



Veterans' and Military Affairs Advisory Board

New Mexico Veterans' Memorial

May 21, 2014

Minutes

- I. Meeting Called to Order by Chairman Roger Newall at 9:10 am
 - a. Present: Chairman Roger Newall, Vice Chairman Archie Garcia, Ken O'Keefe, Steve Overman
 - b. Absent: Stephen Asher, Elise Wheeler
 - c. Pending Members: Gary Zura, Mandy Dykman
 - d. Secretary: Mirella Chacon

- II. Approval of Minutes from April 16, 2014
 - a. The April minutes were accepted.

- III. Public Comments – Citizens Commission on Human Rights
 - CCHR – Biggest mental health watchdog group in the world. Documents and investigates human rights abuse in the file of mental health.
 - Recent tragedies at Fort Hood and the Washington, D.C., Navy Yard are concerning due to the increase of reports of military and veteran violence and suicide in Armed Forces.
 - Some 80% of vets have been labeled with PTSD receive psychotropic drugs and many of these drugs have clearly been shown to have side effects of suicidal and/or homicidal ideation.

Note: A fact sheet was presented on Psychiatry in the Military

Questions/Answers:

Question: In fact sheet or future investigation are they looking into the fact that not only psychotropic drugs are possibly causing these symptoms but is it also in conjunction with either alcohol or narcotics in the person's system with that since it also has a lot of influence?

Answer: It does have a lot of influence but further investigation will be looked into this. Overriding factor is psychiatric medication.

Question: In lieu of these drugs being what they are and how they affect people are you proposing an alternative?

Answer: There are professionals who promote alternatives and help Veterans. Gerald Betts – located out of Las Cruces offers services.

- IV. Old Business
 - a. Albuquerque Employee Coins
 - Successful – talked with both Fire and Police Academy; next time they graduations veterans will be presented with the coins.
 - b. Hiring Preference – Nothing reported
 - APD – reworking the Veteran hiring policies. The challenge with APD is the 60 credit policy. Problem with that is that it is either credits or military service. Even at that point the military service is equivalent to 3 or 6 years.
 - There is no mention of Guard or Reserve.
 - We will have to reclassify the term of service to educate the trained and standard supervisor as to what is a Guard in Reserve individual and what is an active individual.
 - We need to get this to back to basic premises of the city which is to complete a basic training and assign to a unit as a qualification of being described to being a veteran.
 - 3 of years of Active duty does not represent a standard number – 2, 4 or 6 is valid.

- Honorable Discharge is a must.
- Guard and Reserve need to have completed school and provide evidence that they were active duty.
- Something else to consider is exceptions for those that served in the military as police personnel? Do we make exceptions of certain parts of the training options? Should they be re-trained as regular City police to ensure training is equal throughout?
- If individuals have Military Service whether it is active or completed; reserve and ongoing – we need to take the military qualities and put them into our system.
- Currently looking into individuals from Guard and Reserve. Guard individuals are already living here that know their neighborhoods; They bring positive attitudes into this program.
- Military Police Preference: Gordon Eden & Gordon is necessary to approach both the Command Chiefs and Mayor.
- Another point that needs addressing is the Educational component required for this.
- PSA is a good Segway for some candidates who consider entering the Police.

Questions/Answers:

Questions: What's the status on the EMT and Fire Department carryover?

Answer: This is at State level. One thing that was addressed was to try to look at holding our own EMT class two weeks prior to the Academy Class so as not to wait for individuals that are attending other EMT programs.

Discussion ensued on EMT certification.

c. Membership

- We now have someone in charge of Boards and Commissions. We will go through the process and vote to get to the three individuals pending.

d. Projects

- Police Department – ongoing
- New project in process – unable to share much until a later day.
- Currently working with the Memorial Arts Board for new monuments being brought in and the approval they are required before they are put in place. We are putting in writing process and requirements that will be necessary before any monument is placed at the NM Veterans' Memorial.
 1. Dollar amount that is quoted and received for any monument needs to include a 10% for future renovations or complications.
 2. Vandalism is an issue that occurs often at the Veteran's Memorial and money is not available to fix damages done to monuments that did not include the added 10% to care for these damages.
 3. Cameras for the Memorial were received but not installed due to finances. The foundation has talked about bringing in Security. IT has agreed to come to the Memorial to take a look at the cameras.
- Bus Program – concerns included are Veterans that are not part of the VA hospital system.

Discussion ensued on VA Medical concerns

e. Legislation

- Veterans' Expo – had 143 exhibitors, 300 to 400 people registered and participated. We will correspond with those that attended to inquire if they found what they were looking for – to obtain effectiveness of expo. Will also communicate with exhibitors and inquire if they were able to meet the needs of those that attended. Guard Reserves had more volunteers than attendees. Four months of announcing and preparing for this event and very few attended.

- Many volunteered to help but few actually did anything
- Possible future changes include early set up and end at 2:00 pm
- Parking Pass – concerns about parking two buildings away from actual event
- Unsure if this will take place next year – will be discussed at the next meeting.

Discussion ensued on Veterans' Expo.

f. VA Services / ABQ Heading Home

- Homelessness and its epidemic
- Some homeless individuals are mostly over 5 years of homelessness but others over 20 years.
- Job opportunities are limited due to a reduction in references due to reduction in opportunities and lack of updating resumes.
- Mental Health issues become a concern once it involves drugs and alcohol consumption
- Goal is to house these individuals and find services for them.
- Once an individual qualifies for disability or Social Security a program called S.O.A.R. works with them to help them qualify for income and housing.
- Will be working with Service Organizations to include in next year's budget allowance for assistance for deposits and /or electric or gas. Maybe even include Bus Tickets as a means of assistance. Money would be taken from Bingo and Slot Machines. Will be approaching different organizations to finance this program to get homeless off the street.
- The City will save money when repeat offenders are taken off the street by providing some kind of stability (ie. ambulance, hospital stay, and jail)

Discussion ensued on Homelessness epidemic

V. New Business:

- May 26th – Memorial Day Celebration at the NM Veterans' Memorial
- 4th of July Celebrations – concert at the memorial
- The Telling Project (National Theatrical Project) @ the South Broadway Cultural Center to be held September 11, 13, 19 & 20th. Need volunteers to help with this project.

VI. Setting of Future Meetings – June 18, 2014 at 9:00 am at the NM Veterans' Memorial

VII. Adjourn – 10:32. am.