REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, October 13, 2026 – 6:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:
President Bill Barnickel, VP Hanley Chan, Council Members: Joseph Baba, Deborah Dacumos (remote), Aditya Lakshminarayan, Jenny Perez, Nicholas Rusanoff

EXCUSED:
James Boatman, Channie Barker, John Reissenweber

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 any comments or changes to the agenda. No changes. Agenda approved as submitted.

PRESENTATIONS

Mayor's Office of Food Security Coordination, Presented by Peggy Moriarty: Presentation provided an overview of the City's new food security coordination legislation and its response to federal HR1, which introduced changes to CalFresh and Medi-Cal eligibility requirements.

The presentation covered the establishment of an Office of Food Security Coordination, plans for a Food Security Council, and City efforts to minimize benefit loss through outreach, eligibility assistance, workforce services, and improved access to benefits.

Council members emphasized the importance of identifying veterans who may be affected by these changes, particularly those who do not receive healthcare through the VA. Ms. Moriarty agreed to explore whether existing City data could help identify veterans receiving food assistance. Council members offered to assist with outreach to the VA and other veteran-serving organizations.

Update on Veterans Priority in the BMR Housing Lottery, Presented by MOHCD Staff: Sonia Delgado-Schaumberg, Director of Rental Programs and Affordable Housing Placement, and Andrea Nelson, Lottery Preference Program Manager, presented an annual update on the Veteran Priority Program in San Francisco's affordable housing lottery system.

The presenters reported increased veteran participation and housing placement during fiscal year 2025-2026. A total of 523 veterans had been validated for the program, 295 veterans applied for affordable rental housing, and 34 veterans signed leases. One veteran purchased a below-market-rate home, with another purchase in progress.

The presenters reviewed current and upcoming affordable housing opportunities and explained how the veteran priority works within the City's existing housing lottery preferences.

Council members thanked MOHCD for its work and shared examples of veterans who had secured stable housing through the program. Discussion included a council member's description of a veteran's terrible experience trying to qualify for BMR housing before the veteran priority was activated. He cited that as an example of the positive difference the veterans priority has made and thanked several of his fellow council members for their years of effort in pushing for the establishment of a veteran housing priority. [For more information, see MOHCD full presentation posted on the VAC website.]

COMMUNICATIONS

- County Veterans Service (CVSO) Update: No presentation given as the CVSO manager was unavailable to attend meeting. [The CVSO September Activities Report is posted on VAC website.]

- VAC Executive Team Updates:

  Secretary: Announced that due to scheduled building work, the Council's November 10 meeting will be held in Room 400 of City Hall instead of Room 416. The meeting calendar and agenda will be updated accordingly.

  Vice-President: VP Chan provided an update on several veterans-related bills signed by the Governor, including SB296 that provides property tax relief for disabled veterans. He also spoke of legislation concerning coordination between state and county veteran service

offices, military family leave, priority enrollment at public colleges, and in-state tuition eligibility.

President: President Barnickel read an email sent by a veteran recently helped by the CVSO staff. The veteran expressed his profound thanks to the staff for their professionalism, compassion, and commitment to assisting veterans and their families.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES [ACTION]

- President Barnickel asked council members if there were comments or corrections to the September 8, 2026 meeting minutes. He called for public comment re meeting minutes. No public comment.

- Motion to approve / Second / All in Favor

- September 8, 2026 meeting minutes approved as submitted.

  Absent: Boatman, Barker, Reissenweber

NEW BUSINESS

- **Request for a Mayoral Certificate of Honor [ACTION]**

  - President Barnickel asked the Council to request a Certificate of Honor to acknowledge the retirement of Cindy Kauffman, Deputy Director of Community Services at the Department of Disability and Aging Services (DAS).

  - Motion to approve / Second / All in Favor. The secretary will send certificate request to the Mayor's office.

    Absent: Boatman, Barker, Reissenweber

- **Legislative Advocacy and Tracking of Veterans Bills [DISCUSSION]**

  - VP Chan noted he reviewed veteran legislation during his VP report. No further discussion on this topic was held.

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.

- Council member Baba commented on Fleet Week activities. He noted SFCVSO claims representative Maurice Delmer was working a booth during Fleet Week and extended his appreciation for Maurice's commitment to helping veterans.

- Council member Perez acknowledged that today, October 13, is the 251st anniversary of the US Navy.

- Council member Chan noted the "Forces for Heroes" event during Fleet Week. He said it was a great success and well received by military members in attendance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- No announcements.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Craig Northrop, a US Marine, noted he recently applied to serve on the Council. He wanted to introduce himself to council members and say how happy is to reconnect with the veterans community. He currently serves as a San Francisco firefighter.

- Catherine Colmus introduced herself as an eight year veteran of the Army and a transgender woman. She serves as a board member on SPARTA Pride and is committed to advancing military transgender rights. She noted she spoke in Sacramento this year in support of AB1775, which allows veterans in California who were less than honorably discharged from the military solely on basis of being transgender to upgrade their discharge to honorable status and be eligible for VA benefits. She wanted Council to be aware of this legislation. She concluded this is a dark time for those in her community. Just recently there was talk that transgender women may be barred from VA women's veterans clinics. Many can no longer access services. Wanted to bring issue to the Council for their awareness.

- Vincenzo Champion, a Marine Corps veteran. He has been a part of San Francisco veterans community for about four years. He spoke of himself as being a housing recipient of BMR lottery program and he appreciated the MOHCD presentation that was given earlier during the meeting. He thanked the council members for their work and noted he will be applying for one of the vacant council seat.

- Speaker introduced himself as a former Marine who grew up in San Francisco and is now working as a clerk at the DA's office. He is interested in efforts at Veterans Justice Court. He especially appreciates the work of council member Nicholas Rusanoff at the VJC.

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 7:10pm.

The next regular meeting of the Veterans Affairs Council will be held in-person at 6:00pm in **Room 400 (note room change)** at San Francisco City Hall on **Tuesday, November 10, 2026.**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Murphy
Council Secretary
Veterans Affairs Council

This document is Official Business of the Veterans Affairs Council, City and County of San Francisco. It is part of the official Public Record of the City and County of San Francisco.

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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.

Disability Access:
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Veterans Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255
PRESS 1

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.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

24/7 Confidential Support

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