



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION**

MINUTES

Regular Meeting
Wednesday, May 6, 2026
Scottsdale Community Design Studio
7506 E. Indian School Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

PRESENT: Chair Justin Layman; Vice-Chair Donna Tew; Commissioners Mark Ashley, Stephen Casares (MS Teams), Steven Jackson, and Christie Slegers

ABSENT: Commissioner Marcy Kostewa

STAFF: Holly Peralta, Public Affairs Manager; Kira Peters, Deputy City Manager; Dominique Rivas, Citizen Advisor; Eileen Baden, Principal Planner

GUESTS: Chris Watson, Assistant Police Chief; Chris Coffee, Police Commander

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Chair Layman called the meeting to order at 4:34 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 April 1, 2026 commission meeting minutes

COMMISSIONER JACKSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE APRIL 1, 2026 VETERANS ADVISORY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES AS PRESENTED. VICE-CHAIR TEW SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED SIX (6) TO ZERO (0). CHAIR LAYMAN, VICE-CHAIR TEW, COMMISSIONERS ASHLEY, CASARES, JACKSON, AND SLEGGERS VOTED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. THERE WERE NO DISSENTING VOTES.

4. Presentation and discussion: Scottsdale Police Department recruitment efforts and veterans' outreach

Chris Watson, Assistant Police Chief, and Chris Coffee, Police Commander, gave a presentation, discussing efforts being made by Scottsdale Police Department to recruit veterans. Chief Watson explained that the culture, mission, and leadership principals of the police department align well with the military. Military veterans make up a good portion of the police department's sworn and civilian employees. He reviewed the hiring pathways and transition support that are available to veterans. He said that police department prioritizes crisis intervention team training and wellness initiatives for all officers.

Chief Watson noted that SB1107, which was recently signed, will create a pathway for military police applicants to have a different training pathway. Arizona Police Officers Standards and Training Board (POST) are compiling a plan that will expedite training for officers who have had lateral training while in the military. He explained that the Veterans Commission can help to spread the word about opportunities with the police department by sharing information on their personal social network, recommending recruiting opportunities to the department, and letting the department know if there are areas of the process that could be improved.

Commissioners were given an opportunity to ask questions. Chief Watson talked about the Craig Tiger Act, which affords officers, dispatchers, crime scene specialists, and digital forensics unit free counseling. He said that the program is an improvement from in the past when officers were expected to deal with trauma on their own. The Struggle Well program is a week-long program available to police personnel and retirees. Chief Watson explained that the department does not have a veteran recruiting goal, but does do comparisons with national and state averages. Brief discussion ensued regarding the Veterans Justice Court and making officers aware of the program.

5. Presentation and discussion: 75th Anniversary Honor Avenue

Dominique Rivas, Citizen Advisor, and Eileen Baden, Principal Planner, gave an update on the progress of the 75th Anniversary Honor Avenue. Ms. Rivas reviewed the history behind the project, noting that an honor grove was planted in 1968, but staff have been unable to locate the original location in order to recreate it. The Honor Avenue will include 75 trees that will be located along the pathway of Vista del Camino Park along Indian Bend Wash and could include a marker at the start of the path honoring all veterans in the Scottsdale community.

Ms. Baden reviewed the tree selection, talked about requirements that need to be met because of the location being in the wash area, and the ongoing disc golf course project. She noted that because the anniversary project includes 75 trees, the plans for the other tree project that was initiated in October will be amended to include 25 48-inch box trees, instead of 65 24-inch box trees.

Commissioners asked clarifying questions regarding the total number of trees being planted, location of a gathering space associated with Honor Avenue, the configuration of the 75 trees, responsibility associated with the wash and areas originally built by the Army of Engineers, and the veterans memorial. Commissioners expressed concern about the memorial and the configuration of the trees. They opined that if the plan is to honor veterans in Scottsdale, the

memorial should be in line with the other memorials that are present in the City. Chair Layman made a comment that there are specific connotations related to a veterans' honor grove, implying that those specifications might not be met by the current plan.

6. Update and discussion related to the Scottsdale Memorial for the Fallen

Holly Peralta, Public Affairs Manager, gave an update on efforts being made to make corrections and additions to the Scottsdale Memorial for the Fallen. She has yet to hear back from the company who originally installed the memorial regarding their possible involvement. She said she will continue reaching out to the original company as well as other companies to find someone who is willing and able to do the work. Chair Layman noted that once someone is identified, it will be important to plan a ceremony surrounding the updates to the memorial, possibly surrounding the Memorial Day holiday.

7. Update and discussion related to the Scottsdale Veterans Advisory Commission Work Plan and City recognition events

Ms. Peralta gave an update on Veterans Commission events and budgeting. She reviewed the list of events that were hosted by the Veterans Commission during FY 2025/26, noting the total cost to date is \$25,439.63. The FY 2025/26 budget is \$11,136 and with the goal of a 10 percent reduction FY 2026/27 will have a budget of \$10,000. She presented a proposed event plan for the upcoming year, including continuation of the annual Veterans Day event at McCormic-Stillman Railroad Park with the addition of recognizing Scottsdale Salutes honorees on that day; Transitioning Memorial Day programming to the American Legion; and recognizing Vietnam Veterans Day with a social media campaign or through library programming.

Discussion ensued regarding the budget and the proposed amendments to the list of hosted events. Chair Layman clarified that the Commission was unaware of the budget numbers. He noted that Scottsdale Salutes cost more this fiscal year because they chose to hold the event at Canal Convergence in hopes of gaining additional public recognition. He noted that Vietnam Veterans Day event is the most well attended of the events.

Discussion ensued regarding prioritizing the list of events, potential partnering and funding opportunities, and combining events. Chair Layman highlighted that Saguaro High School students are participating in the Imprints of Honor Saluting Stories of Service program, which gives students the opportunity to interview veterans and have their stories published. The City could have an opportunity to get paid for a venue rental for these events.

Further discussion about prioritizing events and possible action will be agendaized for the next meeting.

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

Chair Layman announced that the Veterans Advisory Commission staff liaison responsibilities have been moved to the police department, and Assistant Chief Watson and Commander Coffee will be supporting the Commission moving forward. Ms. Peralta explained that her department has been moved to the City Managers' department. She noted that VeteransAZ will continue to be under the Communications Department. Chief Watson said that in addition to

being sworn officers he and Commander Coffee are part of the executive team and partner with the city and work closely with the City Managers' office and other departments, and the department has a section that is specific to special events. Kira Peters, Deputy City Manager, assured Commissioners that they will be supported and that there are strong alignments for supporting the veterans' community.

Ms. Peralta gave an update on plans for the Memorial Day Celebration, which is scheduled for Monday, May 25, 2026, on the Memorial Lawn.

Chair Layman said that the meeting will be held at the regular time and current location in June and that they can discuss making an adjustment to the meeting start time. He anticipates the meeting location will be changed starting in the fall.

Chair Layman announced that a ceremony for Scottsdale Unified School District students entering the military will be held on Tuesday, May 19th at 6:00 p.m. at Scottsdale Community College. Ten students will be honored and will be presented with a stole to wear during their high school graduation ceremonies.

Future agenda items could include:

- Discussion of event priorities and budget

The next meeting will be held on June 3, 2026.

9. Adjournment

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

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Recorded and Transcribed by eScribers, LLC.