



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 9, 2025 – 6:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

President Bill Barnickel, Vice-President Nicholas Rusanoff, Commissioners Joseph Baba, James Boatman, Hanley Chan, Darya Kutovaya, Prince Kelly Jordan, Jenny Perez, John Reissenweber

EXCUSED:

Commissioners Jason Chittavong, Deborah Dacumos

Quorum established.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Led by President Barnickel.

SET AGENDA

Motion to approve agenda.

Motion / Second / All in Favor

Motion passed. Agenda approved as posted.

No public comment on the agenda.

Absent: Chittavong, Dacumos

PRESENTATIONS: President Barnickel

- Certificate of Honor to retiring SF VA Doctor
At the August 2025 commission meeting, members approved issuing a City & County Certificate of Honor to a retiring SF VA doctor, recognizing his decades of outstanding service



to veterans. Commissioners, notably Commissioners Rusanoff and Perez, presented certificates to Dr. John Straznickas with appreciation conveyed from the Mayor of San Francisco and the Board of Supervisors.

Dr. Straznickas expressed deep gratitude to the Commission for championing veteran issues, noting the humility of veterans and the importance of advocacy.

- Second presentation titled, “Supporting Veterans in Crisis” was presented by the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD). Presenters gave an overview of the newly opened 822 Geary Street Crisis Stabilization Unit. Highlights included:
 - SFPD described interagency crisis response pathways for veterans, including Health Streets Operations Center (HSOC), SFPD Crisis Intervention Team (CIT), and collaboration with VA Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO). It was noted officers are briefed on veteran-oriented resources (e.g. Swords to Plowshares, and other non-profits) and attempt referrals in the field when accepted.
 - Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU): Opened April 28, 2025. Provides 24/7, community-based, short-term behavioral health stabilization; initial focus on first-responder referrals (CRT/SFPD/SFFD).
 - Early operating data (through July): steady utilization; dispositions include treatment/ ongoing care, return home, shelter placement, occasional hospital transfer. Veteran status is asked at intake and recorded, CSU coordinates with SF VA Hospital when applicable.
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 - Comments from commissioners included: A recommendation to reinforce veteran status screening during initial police contacts and encampment outreach. SFPD presenter responded that they would brief district commands and add organization contacts received from commissioners. Further, there was interest in opportunities for veteran volunteers to assist crisis work. Presenter to check existing pathways for this and report back.

COMMUNICATIONS

County Veterans Service Office Report:

- SFCVSO acting director Maurice Delmer presented August report. [For more information, please see slides posted to VAC website.] Highlights from report and commissioner Q&A included:



- Reviewed operational trends (August vs. July): walk-ins up 66.8%, total services up 7.4%
- Updated on SB 694 ('claims shark' protections): Passed Assembly; facing debate in Senate – importance of curbing predatory, fee-based unaccredited actors emphasized.
- Annual report submitted to Controller and HSA; performance targets exceeded across categories; SOGI data collection improvement continues.
- Outreach: Successful California College Fee Waiver clinic with San Francisco State University (SFSU); a Thursday, October 9 clinic has been planned (disability claims support), coordinated with SFSU veteran services and community partners. SF Disability and Aging Services Department (DAS) has coordinated a veteran community needs assessment for September 24, with \$50 participate stipends.
- Commissioners requested the CVSO report show separate numbers for virtual vs. in-person appointments. Additionally, there was a request for CVSO to explore ways to incorporate information about the veterans' priority in the affordable housing lottery when claims reps interact with veterans.
- Further comments were shared by Commissioner Barnickel about past consumer fraud schemes against veterans. Emphasized importance of protecting veterans against predatory actors.

VAC Executive Team Updates:

- Secretary: Reminded about change to Commission's November meeting date and room location. Due to Veterans Day holiday (November 11), the Commission's regularly scheduled meeting on November 11 has been rescheduled to **Thursday, November 6 at 6:00pm in Room 408**. Also shared two updates from last meeting: Request for VAC lapel pins are being reviewed by HSA. If final approval is received, it is possible pins will be ready by November. Second: response received from District 6 Supervisor's office re Veterans Alley letter; follow up action is pending.
- Vice-President: Commented on City's Commission Streamlining Taskforce. Noted VAC will be reviewed at October 15, 2025 public hearing. Brief discussion about commission advisory status and historic significance. Item about Streamlining Taskforce will be added to next meeting's agenda.
- President: Followed up to VP's comments about Taskforce by encouraging all commissioners to visit the Taskforce website to understand more about the goals and focus of the group. He commended the community involvement of all commissioners, especially citing



Commissioners Chan and Jordan. Encouraged all commissioners to work on raising VAC's visibility throughout San Francisco veteran community.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES [Action]

- President Barnickel asked if there were comments or questions from commissioners on August 12, 2025 meeting minutes. No comments from commissioners. No public comment.
- Motion to approve / Second / All in Favor
- Minutes approved as submitted.

Absent: Chittavong, Dacumos

NEW BUSINESS

- September is National Suicide Awareness Month. Commission reviewed letter drafted by Commissioner Reissenweber to the Mayor, recognizing September as Suicide Awareness Month, highlighting elevated suicide risk among veterans and urging increased public awareness and resource coordination.
- Motion to approve letter. Motion seconded. All in favor. Letter to be sent as submitted.

Absent: Chittavong, Dacumos

OLD BUSINESS

- Update on Westside Community Services Clubhouse Program. Presented by Brook Chick, Westside Clinic Program Manager.
- Located at 225 11th Street, the Clubhouse Program offers psychosocial rehabilitation and peer support for adults with serious mental illness. The program recently expanded to two and a half days per week and serves 106 members, average daily attendance is 18 – 22.
- Brook specifically talked about a member-led poetry project and shared printed anthologies with commissioners.



- Commissioners commended the program's creative and therapeutic approach and inquired about eligibility and gender/age demographics. Brook responded that membership is open to San Francisco residents age 18 and older with serious mental health diagnosis.
- Program staff invited commissioners to tour the facility.
- Fleet Week Update – Commissioners Chan and Jordan.
 - Commissioner Jordan reported a Fleet Week planning meeting will be held at the War Memorial Building on Monday, September 15, 9:00am – 2:30pm. Commissioners are encouraged (and welcome) to attend. Further, a Fleet Week luncheon will be held the evening of September 15 at Golden Gate Yacht Club. Commissioners interested in attending should contact Commissioner Chan for ticket coordination.

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.

- Commission extended good thoughts and best wishes for a speedy recovery to Commissioner Deborah Dacumos.
- President Barnickel acknowledged the approach of September 11 anniversary and expressed gratitude to first responders and military personnel.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Commission Secretary shared an announcement on behalf of Commissioner Dacumos – Fleet Week Interfaith Service will be held on Sunday, October 12. More details will follow.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Speaker Chris Hughes with Open Doors to Future Possibilities (ODFP): Mr. Hughes reported on recent veteran community activities including monthly movie nights, sound-meditation sessions, and upcoming Friday “Simple Breath and Stretch” classes led by an Army veteran. Weekly meals and grocery distributions for veterans continue each Friday morning.



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 7:23pm.

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, October 14, 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.



24/7 Confidential
Support

Text [MYLIFE](#) to [741741](#)
Crisis Line:
(415) 781-0500