



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT

Tuesday, February 10, 2026 – 6:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER

President Barnickel called meeting to order at 6:05PM.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Commission Secretary read the Ramaytush Ohlone land acknowledgement.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

President Bill Barnickel, Vice-President Hanley Chan, Commissioners Joseph Baba, James Boatman, Deborah Dacumos, John Reissenweber, Nicholas Rusanoff

EXCUSED:

Commissioners Darya Kutovaya, Prince Kelly Jordan, Jenny Perez

Quorum established.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commission and attendees recited Pledge of Allegiance.

SET AGENDA

President Barnickel asked for comments/changes to the agenda. Hearing none, a motion was called to approve agenda:

Motion / Second / All in Favor

Motion passed. Agenda approved as posted.

Absent: Kutovaya, Jordan, Perez



COMMUNICATIONS

County Veterans Service (CVSO) – January Report:

- The CVSO acting director was absent due to attendance at a conference. The January report was submitted and posted on the Commission's website.

VAC Executive Team Updates:

- **Secretary:**
 - Noted that two Mayor-appointed seats remain vacant, and the Mayor's Appointment Office has indicated applications are currently under review. Additionally, one Board of Supervisors-appointed seat became vacant following the recent resignation of Commissioner Chittavong. Commissioners were encouraged to raise awareness of these vacancies among veterans living in San Francisco.
 - Mayor Certificates of Honor approved at last month's meeting are pending finalization from the Mayor's office. Mayor's Communication Office requested additional details. It is anticipated that certificates will be ready for the March 10 commission meeting.
 - HSA graphic designer has returned from leave. A mock-up design for VAC lapel pins is expected with next couple of weeks.
 - Update re Meeting Recordings: VAC website does not support hosting recorded meetings. While the cost may be significant, the Commission may consider requesting SFGovTV to stream and archive its meetings. Funding for this service would need to come from HSA, as VAC is housed within that department. The Secretary will follow up with HSA to determine the process and obtain cost estimates. It was clarified that City departments cannot solicit private donations for these services; funding must be secured through departmental budget channels.
 - Email / MFA Issues: It was noted that some commissioners have recently reported difficulty receiving multi-factor authentication codes. If commissioners have any issues with city email accounts, please reach out to the commission secretary.
- **Vice-President:**
 - Spoke about proposed extension of small business license fee waiver for veterans. Currently new small businesses in San Francisco receive a one-year business registration fee waiver. Discussions are underway with offices of Supervisor Wong and Supervisor Sherrill about



extending this waiver to two years for veteran-owned new businesses. When a draft proposal is ready, VP Chan will bring this topic to the Commission for a formal discussion.

- **President:**

- President Barnickel emphasized the importance of ensuring that applicants understand the Commission's role and responsibilities. He noted that some recent applicants appeared unclear about the Commission's function and authority, specifically that it operates as an unchartered advisory policy body. He recommended that appointing authorities (Mayor and Board of Supervisors) provide this clarification during the application process.
- Spoke about a commission president from four or five years ago who gave commissioners the autonomy to do what they wanted to do as long as they reported back to the president. President Barnickel noted he organized several job fairs for veterans and reported this back to the president to include with commission accomplishments for the year. Encouraged commissioners to reach out to Board of Supervisors and let them know about veterans issues, especially about need for veteran housing.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

- President Barnickel asked if there were comments or questions from commissioners about the January 13, 2026 meeting minutes. No comments from commissioners. No public comment. **[ACTION]**
- Motion to approve / Second / All in Favor
- Minutes approved as submitted.

Absent: Kutovaya, Jordan, Perez

NEW BUSINESS

- Coordinate follow-up to response to Commission's January outreach letters to the Board of Supervisors. Invitations received from Districts 2 and 8 for one or two commissioners to meet with supervisors' staff to discuss veteran issues specific to their district. Commissioners interested in participating should coordinate with the commission secretary after **[DISCUSSION]**
- It was noted that Commissioner Dacumos has been in contact with District 8 office.



- After discussion, VP Chan and Commissioner Reissenweber volunteered to meet with District 2 office. The commission secretary will contact the commissioners after the meeting to coordinate scheduling.
- Review and vote on a draft letter to the Board of Supervisors expressing the Commission's concern with Streamlining Task Force recommendation to remove "Commission" from the Veterans Affairs Commission name. Letter outlines the Commission's position on this recommendation and urges the Board of Supervisors to reject it. **[ACTION]**
 - Commissioner discussed the confusion that may be caused by removing Commission from its name and stressed that historical context supports retaining name. President Barnickel called for a motion to approve draft letter.
 - Motion to approve / Second / All in Favor
 - Letter approved as submitted and will be sent by commission secretary.

Absent: Kutovaya, Jordan, Perez

- Recognize passage of CA SB 694 and discuss need for additional measures to protect veterans from online fraud. SB 694 addresses predatory practices targeting veterans' benefits. Commission discussed need for broader protections against online scams and look to identify a potential expert speaker to present on this issue at a future meeting. **[DISCUSSION]**
 - Commissioners noted the need to protect veterans benefits and commended the passage of this important legislation.
 - Commissioner Dacumos led a discussion about the need for much broader protections against other types of scams such as online medical emergency scams and social media-based targeting. These scams have led to financial ruin for many elderly and disabled veterans. Commissioners discussed finding someone to present about this issue at a future commission meeting – either from the District Attorney's Office, City Attorney's Office, or Adult Protective Services. VP Chan offered assistance with outreach contacts.

OLD BUSINESS

- Review and vote to approve a draft letter from the Commission to Supervisor Alan Wong's office regarding VA home loans. **[ACTION]**
 - Commission revisited previously discussed concerns regarding barriers to the VA home loan process. A motion was called to approve the draft letter to Supervisor Wong, which



notes that Commissioner Rusanoff will contact the Supervisor's office to speak about this issue on behalf of the Commission.

- Motion to approve / Second / All in Favor
- Letter approved as submitted and will be sent by the commission secretary.

Absent: Kutovaya, Jordan, Perez

GOOD WELFARE

This is the opportunity for members of the Veterans Affairs Commission to share special thanks and congratulatory remarks for the good welfare taking place in the veteran community.

- Commissioner Rusanoff extended good welfare for the January 27 vigil held at the San Francisco VA in memory of Minneapolis VA health worker Alex Pretti. Commissioner Rusanoff, Commissioner Reissenweber, and Commissioner Perez were honored to stand with SFVA healthcare workers at this very moving, spontaneous and community-driven event.
- Commissioner Barnickel extended good welfare to Robert Vicari, a 93-year-old Marine and Korean War veteran. Commissioner Barnickel shared that he visits Mr. Vicari weekly and is impressed by his strength and alertness. He wished to acknowledge and honor Mr. Vicari's service as a Marine and Korean War veteran.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Commissioner Chan said tomorrow is the Milvet conference at the Marines' Memorial in San Francisco.
- Commissioner Barnickel commended Commissioner Chan on the good work he did for the Super Bowl event at the War Memorial Building. He noted it was a great event with good turn out by veterans.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- No public comment.



HONOR REPORT AND MOMENT OF SILENCE

In memory of American service members in all wars and conflicts who made the ultimate sacrifice. We also remember the passing of homeless veterans, veterans who died while awaiting approval of benefits, and suicides within the veteran and armed service communities.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned by President Barnickel at 6:55pm.

The next regular meeting of the Veterans Affairs Commission will be held in-person at 6:00pm in Room 416 at San Francisco City Hall on **Tuesday, March 10, 2026**.

Links and meeting documents can be found on the Veterans Affairs Commission website.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Murphy
Commission Secretary
Veterans Affairs Commission

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Veterans Affairs Commission Meetings:



General meetings of the SFVAC are scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of every month, with the exception for the month of July, when there is no scheduled SF VAC meeting, and are held in Room 416 in City Hall.

Meeting confirmation, and specific announcement of general meetings are made via public posting of the Meeting Agenda as required by law, at least 72 hours prior to scheduled meetings. Agendas for SFVAC meetings (and archived meeting minutes) are available on the SFVAC Pages of the City of San Francisco website, and are also available for public view and inspection at the 5th Floor Government Information Center at the San Francisco Public Library, at 100 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102. The documents librarian telephone number is (415) 554-4472.

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**Veterans
Crisis Line**



If you or a Veteran, you know is in immediate danger to themselves or others, please call 911 or visit your local emergency room.

The Veterans Crisis Line is also available by texting 838255 or by going to their website and chatting with a mental health professional.



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Support

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