



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, August 11, 2026 – 6:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER

President Barnickel called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

President Bill Barnickel, VP Hanley Chan, Council Members: Joseph Baba, James Boatman, Channie Barker, Deborah Dacumos (remote), Aditya Lakshminarayan, Jenny Perez

EXCUSED:

John Reissenweber, Nicholas Rusanoff

Quorum established.

RAMAYTUSH OHLONE LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The council secretary read the land acknowledgment.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Council members and attendees recited Pledge of Allegiance.

SET AGENDA

President Barnickel asked if there were comments or changes to the agenda. No changes. Agenda approved as submitted.

COMMUNICATIONS

County Veterans Service (CVSO) – July Report:

Gerardo Carr, CVSO manager, presented an activities report for July. [Full CVSO report is posted on VAC website.]

- Gerardo reported that July was a particularly busy month for the office. He reviewed the report's numbers, including benefits awarded, scheduled appointments, walk-in clients,



claims filed, and medical verifications. He highlighted the achievement of more than \$1 million in benefits awarded, noting that this represented a significant milestone for the CVSO office.

- Gerardo further reported that that office had begun transitioning to a new area code and phone number. The change is being implemented gradually, with business cards, flyers, website, and other materials being updated. The office is coordinating with the City's design team on new promotional materials and signage, with completion anticipated by October.
- Finally, Gerardo announced that on June 8, 2026, he was selected to lead the San Francisco County Veterans Services Office. He expressed his appreciation for the opportunity and described his goals as ensuring that veterans and their dependents understand and successfully access federal, state, and local benefits and services. He emphasized maintaining a highly trained and accredited staff while increasing outreach to underserved, disabled, homeless, and LGBTQ+ veterans.

Council discussion comments included:

- Council VP Chan asked when the position Gerardo held prior to his promotion would be filled. Gerardo explained that the position will likely remain vacant for up to a year due to budget considerations. He added that he has raised with leadership the possibility of filling the position sooner because of the office's significant workload needs.
- Council VP Chan asked for amount of state funding allocated to SFCVSO. Gerardo said he would request the information from appropriate department handling CVSO budget and provide information if authorized to do so. Council VP Chan noted the information should be available as a public record and he could request through the City's Sunshine process if necessary.
- Several council members congratulated Gerardo on being selected as new CVSO manager. A council member reported receiving positive feedback from CVSO staff regarding Gerardo's support, responsiveness, and attention to staff working conditions.
- Gerardo announced that the San Francisco VA Medical Center will host a car show on Saturday, August 29 from 10:00am to 2:00pm. CVSO staff plan to conduct outreach at the event.
- As there was no further discussion, Gerardo thanked the council for its time and concluded his presentation.

VAC Executive Team Updates:



Secretary:

- Reported that council member Prince Jordan resigned from the Council on June 15, 2026. With this resignation, the Council has three vacant seats. All are BOS appointments.
- Followed up about recent multi-factor authentication (MFA) updates to council members' City email accounts. It seems that most members have successfully completed updates. If there are any problems with email, members were reminded to contact the secretary.

Vice-President:

- VP Chan welcomed council members back from recess. He encouraged council members to work as a whole and advocate for the veterans community in San Francisco. He noted he would have more to say during New Business.

President:

- President Bill Barnickel shared a story about a moving event he attended to honor a 94-year-old San Francisco resident and Korean War veteran. Bill noted the veteran fought in the Battle of the Punchbowl with the Marines during the war. The San Francisco VA Hospital contacted the Secretary of Veterans Affairs in Washington, D.C., to request a Certificate of Honor. The certificate was presented to the veteran during a ceremony at his San Francisco home.

President Barnickel further noted that he speaks with many veterans during his visits to the VA Hospital on Wednesdays, and many are unaware of the benefits available to them. He discussed the idea of hosting a veterans forum, separate from the VAC and not VAC-sanctioned, where council members could volunteer independently. The forum could be held at the War Memorial Building and help with benefits, as well as legal and employment support.

Lastly, President Barnickel talked about the VAC being changed from a commission to a council. He recommended contacting the City Attorney or Supervisor Mandelman to explore reverting back to commission status. He believes there is a good chance this change could be achieved.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES [ACTION]

- President Barnickel asked council members if there were comments or corrections to the June 9, 2026 meeting minutes. He called for public comment re meeting minutes. No public comment.



- Motion to approve / Second / All in Favor
- June 9, 2026 meeting minutes approved as submitted.

Absent: Reissenweber, Rusanoff

NEW BUSINESS

- The Council considered a draft letter prepared by VP Hanley Chan to the Mayor and BoS regarding impacts to the VAC from the recent ordinance that enacted recommendations of the Streamlining Task Force. [ACTION / VOTE]
 - VP Hanley Chan addressed the Council in support of the letter. He stated the issue was not about assigning blame for the streamlining process, but about ensuring fairness and responding to concerns raised by the veterans community. He expressed particular concern about the sunset provision requiring the VAC to periodically justify its existence. He argued that veterans' needs are ongoing and therefore warrant a permanent voice in City government.
 - He requested the Council support the letter asking the Mayor and BoS to restore the historic name of San Francisco Veterans Affairs Commission, remove the sunset provision, remove the revised reporting requirements, and ensure veterans receive a permanent voice at City Hall.
 - Council members discussed the proposal and expressed support to move the letter forward.
 - Council member Dacumos referenced California statutory language concerning veterans affairs commissions and suggested the state code could be reviewed as part of the Council's legal research regarding its status and options.
 - Motion called to approve letter. Seconded. All in favor. Letter approved as submitted.

Absent: Reissenweber, Rusanoff

- Request a Mayoral Certificate of Honor for retiring employee of the San Francisco VA Medical Center. [ACTION / VOTE]
 - President Barnickel requested Council approval to ask for a Mayoral Certificate of Honor recognizing Terri Sharp, Associate Director of Patient Care Service at the SF VA Medical Center, in recognition of her retirement on August 30.



- President Barnickel talked about his long experience as a patient at the VA Medical Center, and emphasized the importance of recognizing the doctors, nurses, and staff who provide exceptional care and services to veterans.
- Motion was made and seconded to approve the request. Motion carried and request for certificate was approved.

Absent: Reissenweber, Rusanoff

- Draft letter regarding veterans' CalFresh Eligibility and the Mayor's Food Security Initiative. [ACTION / VOTE]
- Council members discussed the importance that veterans' needs are considered in the City's food security efforts.
- Motion made and seconded to approve the draft letter. Motion carried and letter was approved as submitted.

Absent: Reissenweber, Rusanoff

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.

- President Barnickel spoke about the importance of recognizing veterans, particularly older veterans, mentioning again the recent recognition of the 94-year-old Korean War veteran.
- Council members congratulated Supervisor Alan Wong on his recent election and promotion to Captain. It was also noted that Supervisor Wong recently recognized former Council member Jason Chittavong for his work in the veterans community.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Council member Baba reminded the Council that Fleet Week is coming up and encouraged members to begin reaching out to Board of Supervisors regarding ship tours.

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 6:47pm.

The next regular meeting of the Veterans Affairs Council will be held in-person at 6:00pm in Room 416 at San Francisco City Hall on **Tuesday, September 8, 2026**.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Murphy
Council Secretary
Veterans Affairs Council

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Veterans Affairs Council 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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