



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT

Tuesday, June 9, 2026 – 6:00 pm

CALL TO ORDER / WELCOME NEW COMMISSIONER

President Barnickel called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He welcomed attendees and introduced the newest Commissioner, Channie Barker, who expressed appreciation for her appointment, shared her background as a first-generation immigrant and military veteran, and affirmed her commitment to serving veterans in San Francisco. President Barnickel further noted that Channie was appointed by the Mayor and that Commissioner Baba was recently re-appointed by the Mayor.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

President Bill Barnickel, Commissioners James Boatman, Channie Barker, Deborah Dacumos (remote), Aditya Lakshminarayan, Jenny Perez, John Reissenweber, Nicholas Rusanoff

EXCUSED:

Joseph Baba, Hanley Chan, Prince Kelly 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. Agenda approved as submitted.

PRESENTATION

Introduction to VetsBoats Foundation: The Commission received a detailed presentation from Matt Goettelman, VetsBoats Director of Development. Matt described the VetsBoats mission of supporting veterans experiencing PTSD, social isolation, and reintegration challenges by



providing therapeutic sailing and boat restoration opportunities. He shared his background as a West Point graduate, Ranger-qualified artillery officer, and current San Francisco resident who volunteers with Swords to Plowshares. Matt explained that VetsBoats focuses on building camaraderie among veterans and helping them reconnect after long periods of isolation. He described the multi-year restoration of the WWII cutter 'Clover,' which is scheduled to relaunch on July 4, 2026, including a special voyage with surviving members of the 1st Reconnaissance Marine Battalion from the Vietnam era.

Matt also provided updated metrics on VetsBoats' service impact for 2026, including seven therapeutic sails completed so far this year, four major events held, and 425 unique veterans served to date. He noted that the organization has served over 1,500 veterans in its 10 years of operation, supported through 3,000 volunteer hours and 18 agency partnerships.

Commissioners expressed strong appreciation for the program and inquired about operational procedures, outreach efforts, safety protocols, and opportunities to expand collaboration. President Barnickel noted that June is PTSD Awareness Month for veterans. He further noted that the District 4 Supervisor is looking for veterans programs to promote during PTSD Awareness month. He offered to connect Matt with District 4 office. Commissioners also discussed including VetsBoats as a resource on the VAC website, and Secretary Murphy agreed to explore feasibility under city rules.

COMMUNICATIONS

VAC Executive Team Updates:

- Secretary:
 - No new updates.
- Vice-President:
 - Absent.
- President:
 - Shared appreciation to several Commissioners for their attendance and contributions at the recent Memorial Day ceremony at San Francisco Presidio. He shared special appreciation to Commissioner Jenny Perez for creating wreaths for the Gold Star families honored at the event and shared appreciation to Commissioner Deborah Dacumos for escorting the Gold Star family. President Barnickel next reviewed Commission bylaws to help clarify the commission's purpose. He mentioned commissioners can serve as liaisons to district supervisors by following the regular procedure to place items on meeting agendas. He concluded by highlighting his work



with past successful job fairs with City College and noted he will be working with City College in August. He reminded members of the July recess.

County Veterans Service (CVSO) – May Report:

- Gerardo Carr, CVSO acting manager, provided the CVSO report for May. [The full CVSO report is posted on VAC website.]
- Gerardo reported that the CVSO had assisted veterans in obtaining over \$766,000 in benefits during the month. He noted that the office handled 147 scheduled appointments (43 in-person and 104 virtual) and received 484 walk-in clients. Additionally, 719 benefit claims were filed and 19 medical verifications completed. Gerardo also described the establishment of a new monthly outstation at City College of San Francisco, designed to provide improved support for student veterans seeking claims assistance or education benefit guidance.

Gerardo further reported on significant technical issues affecting email and text appointment reminders, especially for Gmail and Yahoo accounts. These problems resulted in increased no-shows and scheduling inefficiencies. He explained that the city's IT department is investigating the issue, and the CVSO has implemented temporary measures such as manually calling veterans to ensure appointment reminders are received.

Commissioners thanked Gerardo and his staff for their ongoing dedication and commitment to serving the city's veterans amid increased workloads and technical challenges.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES [ACTION]

- President Barnickel asked commissioners if there were comments or corrections to the May 12, 2026 meeting minutes. He called for public comment re meeting minutes. No public comment.
- Motion to approve / Second / All in Favor
- May 12, 2026 meeting minutes approved as submitted.

Absent: Baba, Chan, Jordan

NEW BUSINESS



- Review and Approval of Draft Letter Regarding JROTC Resolution (BOS File No. 260223). The Commission reviewed a draft letter that conveys its support for the JROTC program and addresses recent actions related to the resolution, which concerns preserving JROTC in SFUSD. Letter was drafted and submitted by VP Chan. [ACTION / VOTE]

- Motion called to approve letter. Seconded. All in favor. Letter approved as submitted.

Absent: Baba, Chan, 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.

- Commissioner Rusanoff expressed well wishes for Secretary Murphy's recovery.
- Commissioner Perez delivered remarks recognizing LGBTQ+ Pride Month and reflected on the history of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' and its impact on veterans' mental health. She emphasized that June is also National PTSD Awareness Month and underscored the importance of supporting all veterans in seeking care.
- Commissioner Perez further extended good welfare to "Save a Warrior" a sailing program with a message of awareness for PTSD and mental health for veterans.
- Commissioner Reissenweber shared that he attended a Memorial Day ceremony at the USS San Francisco at Lands End. He encouraged the Commission to support this event as well as the Presidio Memorial Day ceremony.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- No announcements.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

- Catherine Hastings from Open Doors to Future Possibilities, shared information about a Women Veterans Walk in San Jose and the Fourth of July American Valor 250 celebration at the War Memorial Courtyard. She also noted that her organization is applying for the Sergeant Fox Suicide Prevention Grant to expand veteran crisis support services.



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 6:54pm.

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, August 11, 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.



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