



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT

Tuesday, December 9, 2025 – 6:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER

President Barnickel called meeting to order at 6:07PM.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

President Bill Barnickel, Vice-President Nicholas Rusanoff, Commissioners James Boatman, Hanley Chan, Jason Chittavong, Deborah Dacumos, Prince Kelly Jordan, Jenny Perez, John Reissenweber

EXCUSED:

Commissioners Joseph Baba, Darya Kutovaya

Quorum established.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commission and attendees recited Pledge of Allegiance.

SET AGENDA

President Barnickel requested comments from Commissioners and the public. Hearing none:

Motion called to set agenda.

Motion / Second / All in Favor

Motion passed. Agenda approved as posted.

Absent: Baba, Kutovaya

PRESENTATIONS:

- **Outcome of VA Benefits upon Veteran Population:** Planned presentation was postponed due to the presenter's absence. Commission secretary will contact presenter to reschedule for a future meeting.



COMMUNICATIONS

County Veterans Service (CVSO) Report and Staff Transition Update:

- November Report: Outgoing Acting CVSO reported:
 - November activity numbers were lower than October due to holidays, staff time off, and one day of site closure.
 - Fewer walk-ins and fewer claims completed, along with reduced benefits postings.
 - Staff participated in outreach events including the Contra Costa County Stand Down and a VA Resources Fair.
- CVSO Acting Director Transition
 - Due to the long vacant CVSO Director position, HSA Human Resources has decided to rotate the Acting Director role on a yearly basis until it is filled permanently.
 - Claims Representative Gerardo Carr was selected as new Acting CVSO, effective December 1, 2025. He was introduced to commissioners by outgoing Acting CVSO Maurice Delmer. Gerardo is an Army veteran with past VSO experience and he has worked at SF CVSO for the past three years. At conclusion of introductions, Maurice thanked commissioners for their support during his time in the role and confirmed he will continue to work at SF CVSO as a claims representative.
 - During discussion, commissioners raised concerns regarding CVSO staffing, particularly for the Wednesday drop-in clinic at the SFVA. Several commissioners expressed their appreciation to Maurice for his engagement with the Commission during his tenure as Acting CVSO. Commissioners also extended gratitude to the entire CVSO team for their continued dedication and service.

VAC Executive Team Updates:

- Secretary: An update was provided regarding the Commission lapel pins. The HSA graphic designer has received the request. Graphic Designer is currently very busy and timeline for completion remains contingent on availability. Commission Secretary will keep the Commission updated.



- Vice-President Report: Vice-President Rusanoff gave remarks as his final meeting as commission Vice-President. He reflected on the importance of veterans serving in leadership roles and expressed gratitude for his time as the Commission's Vice-President. He concluded by noting he looks forward to the commission's work in the upcoming year.
- President Report: President Barnickel provided a reflection on the Commission's achievements in 2025, highlighting several key areas of impact:
 - **Veteran Housing Priority:** The Commission continued its leadership on veteran housing, following up on the 2022 ordinance that established a veteran priority in the City's affordable housing lottery. The priority was activated in early 2024, and initial data shared by MOHCD at the Commission's April meeting indicated increased veteran applications and successful placements in both rental and homeownership programs. The Commission will continue to monitor the impact of this housing priority and raise awareness of it throughout the veteran community.
 - **Stonestown Development Advocacy:** Commissioners advocated for veteran inclusion in the Stonestown development project, which was approved with 20% affordable units where veterans will receive priority.
 - **Homeless Veterans:** In February, the Commission sent a letter to the Mayor requesting a veteran preference in the plan to add 1,500 shelter beds. The letter cited the 2024 point-in-time count identifying 587 homeless veterans in San Francisco. The Mayor's October 17 announcement that 124 units for formerly homeless veterans will be included in the 1035 Van Ness Avenue Project was welcomed as a very positive step. It shows the City is paying more attention to the needs of homeless veterans, something this Commission has been pushing for many years.
 - **Support for CVSO:** The Commission continued to raise concerns about CVSO staffing levels and service delivery. During budget negotiations, the commission's advocacy efforts helped preserve the CVSO manager-level position.
 - **Additional Advocacy:** The Commission also addressed issues including the disabled veteran property tax exemption, suicide prevention, protections against unaccredited claims consultants, and improvements to conditions of Tenderloin's Veterans Alley.

President Barnickel concluded by expressing gratitude for the Commission's dedication and teamwork, and shared enthusiasm for continuing to serve in 2026. [NOTE: Following the meeting, President Barnickel amended his report to include recognition of Commissioner James Boatman's exceptional work on the Veterans Connect event held in July. President Barnickel, along with other commissioners, attended the event and saw firsthand the impact of Commissioner Boatman's hard work. He expressed regret at not acknowledging the event during his spoken remarks.]



APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES [Action]

- President Barnickel asked if there were comments or questions from commissioners about the November 6, 2025 meeting minutes. No comments from commissioners. No public comment.
- Motion to approve / Second / All in Favor
- Minutes approved as submitted.

Absent: Baba, Kutovaya

NEW BUSINESS

- Recognition of SFCVSO Claims Representative John Gallagher. [DISCUSSION]
 - Vice-President Rusanoff shared comments about the exceptional work of John Gallagher. He then introduced a Vietnam Veteran who shared further comments about John's exceptional service and impact.
 - Several commissioners voice strong support to place an action item on next month's agenda to request a mayoral certificate of honor for longtime VSO John Gallagher. Commission secretary confirmed item will be placed on agenda.

OLD BUSINESS

- Video Recording of Future VAC Meetings – Update to Discussion from Commission's November 6 Meeting.
 - Commission Secretary updated that the Commission is on SFGovTV waitlist. Noted list is quite long. Webex can be implemented sooner and Commission secretary is pursuing this with HSA. Commissioner Chan noted he will reach out to SFGovTV contacts.
 - It was noted that even with video recording, in-person attendance requirements for commissioners will remain unchanged.



EXECUTIVE TEAM ELECTIONS FOR 2026

- Restated nominations put forth at November 6, 2025 commission meeting:
 - Commission President: Bill Barnickel
 - Vice-President: Hanley Chan

Remarks were shared by both Commissioner Barnickel and Commissioner Chan. Commission secretary called roll call vote. Commissioner Barnickel unanimously elected president. Commissioner Chan unanimously elected vice-president.

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 Chan shared that earlier in the day he performed a marriage ceremony at City Hall for an Air Force veteran couple. He added that he brings this information to commission meetings to underscore the closeness of San Francisco's veteran community.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Commissioner Boatman announced Swords to Plowshares will hold a Holiday Celebration Event on Thursday, December 11 at 1060 Howard Street at 1:00pm.
- Commissioner Chan announced the Wreaths Across America Event at Presidio National Cemetery this Saturday, December 13 at 11:00am.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Speaker: Allan Arata-Vega spoke about an event he is coordinating on behalf of the Mayor's Office. He clarified that currently he is not formally working for the Mayor's Office but had worked in the office during the summer. He invited 1 – 3 commissioners to join a Veterans Roundtable Event on Thursday, December 18 from 10:00-11:00am with Mayor Daniel Lurie. Event will be held in Room 200 of City Hall. Other organizations represented at the event will be Swords to Plowshares and Heart and Armor. Speaker noted he will share further event details with the commission secretary.



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 7:08pm.

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, January 13, 2026.**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Murphy
Commission Secretary
Veterans Affairs Commission

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

Public Access:

Public Records are covered under the State of California Brown Act, as well as the Sunshine Ordinance of the City and County of San Francisco. These acts ensure that deliberations of City Business are conducted “before the People,” and that City and County operations are open to the People’s review.

For information on your rights under the Sunshine Ordinance (Chapter 67 of the San Francisco Administrative Code), or to report a violation of the ordinance, please contact the Administrator of the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force.

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.

Disability Access:

City Hall of San Francisco is wheelchair accessible via all entrances. There is wheelchair accessible public parking nearby, including the underground garage at the north side of City Hall. The nearby BART/MUNI station (Civic Center) is wheelchair accessible as are nearby city bus lines and stops. For more public transit information services, call (415) 923-6142 or dial 311.

**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

Veterans Affairs Commission



City and County of San Francisco