



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION
Regular Meeting**

MINUTES

Wednesday, April 3, 2024

Scottsdale Community Design Studio
7506 E. Indian School Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

PRESENT: Chair Land Anderson, Vice-Chair Justin Layman, Commissioners Mark Ashley, Patrick Mazarella (MS Teams), Steven Jackson (joined meeting at 5:06, MS Teams) and Joe Stempel

ABSENT: Commissioner Pete Palmer

STAFF: Kelly Corsette, Communications/Public Affairs Director

GUESTS: Marcus Brown Foerster, Founder and President of Veterans 5-9

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Chair Anderson called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Members present as listed above.

2. Public Comment

There were no members of the public who wished to speak.

3. Discussion and possible action to approve March 6, 2024, commission meeting minutes

COMMISSIONER STEMPIL MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 6, 2024, VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES. CHAIR ANDERSON SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED FIVE (5) TO ZERO (0). CHAIR ANDERSON, VICE-CHAIR LAYMAN, COMMISSIONERS ASHLEY, MAZZARELLA, AND STEMPIL VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. COMMISSIONER JACKSON WAS NOT PRESENT. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

4. Presentation, discussion, and possible recommendations: Vets 5-9

Marcus Brown Foerster, Founder and President of Veterans 5-9, gave a presentation, outlining the program history and status. He served as a U.S. Marine 2004-2008 with two tours, worked in criminal justice, and joined the City Police Force in 2014. Currently a sergeant with Mesa PD, Mr. Brown was inspired to help veterans after receiving a wellness check request from a VA social worker. Veterans 5-9 is a full-service veterans' case management program across multiple counties in Arizona.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Mr. Brown stated that there are currently fifteen veterans being assisted per month. Funding is provided via private, federal, and state grants. Commissioner Stempil shared information regarding the Veterans Furniture Center which donates new furniture and home necessities to aid veterans. Veterans 5-9 is currently volunteer based with four team members, including one grant-funded case manager. The organization's biggest challenge is finding volunteers and there is a need for resources to add some paid positions. Kelly Corsette, Communications and Public Affairs Director, confirmed that the Veterans 5-9 link could be shared on the Veterans resource page and invited Mr. Brown to participate in the Veterans AZ Program, which could help generate volunteer and donor interest and awareness. Mr. Brown noted that there is a physical address on their website and a QR code on the organization pamphlet to receive donations.

In response to a query from Vice-Chair Layman, he outlined the qualifiers for individuals to receive services as being offered to all service members, active or otherwise, honorable or dishonorable discharge, unless possessing prior sexual assault charges, crimes against children, or arson. They offer help in upgrading dishonorable discharge, if necessary. Candidates are asked about their history, but background checks are not run. They do run DD214 and SQUARES to see what other types of assistance they have received.

5. Debrief, discussion and possible recommendations: Vietnam Veterans recognition event

Chair Anderson led the debrief for the Vietnam Veterans event held on National Vietnam Veterans Day, March 29, 2024, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at Scottsdale Civic Center East Bowl. He offered a special thank you to Vice-Chair Layman and Kelly Corsette, Neighbors Helping Neighbors, and Commissioners Stempil and Palmer. Commissioners talked about ways the event setup could be improved next year. Suggested improvements included the following:

- Location adjustment for food placement with two stations.
- Reserved seating for City Mayor and City Council.
- Announcement regarding Blue Star Pin availability.
- Invite an Honor Flight participant to answer questions at a small resource table.

Chair Anderson noted that a 'Thank You' email was received from Patricia Little-Upah, Col., U.S. Army, Ret, commenting that this was one of the more memorable events that she has been a part of. The email was read into the record as follows:

"I want to thank each of you for putting together an amazing day for our Vietnam Veterans. I've done many presentations at different events, but this one truly touched my heart. So many veterans came up to me afterwards and expressed their gratitude for this event. Two veterans gave me a big hug and said, 'No one has ever welcomed me home.' "

Mr. Corsette commented that the Veterans Heritage Project came through by connecting the Commission with the featured speaker and honored guests, as well as spreading the word about the event, noting that many of the RSVPs came from them. He thanked city volunteers from the Employee Resource Group, vShield, staff at the Public Affairs Office, and Dominique. He said his biggest takeaway was that the structure of the event, with a 30-minute program, allowed time for people to socialize and he thought that the vehicles were a nice touch along with the Honor Health trailer. The event has been registered with the US Vietnam War Commemorative as an official commemorative event.

It was noted that attendees were unaware of the Honor Flight Program. Chair Anderson indicated that he could send a follow-up email as well as a link on the VAC website with the Honor Flight Program information. Commissioner Mazzarella suggested contacting a gentleman in Mesa to speak for the Veterans AZ Program about Honor Flight. He said that all veterans are eligible for the Honor Flight, regardless of where they served. Chair Anderson commented that the unexpected visit by Channel 12 News was appreciated.

6. Discussion and possible recommendations of Vietnam Veterans park recognition options

Vice-Chair Layman gave an update on the progress of researching options for the Vietnam Veterans Park recognition. He presented pictures given to him by Historian Joan Fudala, depicting a Vietnam Veteran recognition done in the 1960s. He noted that the project is challenging because there is currently an overhaul of the Indian Bend Wash parks system underway. Individual parks commissioners and staff have expressed support for installing something like what is done with Scottsdale Salutes, such as a dedication area in a park in north, central, and south Scottsdale where veterans or their families can designate which park. Discussions are ongoing with the parks staff about possible options. The goal is to have something organized in time for the 50th anniversary in March of 2025.

Chair Anderson opened the discussion for comments. Discussion ensued regarding the vision for the site location, monument style, and the possibility of including veterans from other wars in the recognition. Consensus was to focus on Scottsdale Vietnam era veterans. Vice-Chair Laymen will continue with his discovery efforts and report back to the Commission during the June VAC meeting.

7. Discussion and Updates to the Veterans Advisory Commission Work Plan

No discussion or updates.

8. Commissioner reports, staff updates and suggestions for future agenda items

Mr. Corsette said that the Vietnam Veterans recognition event had publicity in Prescott and shared that a veteran in Australia heard about the event and asked his sister, who is local, to attend the event on his behalf. The City was contacted by the daughter of a 100-year-old Scottsdale WWII Veteran inquiring whether it would be possible for her father to be part of Scottsdale Salutes program. Mr. Corsette plans to follow up to see if there is something special that can be done for him. He also noted that publicity for the Scottsdale Salutes program is ramping up.

Commissioner Ashley provided Mr. Corsette with a participant contact list from the Veterans Fair at Phoenix College.

Commissioner Stempil said that he is signed up to begin training at the Hospice of the Valley to visit with veterans in that program.

Vice-Chair Layman suggested that the commission host a veterans table at the 2025 Scottsdale Senior Expo.

Mr. Corsette said that as part of the upcoming Scottsdale Salutes marketing efforts, program flyers will be placed at senior centers.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 4, 2024.

9. Adjournment

CHAIR ANDERSON MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER STEMPIL SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ZERO (0). CHAIR ANDERSON, VICE-CHAIR LAYMAN, COMMISSIONERS ASHLEY, JACKSON, MAZZARELLA, AND STEMPIL VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

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