

San Francisco Veterans Affairs Commission

May 12, 2026 Meeting

**PUBLIC COMMENTS SUBMITTED IN SUPPORT OF “OLD BUSINESS” ACTIONABLE
AGENDA ITEM ABOUT VETERANS JUSTICE COURT.**

POSTED TO VAC WEBSITE - MAY 12, 2026 at 9:00am

The Mayor must not be allowed to shut down or reduce the services or cut the Vets. Court funding and if his proposed cuts to the Veterans court is approved by the Board of Supervisors then they all should be held accountable because they would be responsible for harming so many Veterans unnecessarily.

Sincerely,

George Bracey

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the proposed cuts to the Veterans Justice Court program, specifically the elimination of the case manager and therapist positions that support veterans who are not eligible for VA benefits.

These positions are not optional extras, they are essential services that help vulnerable veterans stabilize their lives, access treatment, secure housing, navigate benefits systems, and successfully complete diversion programs instead of returning to criminal court or incarceration.

According to recent reporting, approximately one-third of current Veterans Justice Court participants rely on these city-funded supports because they cannot access federal VA services. Eliminating the case manager position would effectively shut these veterans out of the program entirely.

San Francisco has long positioned itself as a city that supports veterans, mental health treatment, and alternatives to incarceration. Cutting these positions directly contradicts those values. It is especially troubling that veterans who already face barriers due to discharge status, trauma, homelessness, addiction, or untreated mental health conditions may now lose one of the few systems designed to help them recover and rebuild.

Case managers do far more than coordinate appointments. They provide continuity, accountability, advocacy, and human connection for people navigating extremely difficult

circumstances. Without that support, many veterans are likely to fall out of compliance, lose housing or treatment access, and end up back in the criminal justice system: outcomes that are both more harmful and more expensive for the city.

I urge you to preserve funding for the Veterans Justice Court case manager and therapist positions in the upcoming budget. These roles save lives, improve public safety, and reflect San Francisco's commitment to treating veterans with dignity and compassion.

Please do not abandon veterans who have already sacrificed so much.

Sincerely,

Claire

Hi Mary,

I'm writing to express my concern about the cuts to the Veterans Justice Court. As a member of the community, I strongly urge the Veterans Affairs Commission to preserve this important program and the roles within it for case manager and therapist. The veterans this program serves are some of the most vulnerable members of our community here in San Francisco and the thought of their support being taken away is deeply concerning. After the noble but often brutal sacrifice of serving our country, they deserve the scaffolding, support, and resources they need for a life in this city. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

Marina Chen

Members of the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Commission,

I am writing as a concerned citizen regarding the proposed cuts to the Veterans Justice Court support staff positions.

America asks an extraordinary amount from its service members. We send them into war, ask them to endure trauma, separation, and sacrifice, and promise that we will stand behind them when they return home. Patriotism does not simply mean waving flags on holidays — it means supporting our veterans when they are struggling most. Abandoning veterans in crisis is a betrayal of American values.

The Veterans Justice Court exists because some veterans need treatment, guidance, and support. Cutting the therapist and case manager positions risks pushing vulnerable veterans back into homelessness, addiction, crisis, and the criminal justice system. That is not how a country should treat the people who served it.

These cuts also make little financial sense. The cost of maintaining these positions is small compared to the enormous public cost of repeated arrests, incarceration, emergency medical care, and homelessness services. Supporting veterans before they fall deeper into crisis is both the humane choice and the fiscally responsible one.

A nation that truly supports its troops does not abandon them after their service ends. I urge the Commission to oppose these cuts and protect these critical services for San Francisco veterans.

Respectfully,

Arya Goutam

Good afternoon,

My name is Hattie Halloway. I am the case manager for non-VA connected veterans in San Francisco Veterans Justice Court (VJC). I am writing to express my concern about the program losing funding come June 30.

Last May, I attended All Rise, a conference that brings together treatment courts from all over the country. Many of the sessions offered advice about how to talk with justice-involved veterans about their military experience. I was unsure how this advice applied to me, since my veterans tend to have complicated relationships with the military and VA. I raised my hand and explained that I work with veterans who are ineligible for VA care. I asked if this changes how I should talk to them about their military experience.

The response was overwhelming, and surprising. The whole room was so impressed that San Francisco made it possible for all veterans, regardless of discharge status, to participate in veterans court. The entire conversation became about how amazing San Francisco's program is, and about ways I could support this uniquely vulnerable subpopulation of veterans. While I was sad to learn that most veterans courts don't include everyone, it made me incredibly proud to represent San Francisco. After the session, at least half a dozen participants, many of them veterans themselves, came up to me to reiterate their admiration for San Francisco's program.

I believe that losing the funding for non-VA connected veterans to participate in VJC means losing one of the things that makes San Francisco special. We protect our most vulnerable

residents. We don't throw them away.

I also believe that the services Veterans Justice Court provides can be life changing, especially for veterans without VA care. Most of the veterans I work with have severe mental health, substance use, and trauma, often from their time in the military. Many of them lack stable housing or income. And they are often deeply isolated.

In my role as case manager, I help veterans make treatment plans that address the root causes of their justice-involvement. For example, if a veteran has an illegal weapon charge due to safety concerns resulting from homelessness, I connect them with housing. If a veteran stole to fund their addiction, I connect them with appropriate addiction treatment. I also utilize the program's partnership with Swords to Plowshares to get veterans help applying for discharge upgrades and VA benefits. The program's clinician, who will also lose her job June 30, offers the same person-specific approach in her therapeutic work with each client. The clinician and I are both highly involved in the day-to-day lives of the veterans. We support them as they navigate the early stages of recovery and gradually stabilize.

I want to emphasize how much I believe in what this program does. While I love my job and don't want to lose it, this isn't just about that. The veterans I work with are some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Many of them have been in and out of the justice system since they left the military. Veterans Justice Court helps them break this cycle by addressing the root causes of their justice-involvement and connecting them to the VA. My clients need support, housing, treatment, and access to benefits. They do not need jail or prison.

Thank you so much.

Hattie Halloway, she/her/ella

Veterans Justice Court Case Manager

SF Pretrial Diversion Project, Inc.

1200 Folsom Street

San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Commissioner Murphy,

I'm writing to urge the County Veterans Affairs Commission and the City of San Francisco to continue funding case management and clinical support for veterans participating in Veterans Justice Court who do not have VA healthcare.

I read Mission Local's reporting that San Francisco's Veterans Justice Court is no longer accepting veterans without federal VA benefits into its diversion program because the city plans to cut funding for the therapist and case manager who support them.

These veterans are often dealing with homelessness, serious mental health challenges, trauma, substance use, and complicated discharge or benefits issues. Without hands-on case management and treatment, many will have no realistic path to stabilize, access benefits, comply with court requirements, or avoid returning to the traditional criminal legal system.

I understand the city is facing hard budget choices. But cutting this support would likely push costs and harm elsewhere: back into jails, emergency services, homelessness systems, and criminal court. More importantly, it would abandon veterans who are already least able to navigate these systems on their own.

Please support continued funding for Veterans Justice Court services for veterans without VA healthcare—I don't see any other city-backed path that preserves case management, clinical care, and access to treatment and benefits for these participants.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Max

Dear Sir or Madam, who is considering the SF City budget cuts at the end of this month,

I certainly understand that the budget has need to of reduction, but I would like to voice my support for keeping the two staff who are currently supporting Veterans Justice Court for veterans who do not qualify for VA Benefits.

The folks who are most in need of support are those who, often because of the wounds of war, self-medicate and may have had run-ins with the Justice System. They may have lost their ability to get benefits, putting them in a far more dire situation than the rest of us Veterans who have the life saving treatment that the VA has provided.

I do not know where I would be today, but I do not think I would be alive if it wasn't for the VA hospital at Ft. Miley where I received treatment. Had I been ineligible because of the behavior which I was guilty of after my combat deployment in Iraq, well, I hate to think of someone in that situation.

Please consider the impact these 2 workers have on the lives of not just the Veterans they support, but the broader city, which no doubt tires of the many residents who are unhoused, abusing substances, and getting in trouble with law enforcement. A dollar spent here is one less you will need to spend putting these folks in sobriety tanks and other programs.

This San Francisco Veterans Justice Court has permanently diverted many marginal Veterans into meaningful lives who can go on to contribute to society and live a life of peace.

Respectfully

Brandon Jones
US Army Veteran

San Mateo County Veteran Commissioner

These opinions expressed are my personal views and not official endorsements from San Mateo County officials or Commissions.

Brandon Jones

Dear Supervisor Chan,

My name is Janice Hayes, I'm a United States Marine Corps veteran and a retired San Francisco Fire Department firefighter. Although I no longer live in the city, San Francisco will always be my community — and its veterans will always be my people.

I'm writing to ask you to restore the approximately \$250,000 that funds a therapist and case manager for Veterans Justice Court participants who lack federal VA benefits, positions slated for elimination this July.

As a Marine, I understand the culture we come home with — the self-reliance, the reluctance to ask for help, the years of self-medicating before anyone reaches out. I also know how challenging the VA benefits process can be, and how easy it is to fall through the cracks if no one is guiding you through it. For many veterans in this program, the case manager is the only person standing between them and those cracks.

About 15 veterans — a third of the court's current caseload — have no federal VA benefits. They may have less-than-honorable discharges, or they simply never knew they were entitled to anything. Without a case manager, they can't navigate the system. Without a therapist, they can't address what brought them to court in the first place. And without this

program, many will be sent back to criminal court — and we'll all pay a far greater cost down the line.

This funding also makes fiscal sense: the case manager has a strong track record of connecting veterans to federal VA benefits, moving them off city-funded services entirely. The program pays for itself.

In the Marines, we don't leave anyone behind. I'd like to believe San Francisco holds the same standard.

I hope the Budget and Appropriations Committee will protect this funding in the FY2026–27 budget.

Semper Fidelis,

Janice Hayes

USMC Veteran | Retired, San Francisco Firefighter
