



VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMISSION

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING MINUTES

JULY 17, 2025

Agenda ID # 250657

City of Dallas 1500 South Marilla Street 6 ES Dallas Texas

CISCO WEBEX LINK:

<https://dallascityhall.webex.com/dallascityhall/ldr.php?RCID=f7a12e55dc9df6be09b4682bbc825f53>

PRESENT: [9]

Charles Ayers Presiding Commissioner & Chair

District 1- Charles Ayers
District 5- Gayland Sherman
District 7- Sergio V. Ortega
District 8- Dominique Haskett *
District 9- Glenn Hunter
District 11- Scott Chase
District 12- Steven Cole
District 13- Ray A. Smith *
District 14- Matthew Bell *

ABSENT: [1]

District 2- Juan M. Preciado

**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 12:00pm quorum was met, and Chair Charles Ayers began the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance, then a call to order, and the roll call.

Old Business

II. Public Comments on Items III – IV

There were no public comments.

III. Vote to Approve June 12, 2025, Veteran Affairs Commission Meeting Minutes

The commission voted to approve June 12, meeting minutes. Commissioner Scott Chase made the motion and Commissioner Gayland Sherman seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed.

New Business

IV. Certificates of Appreciation

Chair Charles Ayers, on behalf of the Veteran Affairs Commission, thanked former commissioners Ronnie L. Mestas, Fred Walker, and Diane Birdwell for their service on the commission. Diane Birdwell was present. Chair Ayers handed her the Certificates of Appreciation. Chair Ayers asked Shpendim Nadzaku to mail Ronnie Mestas and Fred Walker their certificates. Additionally, a get-well card was signed for Ronnie Mestas who was reported to be in the hospital. That was mailed to him along with his certificate.

V. Veterans Innovation & Insight Forum Debrief from Team SMU

The Southern Methodist University team: Dr. Monnie McGee- Associate Professor in SMU's Department of Statistics and Data Science, and Dr. Jennifer Ebinger- Executive Director of the Office of Engaged Learning, debriefed the commission on the Veterans Innovation & Insight Forum that took place on Saturday, July 12, 2025.

Dr. McGee reported positive observations from the forum. Attendees were engaged, followed directions, and seemed happy. The facilitators did an excellent job keeping participants on task, which is important for the integrity of the research. A feedback form was sent to participants to capture additional insights. Dr. McGee included information on attendance. She said 85 people RSVP'd, 5 cancelled a week in advance of the forum. Of the remaining 80, 42 did not show up meaning only 38 attended, which is less than 50%. They were unsure why 42 attendees did not attend. Out of the 38 attendees 21 were veterans: 6 Army, 6 Navy, 5 Air Force, 3 Marines, and 1 Coast Guard. Next steps include coding the qualitative data. The data entry and analysis phase will take some time. That concluded her presentation and opened for questions.

Co-Chair Steven Cole said that several commissioners didn't get the feedback email and requested verification and follow-up. Furthermore, he suggested the commission send a follow-up communication thanking them for their attendance and participation and to cultivate a relationship.

Additionally, he asked what the commission can do regarding the 42 no shows. Dr. Jennifer Ebinger said she will share the list so that the commission can reach out to them.

Co-Chair Cole said that he would like to afford the 42 absentees an opportunity to participate in an online survey and would be willing to collaborate on this. SMU staff agreed.

VI. Announcements

Chair Ayers mentioned there are 5 vacancies on the commission and currently, no females. He asked the commissioners to reach and help recruit by sharing information with their contacts.

Also, he shared information from his councilperson's office. He will share that email's material which includes important information on the expiring terms for the commissioners as well as next steps.

Furthermore, he stated that he wants to establish subcommittees with subject matter experts for each committee. These are the subcommittees: 1) housing, 2) employment, 3) homelessness, and 4) education.

Lastly, he said that he'd like the commission to select a local nonprofit to be the point of contact and serve as a hub for Dallas veterans. The City would advertise that organization and their contact information.

VII. Adjournment

Chair Ayers adjourned the meeting at 12:35pm.

VIII. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date for the Veteran Affairs Commission is scheduled for Thursday, September 11, 2025, 12:00pm at Dallas City Hall, Conference Room 6ES.

Approved by: Chair Charles Ayers,
Co-Chair Steven Cole

Date

Drafted by: Shpendim Nadzaku,
Coordinator

Date