



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, November 12, 2024 – 6:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME / President Jason Chittavong

Meeting called to order at 6:00PM.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

President Jason Chittavong, Vice-President Nicholas Rusanoff, Commissioners Joseph Baba, James Boatman, William Barnickel, Hanley Chan (left at 6:30pm), Deborah Dacumos, Darya Kutovaya, Jenny Perez, John Reissenweber

ABSENT: Courtney Ellington (absent), Prince Jordan (excused)

Quorum present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Chittavong led attendees in reciting Pledge of Allegiance.

SET AGENDA

President Chittavong called for motion to approve the agenda.

Motion / Second / All in Favor

Motion passed. Agenda set.

Absent: Ellington, Jordan

PRESENTATIONS

- BayFC – Football Club
Presenter: Brady Stewart, CEO
 - Provided an overview of BayFC football program. [PPT slides are posted to VAC website.] At conclusion of presentation there was time for questions and comments from commissioners, including:



- Suggestion made that a military ticket discount be provided. Ms. Stewart said BayFC would like to have a veterans program.
- Ms. Stewart said they are very focused on community access. They want to engage with young emerging athletes in the community.
- Club does not currently have partnerships with community groups or nonprofits. Ms. Stewart noted the group attends meetings such as the VAC to raise awareness about BayFC.
- Open Doors to Future Possibilities – Veterans Programs
Presenters: Chris Hughes, Managing Director and Katherine Hastings, Training Director
 - Provided an overview of services offered by Open Doors. [PPT is posted to VAC website.] Asked that commissioners spread the word throughout the veterans community. Comments from commissioners included the following:
 - Commissioner Reissenweber asked if veterans living outside San Francisco can receive services and if case management offered for veterans receiving HUD-VASH housing in San Francisco and San Jose. Ms. Hastings replied that Open Doors services are available to veterans living throughout the Bay Area. If commissioners know of veterans in need of case management please connect them with Open Doors.
 - Commissioner Rusanoff asked for contact information to connect Open Doors to the SF Veterans Justice Court. Open Doors responded that they are very interested in connecting with the VJC.
 - Commissioner Dacumos asked about the organization's funding source. Mr. Hughes responded that Open Doors is funded mainly through private donations, some grants, and corporate sponsorships. The organization is always looking for new funding sources.
 - Commissioner Barnickel asked about the difference between services offered by Open Doors and the VA Hospital. Ms. Hastings replied that Open Doors is another option for services. They are not affiliated with the VA, but they do work closely with them.



- Commissioner Chittavong asked how VAC can help Open Doors. Mr. Hughes responded that Open Doors is always looking to grow and expand. Connecting veterans to Open Doors is one way to help, another way is to provide connections to groups such as the Veterans Justice Court.

COMMUNICATIONS

CVSO Report:

- CVSO interim director Maurice Delmer reviewed the October report with the commission. [Report is posted on VAC website.] At conclusion of review, Mr. Delmer asked for comments or questions.
 - Commissioner Rusanoff asked if metric can be added to the report showing closed claims. Mr. Delmer said he would check on this and follow up.
 - Commissioner Barnickel asked about hiring status for SFCVSO. Mr. Delmer answered that at this time there are no plans to hire new staff. Commissioner Barnickel noted the urgent need for additional staff support at the VA Hospital.
 - Commissioner Perez asked about volunteers and if CVSO has considered training veterans. Mr. Delmer responded that all solutions are appreciated. He suggested commissioners email ideas to him.

Secretary Report:

- Reminded that a “Call for Agenda Items” email will be sent to all commissioners. Please respond to that email to request adding an item to the December 10 meeting. Indicate if item is discussion or actionable.

Vice-President Report:

- Veterans Alley is not in good shape. Will add an actionable agenda item to a future meeting to bring this to the attention of the BoS and Mayor.



President Report:

- Nothing significant to report.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

- Call for motion to approve the October 08, 2024 regular meeting minutes.

Motion / Second / All in Favor. Motion passed. Minutes approved.

Absent: Chan, Ellington, Jordan

NEW BUSINESS

- President called for nominations for 2025 commission president and vice-president:
 - Nominated for president: Bill Barnickel. Commissioner Barnickel accepted nomination.
 - Nominated for vice-president: Nicholas Rusanoff. Commissioner Rusanoff accepted the nomination.

The Commission will vote during the December 10, 2024 meeting.

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Commissioner Barnickel noted that six years ago the Board of Supervisors passed a resolution establishing November as Veterans Month in San Francisco.
- Commissioner Dacumos said Michael Blecker will be a guest speaker at the San Francisco InterFaith Council breakfast on Thursday, November 14.



GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Speaker: Chris Ward Kline.
Shared a handout with the commission. Said as of 11/1/2024 SF not using form to report misuse or breaches of data with their HMIS, Homeless Management Information System. If not reported it was not investigated. City leaders with federal, state, and county governments are aware of this and should start ensuring this form is in sixty plus agencies to start the report and provide any training necessary. He has talked about this over the past six months. He said it is basically noise pollution – if noise is way up there will be more suicides and more overdoses. Once the issue with form is corrected, we should start seeing noise come down and drastic improvements. More news to come over the next few weeks.
- Speaker: John Lowell
Said he carried the flag of the Sons of the American Legion during Sunday's Veterans Day parade. It prompted him to think what traumatic affairs are occurring to veterans in San Francisco. He shared that there will be a vigil to remember those who have endured traumatic injuries on Sunday, 11/17 on Polk Street steps of City Hall at 5pm.
- Speaker: Cory Thoreack
Cory is a US Coast Guard veteran and has been homeless since July 2. Cory spoke about trauma endured as a homeless veteran. Cory left contact information with the commission secretary.
- Speaker: John, retired Army veteran. He attended commission meeting to understand and learn what he can do to help veterans. He recently took a job with Salvation Army and said he wants to help as much as he can. His office is located at Folsom Street and he will try to continue to attend VAC meetings.
- Speaker: Mitch Weller. He noted most public commenters before him mentioned a technology issue that has impacted the ability for a VSO to get access to VA systems to administer benefits, etc. He said these are unskilled human problems. Noted we cannot continue to rely on people within any organization to keep handling these things. Software is built to deal with this. Connection should be made with various organizations to see what systems they are using. Said that with the upcoming administration veterans benefits will be



targeted, notably disability benefits, the PACT Act, etc. Software needs to be put in place to deal with this.

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:06pm.

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, December 10, 2024.

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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Veterans Affairs Commission



City and County of San Francisco

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