



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT

Tuesday, May 12, 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, Vice-President Hanley Chan, Commissioners James Boatman, Deborah Dacumos (remote), Aditya Lakshminarayan, Jenny Perez, John Reissenweber, Nicholas Rusanoff

EXCUSED:

Commissioners Baba, Jordan.

Quorum established.

RAMAYTUSH OHLONE LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The commission secretary read the land acknowledgment.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Commissioners and attendees recited Pledge of Allegiance.

SET AGENDA

President Barnickel asked if there were any comments or changes to the agenda. No changes to the agenda.

COMMUNICATIONS

VAC Executive Team Updates:

- **Secretary:**
 - Reported that HSA has placed order for commission lapel pins and pins are expected to be delivered soon, possibly by the next commission meeting.



- Commissioners were asked to report any issues with their city issued VAC email accounts so IT assistance can be requested if needed. All commission information is sent using VAC emails.
- **Vice-President:**
 - VP Chan reported that the Commission is on track to begin video recording its meetings. The commission secretary is coordinating with SFGovTV staff to schedule the training she will need.
 - Secondly, VP Chan shared a concern regarding the San Francisco Youth Commission's recent discussion and negative recommendation related to JROTC. He noted the Veterans Affairs Commission has historically supported JROTC and suggested the matter be considered for a future agenda item. [NOTE: Following the meeting, VP Chan emailed the commission secretary to clarify his remarks. The Youth Commission's action was specifically a negative recommendation regarding Supervisor Alan Wong's resolution supporting and preserving the JROTC program within SFUSD. The Youth Commission's own written response acknowledged the importance and positive impact of JROTC on students, while raising concerns regarding staffing, administration, and individual experiences within the program.]
- **President:**
 - President Barnickel welcomed new commissioner Aditya Lakshminarayan to his second meeting as a member of the Commission. President Barnickel then read the Code of Conduct section of the Commission's bylaws, emphasizing professionalism, respectful conduct, integrity, and compliance with applicable rules and policies.

County Veterans Service (CVSO) – March Report:

- Gerardo Carr, CVSO acting manager, provided the CVSO report for April. [The full CVSO report is posted on VAC website.]
 - Gerardo reviewed numbers in April for in-person appointments, phone appointments, walk-ins, and medical evaluations. VA-related actions and claims activity were also reported. Further, Gerardo shared a success story involving a veteran whose claim resulted in a 100% service-connected disability rating and retroactive compensation of approximately \$37,930. He also informed the Commission that CVSO staff would participate in outreach and commemorative events, including activities at the San Francisco VA and the Western Annual Training Conference in Reno, Nevada.



APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES [ACTION]

- President Barnickel asked commissioners if there were corrections or comments about the April 14, 2026 meeting minutes. A question was raised by Commissioner Rusanoff as to whether VP Chan's vote was accurately reflected. The minutes recorded his vote as "yes." Commissioner Rusanoff stated that in the meeting audio VP Chan said the word "yes" twice. It was explained to Commissioner Rusanoff that the one "yes" vote listed in the minutes was correctly recorded.
- Motion to approve / Second / All in Favor
- Minutes approved as submitted.

Absent: Baba, Jordan

NEW BUSINESS

- **In recognition of May as Mental Health Awareness Month the Commission drafted letters to the Mayor and Board of Supervisors advising of the "Mindful Movement for Veterans" Program.** An overview of this San Francisco based wellness program was presented during last month's commission meeting. [ACTION]
- Motion called to approve letters. Seconded. All in favor. Letters approved as submitted.

Absent: Baba, Jordan

- **Commission considered approval of a draft letter to the Mayor's Budget Office regarding hiring freeze that is delaying the almost completed hiring process for the SFCVSO manager position.** [ACTION]
- Motion called to approve letter. Seconded. All in favor. Letter approved as submitted.

Absent: Baba, Jordan

OLD BUSINESS

- **Follow-up to last month's discussion about sending a letter to the Mayor's office advocating against the decision to elimination two Veterans Justice Court (VJC) positions as part of citywide budget cuts.** A revised letter drafted by Commissioner



Rusanoff, along with numerous written public comments, were reviewed by the Commission. The letter was considered for approval. [ACTION]

- Letter was shared with commissioners and posted to VAC website prior to the meeting. Written public comments were also shared with commissioners and posted to VAC website. Commissioners discussed the urgency of this issue, including a June 30, 2026 deadline, the impact on vulnerable veterans, and the importance of contacting the Mayor and Board of Supervisors during the budget process.
- Public Comment: Speaker introduced herself as Hattie Halloway, the current case manager for non-VA connected veterans in San Francisco Veterans Justice Court (VJC). She described the population she works with as highly vulnerable, often facing homelessness, substance use challenges, and justice-system involvement. She emphasized the importance of intensive case management, connection to resources, and assistance with VA benefits and services.
- Motion called to approve letter to the Mayor / Seconded / All in Favor
- Motion carried. Letter approved as submitted and will be sent to Mayor's office.

Absent: Baba, Jordan

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.

- Commissioners discussed the Mayoral certificate that the Commission requested to honor the work of CVSO claims representative John Gallagher. It can be presented at the next meeting or at a Wednesday when John is at the VA hospital. If it is at the VA, President Barnickel will present the certificate.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- VP Chan reminded commissioners about the May 25th Memorial Day Ceremony at the Presidio. He encouraged commissioners to attend.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Katherine Hastings, Assistant Director for Open Doors for Future Possibilities, shared upcoming events, including a Memorial Day ceremony in Los Gatos, a Women Veterans



Day Walk on June 12 in San Jose, and a proposed Fourth of July / America 250th celebration at the War Memorial courtyard (pending approval).

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.

- Commissioner Chan acknowledged the passing of the father of California Assemblymember Catherine Stefani. Lawrence M. Stefani, a United States Army Vietnam veteran, passed away on April 29, 2026.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned by President Barnickel at 6:44pm.

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, June 9, 2026**.

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](https://www.sfpd.org/2017/07/11/mylife/) to [741741](https://www.sfpd.org/2017/07/11/mylife/)
Crisis Line:

Carlton B. Goodlett Place San Francisco, California 94102-4689

Veterans Affairs Commission



City and County of San Francisco

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