



Veteran's Affairs Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 9th, 2023

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CITY SECRETARY
DALLAS, TEXAS

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City of Dallas 1500 South Marilla Street 6 ES Dallas Texas
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VICE CHAIR COMMISSIONER RONNIE MESTAS

PRESENT: [7]

Ronnie Mestas, District 6, Commissioner and Vice Chair
Juan Preciado, District 2, Commissioner
Dr. Katina Robertson, District 3, Commissioner
Gaylord Sherman, District 5, Commissioner
Diane Birdwell, District 7, Commissioner
Steven Ramos, District 9, Commissioner
Fred Wells, District 12, Commissioner

ABSENT: [2]

Mary Ellen Viancourt, District 13, Commissioner
Peter Gray Smith, District 14, Commissioner

Vice Chair Ronnie Mestas called the meeting to order at 11:16 am.

January meeting minutes were reviewed. Vice Chair Mestas asked for any comments on the items from the previous agenda. Commissioner Wells mentioned that the approximate number of homeless veterans identified by a non-profit is 302. Commissioner Wells motioned to approve the meeting. Commissioner Robertson seconded. Motion was passed.

Presentation from Legal Aid NorthWest Texas – Eboni Jacobs, Paralegal & Veteran Outreach

Eboni Jacobs, Veterans Outreach Paralegal presented about Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas and the legal services they provide for veterans.

Contact Information:

Eboni Jacobs

Veterans Outreach Paralegal

Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas (LANWT)

214-748-1234 ext. 2285

jacobs@tanwt.org

Commissioner Wells asked if the city could do something that can help more vets, what would that be. Jacobs emphasized advertisement and marketing. It would help if the City of Dallas backs them up and shares their resources to help the community. Any type of funding is helpful.

Commissioner Wells asked how many vets do you end up representing because of housing issues within a year. LANWT have helped up to 20 veterans in the last year with full representation cases and 50 with advice and brief services. They hope to increase the increase the number. Also emphasized that any help from the City to get the word out would be beneficial. Mentions LANWT is often left out of resource lists. Funding will help.

Regarding evictions, LAWNT can negotiate with landlords, connects veterans to rental assistance or provide legal defense to overturn an eviction in court. LANWT answered that there is a process for the general public to call in, it can take a while. There is a huge demand and limited resources available. LAWNT can provide support with appeals of denial of benefits.

LAWNT stated that it is not required for DD- 214 to receive services if the client satisfies all other eligibility requirements. Jacobs stated that she is the point of contact for referrals if any Commissioners would like to connect a veteran who needs support.

Discussion on the Dallas Veteran Resource Card with First Responders

The Commission listen to feedback from first responders (Dallas Police Department, Code Compliance and Fire Department) about the Dallas Veteran Resource Card and how to best connect veterans with services.

Commissioner Robertson stated that it would be good to add LANWT to the resource card. Along with to add city services, including dialing 311 for any community or neighborhood issues.

Sargant Herrera works in Southeast Dallas, covering most of southeast Pleasant Grove area. Sargant Herrera mentioned that the resource card would be very helpful. DPD

would want to hand off the card to veterans and RIGHT Care team that works on mental health. Sargent Herrera added the top legal services on the card, it would be beneficial for veterans may be beneficial for them getting support with especially expungement.

Commissioner Wells recommended adding a back side to the card which would allow for listing more resources. Commissioner Robertson mentioned adding Mr. James Henderson, works with Dallas County V.A. and initiates service connections for veterans that are not service connected.

Marianna Stevenson – Resilience Coordinator with Fire Departments mentioned the card would be beneficial to fire fighters and paramedics who often run across veterans who need services. She reached out to her Fire Department staff and they suggested adding Disabled American Veterans group and Texas Veterans Commission who help vets get their paperwork and connect with benefits that are available in addition to helping veterans with loans and housing. Additionally, Stevenson mentioned adding the Carry the Load organization that connects to 40 nonprofit orgs that provide services such as mental health, housing and peer to peer connections for vets.

Commissioner Wells asked if there were any resources that were lacking in supporting veterans. Sargent Herrera added that one resource that would be helpful is related to transportation. It was suggested to research if there could be support to transportation such as providing credit for uber, Lyft or DART and or a DART pass.

Veteran Homeless Subcommittee

Commissioner Mestas shared that the Veterans Homeless Subcommittee is aiming to visit the Bridge and additional facilities that services veterans. The goal would be to set up meeting with veterans in a small group setting and have causal conversation with veterans to learn more about needs.

There was discussion of commissioners to break into groups and report out at future VAC meetings. Commissioners discussed of the possibility to visit homeless shelters within the next 60 days and debrief in subsequent meeting.

The City Attorney stated that if all three subcommittee members attend a meeting at the same location, then the agenda will need to be posted 72 hours prior to the meeting.

Commissioner Robertson requested that a representative from DART be invited to attend to address transportation issues for veterans at the next meeting.

Staff Reports/Briefings

Christina da Silva WCIA Officer shared that the Welcoming Coordinator was posted and open to the public.

Announcements

Commissioner Mestas shared The Jeremiah Project in Austin served as a model that provided complete wrap around service that takes care of two generations – a parent and a child. The Jeremiah Project is in Austin and is a great model for services to help families get out of homelessness.

Commissioner Robertson mentions that The Greater Dallas Veteran Foundation is looking for members to assist with the Greater Dallas Vet Day 2023 Parade. If anyone is interested in serving in the board or committee, please call Pat Tipel at 469-583-8714.

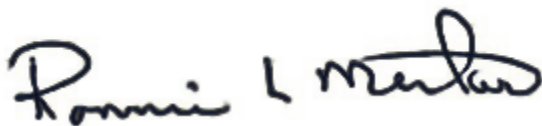
Commissioner Birdwell stated that for the next meeting, she will share information on “Operation Meet-A-Hero” at Bryan Adams.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:29 pm.

Prepared by:
Christina da Silva



Approved by:



Ronnie Mestas, Vice Chair Veteran's Affairs Commission

Webex webinar recording: Veteran Affairs Commission - March Meeting-20230309 1640-1

Recording link:

<https://dallascityhall.webex.com/recordingservice/sites/dallascityhall/recording/0917b10aa0c7103bbffe00505681643e/playback>

