



## VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION

### Meeting Minutes

March 13, 2025

Agenda ID # 250273

City of Dallas 1500 South Marilla Street 6 ES Dallas Texas

#### CISCO WEBEX LINK:

<https://dallascityhall.webex.com/webappng/sites/dallascityhall/recording/45a80315e259103dbf7f0a4f342c8c77/playback>

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

**PRESENT: [10]** Charles Ayers Presiding Commissioner & Chair

District 1- Charles Ayers
District 2- Juan M. Preciado
District 4- Fred Walker
District 5- Gayland Sherman
District 7- Diane E. Birdwell
District 8- Dominique Haskett *
District 9- Glenn Hunter
District 11- Scott Chase *
District 12- Steven Cole *
District 13- Ray A. Smith *

**ABSENT: [1]**

District 6 - Ronnie L. Mestas
-------------------------------

*\*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**

Quorum was achieved at 12:10pm and **Chair Charles Ayers** began the commission with the pledge of allegiance, then the roll call.

### **II. Vote to Approve the February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

Chair Ayers moved onto the next item on the agenda, approving the February 13<sup>th</sup>, meeting minutes.

Commissioner Juan Preciado made the motion and Commissioner Glenn Hunter seconded. All were in favor, so the motion passed.

### **III. Veterans' Wellbeing Assessment Update**

Next, the Chair moved onto the Wellbeing Assessment.

**The Assistant Director of the Office of Equity & Inclusion, Christina da Silva**, provided the update on the Veterans' Wellbeing Assessment. She said it is currently in the contracting process with the selected vendor. We're anticipating the contract be signed by the end of the month and to start by April 1, 2025.

Commissioner Chase asked if there were any edits to the deliverables. Christina said there were no edits to the deliverables, but to procedural items.

### **IV. Scholarship on Behalf of Dr. Katina Robertson Update**

Christina provided an update to the commission regarding the scholarship on behalf of Dr. Katina Robertson. She said the Youth Commission set the precedent as the first commission to establish a scholarship. They were invited to present to the commission but are currently on a trip. We hope to have them present in April's meeting.

### **V. Letter to City Council in Support of Filling Four (4) Commission Vacancies Update**

Christina da Silva said the letter was signed by both Chairs Mestas and Ayers and submitted to leadership.

Chair Ayers asked when they can expect an update. Christina said council is currently in recess and returns on March 24<sup>th</sup> and that staff would follow-up after they return.

Chair Ayers requested staff to provide an update in April.

A public attendee, Charles Brown stated that he wants to join the commission. Chair Ayers said he'd be happy to have him on the commission and told him to speak with Christina and Shpendim to assist him with the process.

## **VI. Commissioner Business Cards Update**

Christina da Silva mentioned that the cards were finalized and ready for print. However, the Communications Department informed us that the City is undergoing rebranding and an updated sample. The provided sample is the newly rebranded card.

Commissioner Diane Birdwell asked what has changed. Christina replied the change is minimal and primarily on the back side. It shows the new, updated moto "Service First, Now!" Also, she asked the commissioners to confirm the information on their card.

## **VII. National Medal of Honor Grand Opening**

Christina stated that the National Medal of Honor Museum, located at 1717 East Randol Mill Road, Suite 301, Arlington, TX 75011 will have its Grand Opening event on Saturday, March 22, from 7:00 to 9:00pm. Staff have reserved a 15-passenger van to transport the commission. Anyone who is not city staff must fill out a liability waiver form. It will be emailed to you via Adobe signature. Commissioner Preciado has volunteered to be the driver. The meeting place and time will be confirmed by email.

Commissioner Birdwell asked about bring our own chairs and supplies. Commissioner Preciado answered confirming that because it will take place outside.

There was a little confusion on the date. However, it was clarified and confirmed to be on Saturday, March 22.

## **VIII. Announcements**

Commissioner Gayland Sherman presented his personal struggle of 20 years to upgrade his discharge from the Navy. He stated he needs memorandums for character witness and asked for the commission to provide him this support.

Chair Ayers then made an announcement asking for a VA representative to attend the April meeting to address concerns with the federal budget cuts on the VA and services to veterans. Christina said we'll reach out to our contact in the VA to address questions regarding the budget cuts and their impact on Dallas veterans.

Commissioner Birdwell mentioned she recently lobbied in Austin for an education issue. She suggested asking elected officials or their staffers from the House of Representatives come to present to the commission. She asked if the commission support this, and they all agreed. The district are:

3- (R) Keith Self, 4- (R) Pat Fallon, 5- (R) Lance Gooden, 6- (R) Jake Ellzey,  
24- (R) Beth Van Duyne, 30- (D) Jasmine Crockett, 32- (D) Julie Johnson  
33- (D) Marc A. Veasey

Commissioner Chase asked who will contact them to follow up with this request. Christina said we recently requested that information and have it on hand. Staff will reach out to them and will update the commission. In addition, she asked about including the senators along with the House of Representatives and the

commissioners agreed it would be good to have Senator’s Cruz and Cornyn’s offices present.

Commissioner Birdwell mentioned Dallas has many representatives because of the large population. This can divide veterans voices, unless we have a united voice.

Chair Ayers asked if there were more new business.

Christian da Silva introduced the Interim Director for the Office of Equity & Inclusion, Hai Tran. Previously, he was the Ethics Officer for the City Manager’s Office.

Hai Tran expressed gratitude for the commission, their dedication to the city’s veteran residents, and the opportunity afforded him. He concluded by affirming his support for the commission.

Chair Ayers opened it up for questions.

Commissioner Birdwell asked if Hai was a veteran. Hai said no, but he has many family members who are.

Christina had new business regarding the Townhall Budgets. She informed the commission of this opportunity for the commission to learn and ask questions.

Chair Ayers said this may be an opportunity to share concerns and make recommendations pertaining to veterans. Commissioner Preciado said he’ll share that schedule.

**IX. Adjournment**

Chair Ayers adjourned the meeting at 12:47pm.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Approved by: Chair Ronnie Mestas,  
Co-Chair Dr. Charles Ayers  
Veteran Affairs Commission

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Drafted by: Shpendim Nadzaku,  
Welcoming Coordinator OEI/WCIA

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date