

**SAN DIEGO COUNTY
VETERANS ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES**

San Diego County Veterans Service Office
5560 Overland Avenue, Suite 310, San Diego CA 92123
February 14, 2015

Meeting Held at the Veterans Museum and Memorial Center in Balboa Park (VMMC)

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mary Beth Newton, District 1; Laurie Martell, District 3; Ted Kagan, District 2; Nancy Owen, Member-at-Large; John Weaver, District 4; Bill Dillingham, Member-at-Large; Will Rodriguez, Member-at-Large; Michael Piepenburg, Veteran Service Representative Sr., San Diego County.

MEMBERS ABSENT

Michael Robledo, District 5 (E); Commander, Navy Region Southwest (U)

OTHERS PRESENT

1. Call to Order

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Introductions/Public (3 minutes)

4. Approval of Minutes Previous Meeting

Motion was made by Mary Beth Newton and seconded by John Weaver to approve the prior meeting minutes, all in favor.

5. Chairman's Report

Mary Beth spoke about the fact that Supervisor Bill Horn, Chairman of the San Diego County Board of Supervisors declared 2015 the "Year of the Veteran" in his State of the County speech and also went over programs the County is rolling out in the coming year.

Chairman Horn served as a Marine during Vietnam.

Legislative:

John Weaver said the Toxic Exposure Act died in committee but it will be reintroduced as soon as possible.

Michael Piepenburg spoke about AB171, introduced 2 weeks ago. This is for continued additional funding for Veteran Service Offices across the state. It looks like all members of the Assembly were onboard. The Veteran Service Offices in the Counties are to prepare a report listing what services were provided and what was done with the money received over the last 2 years. They are to present these figures at the Center Committee meeting on February 24th.

Mary Beth spoke about the release of the widely anticipated report by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission (MCRMC) on proposals to change military pay and benefits. It essentially suggests 15 reforms to modernize military pay and benefits and generate budget savings for the DOD and the VA.

Mary Beth also spoke about the passing by the Senate of the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for America Veterans Act. It passed 99 to 0 setting the stage for it to become federal law. It is named after a Marine Corps veteran who served in Iraq and Afghanistan who committed suicide in 2011. It essentially calls for the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) to create a one stop website as a source of information for VA mental health services, address a shortage of mental health care experts, and review what is working and make recommendations on what may not be working.

One VA

Nancy Owen will attend the next One VA meeting on Wednesday February 18th. She will give an update at the next VAC meeting.

Chula Vista Veterans Home (CVVH)

Nancy spoke about the Chula Vista Veterans Home yearly Golf Tournament at Eastlake. It will be in May. Nancy will bring the flyers to the next meeting.

Mary Beth said she invited Luis Monteagudo to the next meeting to give more information about the County Board of Supervisors' advocacy of the memory care unit at the Chula Vista Veterans Home. Mary Beth brought a copy of the letter from the County Board of Supervisors to CalVet supporting the memory care unit and also shared the letter response from CalVet to Chairwoman Jacob. (Attachment A)

Mary Beth also said the Chula Vista Veterans Home Support Foundation has their quarterly meeting in March.

United Veterans Council (UVC)

Mary Beth updated on some items discussed at the last UVC meeting:

- The Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission
- The passing by the Senate of the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for America Veterans Act.
- The one time schedule change for their February meeting to the 21st of February.

Mary Beth brought a flyer she picked up on the “59th Massive of Colors” celebration honoring WWII Veterans. It will be Saturday, March 21st, at Balboa Park. (Attachment B)

County Veteran Service Office (CVSO)

Michael Piepenburg represented San Diego County today and updated on the following:

- State of the County speech and Chairman Horn declaring 2015 the “Year of the Veteran”.
- The Escondido Resource Center is on track. There was a meeting with the entities that will be in the veterans’ area last week. The tentative date for the grand opening is still June 2015.
- The Vet Connect pilot will commence in the Julian library in March 2015. Will Rodriguez asked how these services are being promoted to veterans in the area and Mike said the library is posting information and the County is working on it also.
- In an effort to increase veteran outreach in the east region, a Veteran Service Representative will start outreach in the Pine Valley library on the third Thursday of each month starting February 2015. Outreach information will be advertised in the Pine Valley Daily News.
- Michael Piepenburg was in Sacramento for the Winter Professional Training Conference. The acting CalVet Secretary appointed by Governor Brown, Debbie Ensley, was introduced during this meeting.
- There were approximately 400 applications submitted for the Veteran Service Officer position. Human Resources is reviewing them all.

6. Community Reports

Laurie Martell has been contacting her representatives in Escondido to promote attendance at the VAC meetings and will continue to talk to veterans to revitalize attendance.

Nancy spoke about an event she attended February 7th, at the Naval Medical Center in Balboa Park given by Gary Sinise, and his Lt Dan Band for local wounded warriors. She added that Gary Sinise does a tremendous job for wounded warriors.

Nancy spoke about the recent loss of retired Navy nurse Rose Lochte. She was 82 and still volunteered every Wednesday at the ophthalmology clinic at the hospital. Her funeral was on Monday February 16th and burial will be at the Miramar Cemetery.

John Weaver has also been contacting representatives in his area and will continue to do so.

7. Unfinished Business

None

8. New Business

None

9. Closing Remarks

Mary Beth thanked everyone for their effort to revitalize attendance at the VAC meetings and for everyone's support. She also wished everyone a Happy Valentine's day.

10. Adjourned

Meeting adjourned at 10:15 am