



VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

May 9, 2024

Agenda ID # 240462

City of Dallas 1500 South Marilla Street 6 ES Dallas Texas

CISCO WEBEX LINK:

<https://dallascityhall.webex.com/webappng/sites/dallascityhall/recording/f3f0b84df052103c8fff02c42acec2d5/playback>

Call-In # Telephone: +1-469-210-7159 Access Code: 2481 858 7989

PRESENT: [9] Ronnie Mestas Presiding- Commissioner Chair

District 6 - Ronnie L. Mestas
District 1- Charles Ayers
District 2- Juan M. Preciado
District 4- Fred Walker
District 5- Gayland Sherman
District 7- Diane E. Birdwell *
District 11- Scott Chase
District 12- Steven Cole
District 14- Peter G. Smith *

ABSENT: [4]

District 3- Katina Robertson
District 8- Dominique Haskett
District 9- Steven T. Ramos
District 13- Ray A. Smith

**Note: Members of the Board/Commission participated in this meeting by video conference.*

***Note: Indicates arrival time after meeting called to order/reconvened*

AGENDA

I. Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance, and Roll Call

At 12:03p.m. Chair Mestas determined that there was quorum, then began with the call to order: the Pledge of Allegiance, then the Roll Call was taken.

II. Public Comments on Items III – VI

There were no public comments.

III. Vote to Approve the April 25th, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes

Chair Mestas asked the commissioners to motion to approve the Meeting Minutes. Commissioners Chase made the motion and Commissioner Birdwell seconded it. The vote to accept was unanimous and no one objected. Then, he moved on to the next agenda item.

IV. Presentation from Veteran's Community Project (VCP)

Chair Mestas asked Veteran's Community Project to begin with their presentation.

Bryan Meyer, CEO of VCP asked to begin with their video: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQW5i25zztY>).

After the video, Bryan gave a little of his history. He was in the Marine Corps. Upon returning to civilian life, it was challenging! A judge gave him the chance to redeem himself, and he did. He returned to school and eventually finished Law School. VCP is how he's giving back to the community, by serving veterans. They are based in Kansas City. In 2016 he and VCP cofounders began working full-time and opened the first center.

VCP builds dignified, tiny homes, slab on grade, with full utilities, and on-site case manager offices, a health clinic, and social and technology space. Their assessment of the core reasons why veterans are homeless are three factors: people, property and pets.

Veterans need security with their selves, their property and their loyal pets. VCP homes are private, everything inside is their belongings and secured, and they are allowed to have their pets.

VCP is a long-term, permanent fix. They accomplish this by having housing with wrap around services. The house sizes are either 240 or 360 square feet. The 360 square foot home is for families. VCP has an 85% success rate of veterans transitioning to permanent housing.

VCP's 5 pillars: 1) health & well-being, 2) income stability, 3) fiscal understanding, 4) education & training, and 5) network of support. The medical, dental and veterinary services are in collaboration with community supporters.

Currently, there are 7 locations: 1) Headquarters in Kansas City, MO 2) St Louis, 3) Sioux Falls, SD 4) Boulder, CO 5) Oklahoma City, OK 6) Milwaukee, Glendale (Phoenix), and 3 new potential locations: 1) Dallas, 2) Atlanta, and 3) Northeast.

Commissioner Chase thanked Mr. Meyer for his presentation. Then, he asked about the size and cost of the project in Kansas City.

Mr. Meyers said the land was purchased from the city for \$500. There are 49 homes built on the property, plus a 5,000 square foot commercial building that houses the case managers, health clinic, and social center. Total costs were \$6.5 - 7 million.

Commented [dC1]: @Nadzaku, Shpendim is this amount correct?

Commented [NS2R1]: Yes!

Commissioner Chase asked if the funds were from the federal government or private?

Mr. Meyers responded, VCP has stayed away from all federal dollars because of associated constraints. For example, VCP's case manager to client ratio is smaller. Also, they can house veterans for much longer. Now, they accept state and county dollars because they don't affect their programming in the way federal dollars do.

Mr. Meyers stressed a maximum of 50 homes to nurture community. Anything more would require additional locations, even within the same city. Also, they ~~They~~ base their costs on market rate. So, for a ~~50-home~~ 50-home project in Dallas the estimate is around \$15 million. But the costs are reduced by volunteers and donations of materials and labor.

Commissioner Chase asked –what percentage of residents are over 60?
Mr. Meyers shared that –the majority are slightly over 50, so they're close to 60. But it's starting to decline with a lot of veterans being from the Iraq & Afghanistan era.

Commissioner Preciado asked –how VCP markets itself?

Mr. Meyers shared that they engage in –several forms of outreach. Among them are billboards, ads, the VA, word of mouth, going out on the streets, etc. There is a difference between VCP's definition for a veteran and the VA's. VCP accepts anyone who served, and in any of the many different branches of service, like the National Guard.

Commissioner Preciado asked –what is the vacancy rate for their homes?

Mr. Meyers stated that –VCP strives to keep 85% occupancy so that they can accommodate emergencies.

Commissioner Ayers asked what's necessary to begin a new project, like in Dallas?

Mr. Meyers responded that –there are 3 core tenets: land, municipal support, and philanthropic support.

Commissioner Cole said he noticed that their numbers come for the VA's Supportive Housing program. Then, he asked if they use VA support transitioning into permanent housing.

Mr. Meyers stated that– since everyone's long term housing is uniqueunique, they tailor it on a case-by-case basis. An evaluation is done for each veteran as part of the transition to permanent housing.

Chair Mestas shared that– veterans are a vulnerable group. Also, there is no preparation to transition to civilian life. What does VCP do for this?

Mr. Meyers stated –VCP has workforce solutions to help newly transitioning veterans. They do all that they can to help them connect with their VA

benefits, education & training for employment, prevent homelessness. VCP has wrap around services to ensure veteran success.

Commissioner Ayers asked to be kept informed regarding any progress for Dallas.

Mr. Meyer shared that they ~~We~~ can update the commissioners via email.

Commissioner Chase stated that ~~it~~ the VAC is happy to champion VCP in Dallas.

Commissioner Birdwell said her friend worked on the Kansas HQ project. Also, she echoed commissioner Chase to support VCP coming to Dallas.

Mr. Meyers said VCP takes huge pride in volunteer support. Like Habitat for Humanity, many supporters get involved with building the community.

Commissioner Chase asked if VCP has collaborated with Habitat for Humanity to build homes for veterans.

Mr. Meyers stated that there ~~There~~ has been collaboration between the two. However, Habitat has a chapter affiliate model. VCP is managed from Kansas City, so there are some differences.

Chair Mestas asked if they only build tiny homes ~~homes~~ or do they remodel properties?

Mr. Meyers responded; property acquisition looks different in different areas. VCP is open to opportunities and is creative in finding solutions.

Mr. Meyers concluded by introducing the rest of the team.

V. Announcements

Chair Mestas thanked Commissioner Birdwell for the “Operation Meet a Hero” event she hosted at Bryan Adams High School. Commissioner Birdwell thanked the veterans for attending. The following veterans attended: Diane Birdwell, Ronnie Mestas, Scott Chase, Charles Ayers, Gayland Sherman, and Melissa Harris, a COD Employee Retirement Fund & VERG member.

Commented [dC3]: @Nadzaku, Shpendim did anyone provide a report of who attended the "Meet a Hero" event?

Commented [NS4R3]: No. But I took notice when I attended. The following commissioners attended: Birdwell, Mestas, Chase, Ayers, & Sherman. Also, Melissa Harris, COD retirement fund & VERG member attended.

Chair Mestas said “Tonight is the CPC planning meeting to discuss the forward Dallas housing plan.”

Shpendim mentioned he has certificates and lanyards for Commissioners as part of the Appreciation Lunch that was hosted by the City of Dallas.

VI. Adjournment

Chair Mestas adjourned the meeting at 12:58p.m.

Drafted by: _____ Date
Shpendim Nadzaku,
Welcoming Coordinator OEI/WCIA

Approved by: _____ Date
Ronnie Lee Mestas, Chair
Veteran’s Affairs Commission

Attachments:
Transcript Link and or Video Link:
<https://dallascityhall.webex.com/webappng/sites/dallascityhall/recording/1ed6babfc452103cb8cf0a215a691d8a/playback>