foot of space, which can feel similar to rental payments, especially for small nonprofit organizations. She noted that staff has proposed a one-year pilot program to waive fees for these veteran-serving organizations, which are not occupying full offices in the Veterans Building, as an incentive to the good work they are doing for veterans in the Veterans Building. Trustee Wright also proposed an annual report to the Board of Trustees so the Board can understand the breadth and depth of work these organizations are undertaking in the Veterans Building. Mario Benfield clarified that none of the organizations on the submitted list occupy a full office and may only occupy a

mailbox or a locker.

Following discussion, and on motion of Trustee Kopp, seconded by Trustee Rocco, the following recommendation was unanimously adopted:

RECOMMENDED, To the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco that it approve a one-year waiver of Occupancy Fees for the proposed veterans service organizations, contingent upon staff receiving any outstanding organizational and tax ID information within 30 days, and requiring the organizations receiving the waiver to present an annual report of their 2026 activities at a Veterans Committee meeting of the Board of Trustees, to be held in January 2027.

Proposed Increase to Monthly Amounts Paid to American Legion War Memorial Commission: Director Sofis explained every two years the War Memorial and the American Legion War Memorial negotiate a contract that stems from the 1977 transfer of management and control of what is now the Herbst Theatre and the Green Room from the American Legion War Memorial Commission to the Trustees. This agreement was made in exchange for the Commission receiving a more assured source of income to help cover the Commission's office expenses related to administering Veterans Building space allocated for veterans' use.

The last renewal agreement covered the 2-year period effective January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2026. In the last renewal, it specified that the monthly payments for 2026 would be based on a calculation of 15% of gross revenue sales at the Herbst Theatre in the previous year. Director Sofis stated that the 2026 calculation results in a monthly payment of \$4,500, a modest increase over \$4,450 monthly payments in 2025. She noted while rentals in the Herbst have remained flat, the modest increase is in the spirit of good faith to the aims of the contract. Vice President Wilsey advocated for increased bookings in all the venues. Mario Benfield thanked the Board for the increase.

Following discussion, and on motion of Trustee Kopp, seconded by Trustee Rocco, the following recommendation was unanimously adopted:

RECOMMENDED, To the Board of Trustees of the War Memorial of San Francisco that it approve the proposed monthly payment of \$4500 to be paid to the American Legion War Memorial Commission for 2026.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There being no public comment, Chair Kopp closed public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Kopp adjourned the meeting at 1:46 p.m.

/s/ Francesca Cicero
Board Secretary