



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - APPROVED

Tuesday, April 8, 2025 – 6:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME

President Barnickel called the meeting to order at 6:00PM.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

President Bill Barnickel, Vice-President Nicholas Rusanoff, Commissioners James Boatman, Jason Chittavong, Prince Kelly Jordan, Darya Kutovaya, Jenny Perez, John Reissenweber

EXCUSED:

Joseph Baba, Hanley Chan, Deborah Dacumos

Quorum present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Barnickel led attendees in reciting Pledge of Allegiance.

SET AGENDA [Action]

President Barnickel called for motion to approve agenda.

Motion / Second / All in Favor

Motion passed. Agenda approved as submitted.

Absent: Baba, Chan, Dacumos

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

- Mayoral Certificate of Honor presented (posthumously) to United States Army Staff Sergeant Yuen Hop for his brave service and ultimate sacrifice during World War II. SSgt. Hop was reported as missing in action after his plane was shot down over Germany in December 1944. After many decades of search and recovery efforts, SSgt. Hop's recovered remains were finally returned home to San Francisco on January 31, 2025.



Earlier today, President Barnickel presented the Certificate of Honor to SSgt. Hop's sister, Mrs. Margery Wong, and her family. During the meeting, a picture of the certificate presentation was displayed for commissioners and meeting attendees.

Moment of silence observed for WWII veteran SSgt. Yuen Hop.

PRESENTATION

- Veterans Housing Priority Update. Presented by: Maria Benjamin, Deputy Director, Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD)

The presentation included PPT slides and an explanatory review of the housing lottery system and veteran priority preference. [See slides on VAC website for more information.]

Highlights included:

- Increase in number of veterans housed since priority was implemented. In 2023 (pre-priority) 3 veterans housed. In 2024 (with priority) 13 veterans housed.
- Shared a success story of a veteran housed in Hayes Valley.
- Listed upcoming veteran housing opportunities.

Following the presentation, Ms. Benjamin took questions and comments from commissioners. Discussion underscored the importance of commission's past and continuing advocacy for veterans housing in San Francisco and addressed neighboring counties' potential adoption of preferences. VAC members expressed gratitude for MOHCD's update and were especially pleased to see an increase in the number of veterans housed.

COMMUNICATIONS

CVSO Report:

- The CVSO acting director, Maurice Delmer, presented the activities report for March. [See report on VAC website for more information.]

Highlights included:

- Increase in claims processed from February to March.
- Notable success story: Vietnam War Navy Veteran, homeless since 1968, was denied service connection in 1982. Re-engaged in 2024 and filed under current PTSD criteria. Awarded 100% PTSD compensation in February 2025 with back pay of over \$19,000.
- Commissioner Reissenweber participated in video content for SF Human Services Agency.
- Upcoming events: May 8 (PGA Hope), May 15 (City College, SF)



CVSO presentation was followed by a Q&A session with commissioners. Included was a brief follow-up discussion about a QR code for in-person appointments on CVSO flyer. Mr. Delmer answered Commissioner Reissenweber's question about this by noting the SFHSA Communications Team decided on a more accessible document that includes only one QR Code and not two or three. He noted the new flyer will have a single QR Code that links to CVSO webpage with appointment instructions for both virtual and in-person. The new flyer should be available within next two weeks. Further, Commissioner Reissenweber asked why SFCVSO does not have its own social media presence. Mr. Delmer noted CVSO falls under SFHSA and is connected to SFHSA social media account.

President Barnickel thanked Mr. Delmer for CVSO presentation and for all the good work being done at CVSO office. He especially noted the good work of John Gallagher at SF VA. Mr. Delmer briefly responded to that comment by noting their office is aware of the often high number of veteran clients at SF VA and efforts are being made to improve accessibility and wait time.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES [Action]

- President Barnickel asked if there were comments or questions from commissioners on March 11, 2025 meeting minutes. No comments.
- President Barnickel called for public comment. No public comment.
- Motion called to approve March 11, 2025 regular meeting minutes.
- Motion / Second / All in Favor. Motion passed. Minutes approved as submitted.

Absent: Baba, Chan, Dacumos

NEW BUSINESS

- Request for a Mayoral Certificate of Honor to acknowledge the retirement of Jia F. Li, Health Care Director with San Francisco VA Health Care System. President Barnickel asked for commission's approval by vote to request a certificate from the Mayor's Office. **[Action]**
 - Motion called to approve request of certificate. Seconded. All in Favor.
 - Motion approved. Commission's request for certificate will be sent to Mayor's Office.

Absent: Baba, Chan, Dacumos



- Draft letter regarding interaction of SF city departments with homeless veterans. Prior to the meeting, a letter drafted by Commissioner Rusanoff was shared with the commission. Commissioner Rusanoff led discussion, which included a vote to approve the letter. **[Action]**
 - It was noted letter is a first step in an ongoing dialogue with the Mayor's Office about city departments interaction with homeless veterans. Updates on this topic will be added to future VAC meeting agendas.
 - Motion called to approve sending letter.
 - Motion / Seconded / All in Favor. Letter approved as submitted.

Absent: Baba, Chan, Dacumos

OLD BUSINESS

- Update on Memorial Day Commemoration regarding Gold Star family attendance. Commissioner Dacumos to provide an update. **[Discussion]**
 - In Commissioner Dacumos's absence, the commission secretary shared a brief update: Event will be held Monday, May 26 at the Presidio. Commissioner Barnickel will lead Pledge of Allegiance and Commissioner Dacumos has coordinated participation of a Gold Star Family. The event's planning team is seeking SFFD participation and welcomes assistance from VAC to help make this connection. Commissioners with any contact information for SFFD please contact the VAC commission secretary.

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 Barnickel extended good welfare and congratulations to John Gallegher on an award he recently received from several federal agencies in acknowledgement of John's outstanding work helping veterans.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- No new announcements.



GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Speaker Chris Ward Kline spoke about class action funding opportunity for San Francisco veterans. He said earlier today he submitted a packet to the Mayor and Board of Supervisors that explains process on how San Francisco can submit a claim. Noted this action should happen within the next few days. Encouraged commissioners to review packet and spread the word throughout veterans community. Recipients of class action funds will include SF VA, military non-profits, and the city.
- Speaker Stefanos urged support for veteran engagement events, including “Twilight Golf,” events being planned at new Great Highway parkway, and various youth programs at public schools.
- Speaker Trey Matchin, special assistant to California State Senator Adam Schiff. Mr. Matchin noted he was introduced to commissioners prior to the meeting and he reaffirmed the Senator’s commitment to veterans.

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.

Commissioner Rusanoff remembered the four United States soldiers lost in Lithuania swamp accident:

Staff Sgt. Jose Duenez Jr., 25, of Joliet, Illinois; Staff

Sgt. Edwin F. Franco, 25, of Glendale, California

Pfc. Dante D. Taitano, 21, of Dededo, Guam

Staff Sgt. Troy S. Knutson-Collins, 28, of Battle Creek, Michigan

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned with thanks by President Barnickel at 7:18pm.



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, May 13, 2025.

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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