



CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD
Meeting Minutes #753
March 29, 2016



Charlene Taylor, Chair

Hugh Crooks, Jr., Vice-Chair
Caroline Morales, Member
Todd Trotter, Member

Carla Thornton, Member
Juan Gonzalez, Member
Gena Truitt, Member

The California Veterans Board met at the California Veterans Home – Fresno at 9:00 AM.

ROLL CALL

Present: Charlene Taylor (Chair), Hugh Crooks Jr. (Vice-Chair), Todd Trotter (Member), Gena Truitt (Member), Caroline Morales (Member), Carla Thornton and Juan Gonzalez (Member) via Video teleconference (VTC)

Absent: - None

Chair Taylor presided.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

WELCOMING REMARKS/INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Taylor welcomed and thanked everyone for coming. The Board and Executive Officer (EO) introduced themselves.

INTRODUCTION OF CARLA THORNTON: Member Thornton, a native Californian, served as Associate Director of Development at the University of California, Riverside since 2014, a Victim Advocate for the U.S. Air Force Reserve since 2007 and Logistics Manager for the U.S. Air Force since 1997. She was Fund Development Coordinator at Human Options from 2012 to 2014 and Combined Federal Campaign Fund Manager for the U.S. Air Force Reserve from 2009 to 2011. Thornton serves in the U.S. Air Force Reserve and served active duty from 1997 to 2008. She earned a Master of Social Work degree from the University of Southern California and a Master of Arts degree in Management from the University of Redlands. She now is a Professional Fund Raiser for the University of California, Riverside, as well as a reservist at March Air Force Base.

INTRODUCTION OF MR. LARRY IMPERIAL: Mr. Imperial is the Home Administrator for the Fresno home which is a beautiful 26 acre site. Mr. Imperial gave a report on the status of the home and the process of opening the remaining units. He said they recently opened a memory care unit, the last RCFE unit will open next week and he expects to be at capacity by the end of the year. Mr. Imperial commended his team and the dedication that they bring forward and boasted of the luxuries that the residents are blessed with, i.e. Separate WiFi for each person/room, own cable T.V. and own phone. The Fresno home has two memory center choir rooms, family rooms for care conferences, a faux fire place and a water fountain.

When asked about the waiting list, Mr. Imperial reported that that would depend on the level of care. He has 30 veterans waiting for skilled nursing. He has 60 beds for Memory Care and 34 of those are filled.

Mr. Imperial reported that his Memory Care staff is required to take three (3) additional courses allowing added benefit to its Alzheimers/Dementia residents

When asked of Fresno's mental health staff, Mr. Imperial reported that they have one (1) on-site, a full time psychologist, a lead clinical social worker and three (3) clinical social workers for the skilled nursing.

When asked about non veteran spouses, it was learned that the Fresno home has about a dozen spouses that share a room, however, a couple do not and that is by choice.

Chair Taylor thanked Mr. Imperial for the fabulous welcome to the board.

MINUTES RECOMMENDATION

Approved minutes from January 27, 2016 Board meeting. Member Trotter moved to approve the minutes and Vice-Chair Crooks seconded. Motion unanimously approved and carried. (Attachment) #1.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

CHAIR'S UPDATE – Chair Taylor reported that she met with the Secretary on Feb 18, 2016 where they discussed the Secretary's upcoming Town Halls and they both agreed that it would be nice to have the Board's participation in them. Member Truitt has attended the Chula Vista Town Hall and Chair Taylor has attended the Yountville Town Hall, so far.

Chair Taylor was happy to welcome Carla Thornton to the Board.

Chair Taylor then reported that from February 29-March 1, 2016 she was in Dallas for her Federal Commission which is progressing nicely and a final report is due in June. Her last meeting should be in May.

The Chair further reported on the Little Hoover Commission's meeting of March 3rd and the Secretary's stellar job with his testimony. He was said to have "Hit the ball out of the ballpark" impressing everyone. In addition, Chair Taylor felt her testimony went well. The commission was interested in the Boards' role as the Department moves forward. Extensive feedback included their practices in how they became effective as an advisory commission. They have hearings and write reports that are submitted to the Governor and the appropriate Departments within the state. Their best practices include incremental reform; having public hearings whereby they bring people together who otherwise might not meet. The commission provided relevant feedback that it is difficult to be influential on all fronts and they felt the Board should think small but be bold in its thinking. Pick a smaller theme, do that, do it well and grow from there. To get people to know you are relevant you need actual things with obvious benefits and implement with little or no new resources.

On March 7, 2016 Chair Taylor visited the Martinez VA as part the Commission on Care Work. They have a program of transition from a rehab skilled nursing environment to transitional housing. They have several condos that they own where these veterans can stay 3-6 months in transition. This

program is successful due to the fact that it has a support team that follows the Veteran through to recovery.

On March 14, 2016 the Chair attended the Yountville Town Hall and found the meeting well attended with 100 +/- veterans, allowing standing room only. The residents were so thankful that the Secretary was there and he listened intently to their issues. Some of the issues discussed were accommodations, the admission process, Comcast, meals, censorship and the busses they utilize for transportation. The Secretary would like to see a CBOC on the campus to alleviate the need to bus to San Francisco. The Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) up and down the state were discussed as was the need for clarity and possible revision. Member Truitt informed the group that the VA can provide transportation if they are wheelchair bound by use of Choice Vouchers; however, they are not very popular due to the red tape involved.

March 15, 2016 Chair Taylor attended the Women in Military reception where Secretary Imbasciani presented awards to two women.

DEPARTMENT FORUM: Department Update

Secretary Imbasciani addressed the Board and reported on his testimony to the Little Hoover Commission. He felt he was given a very nice reception and it was acknowledged that he has his hands full. The commission had many questions regarding the entire mission. They questioned whether the Department should be running homes? Ultimately, Dr. Imbasciani was encouraged to be bold and radical.

The Secretary announced that his organizational chart has been filled with the addition of Undersecretary Russell Arterberry, Deputy Secretary, Sherri Gastinel and Deputy Secretary, Ricardo Reyes.

He went on to give an update on the Leadership Summit coming up on April 19-21, 2016 This Leadership Summit will bring Service Organizations, CVSOS and not for profit organizations; State officials and Legislators. With this the Secretary hopes to reach a critical mass, per se.

Finally, Dr. Imbasciani announced that two (2) weeks ago the automated medication dispensing machine, Talyst made its debut in Chula Vista.

OLD BUSINESS

Town Hall, Member Truitt:

Member Truitt reported that she is still working on the Town Hall report as she has changed the format of the report. She believes a rough draft will be ready by Friday the 22nd.

2016 Committee Goals, Chair Taylor:

Chair Taylor went over the goals another time and received a motion to pass.

State Survey of Homes, Member Morales:

Member Morales contacted 6 of the 12 states that were identified for the home study: findings are as follows:

- 1 home, Palmer, Alaska, offers Intermediate level care
- 4 of the 6 require an honorable discharge for eligibility
- 5 of the 6 allow for a non-VET spouse to be admitted
- 6 of the 6 have on-site pharmacy
- 6 of the 6 provide medical equipment
- 3 of the 6 have an on-site lab, the other 3 have to contract for lab services
- 2 of the 6 required Health Insurance.

Possible questions for the second phase include: What is the time to wait for admittance after they are given approval? What Mental Health services do they offer? What is their obligation to pay for the non-vet spouse?

Secretary response: The Military Department and CalVet will look at the law that governs both our Departments as it hasn't been re-written since 1944 and is filled with historical inaccuracies. He feels this would be a great opportunity to input necessary requirements that would refine and clarify the Military and Veterans Code.

NEW BUSINESS

Appeals:

Two new Appeals: 1) Record of Review, Senini, Fee Waiver
2) Informal Hearing, Miller, Fee Waiver (May 25, 2016)

Timothy Taylor's Appeal was withdrawn.

Complaints:

Executive Officer Lassiter reported that there was one complaint regarding a Fee Waiver and was promptly handled by Deputy Secretary Keith Boylan.

Secretary Imbasciani added that he was visited by a team of lawyers from Fair Employment and Housing Department under Business, Consumer Affairs and Housing. Back in 2014 a law was passed which added Veteran Status to protective entities in the workplace. Their Department never acted on it and they are eager to make up for lost time. Their plight is to make the veteran status equal with all the other discriminations.

Member Trotter added: The hiring and affirmative action practices will be under scrutiny by the regulatory agencies and will include Veterans along with individuals with disabilities. Are you making those good faith efforts or are you just checking a box so you can get the monies? In addition, data bases are being set up between the EOC and Department of Labor whereby they can communicate and tap into each other's data base.

BOARD COMMENTS:

COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Plan and Objectives

Action Items:

1. Hugh Crooks: Communication and Marketing

Member Crooks reported that he recently represented the Board at an immigration ceremony where he witnessed 966 new citizens from 68 different countries. Of those, 15 were active duty military.

2. Todd Trotter: Administration

Member Trotter reported on the Vaughan appeal that we have had some issues with communication and will need to follow up.

3. Gena Truitt: Homes

Member Truitt reported that she went to the Town Hall in Chula Vista recently. She questioned how they screen for mental health issues.

4. Caroline Morales: Legislation

Member Morales reported that she is watching 4 bills closely:

- 1) SB 1112, Veterans Bill of Rights
- 2) SB 543, MWR Funds
- 3) SB 980, Electronic Records by January 2018
- 4) AB 2561, Cemetary bill

5. Carla Thornton: Services

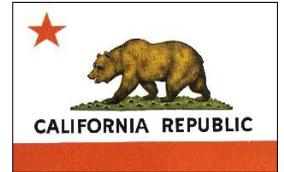
No report at this time.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 11:30 AM

ATTACHMENT #1



CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD
Meeting Minutes #752
January 27, 2016



Charlene Taylor, Chair
Hugh Crooks, Jr., Vice-Chair
Todd Trotter, Board Member

Caroline Morales, Member
Juan Gonzalez, Board Member
Gena Truitt, Board Member

The California Veterans Board met at the California Veterans Home – Yountville in the Holderman Building, Conference Room A at 9:00 AM.

ROLL CALL

Present: Hugh Crooks Jr. (Vice-Chair), Todd Trotter (Member), Gena Truitt (Member) via teleconference, Charlene Taylor (Chair) via teleconference and Juan Gonzalez (Member) via Video teleconference (VTC)

Absent: Caroline Morales (Member) - work/schedule conflicts.

Vice-Chair Crooks presided.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

WELCOMING REMARKS/INTRODUCTIONS

Vice-Chair Crooks welcomed and thanked everyone for coming. The Board and Executive Officer (EO) introduced themselves.

MINUTES RECOMMENDATION

Approved minutes from December 3, 2015 Board meeting. Member Trotter moved to approve the minutes and Chair Taylor seconded. Motion unanimously approved and carried. ([Attachment #1](#))

PRESENTATION BY MR. DON VEVERKA AND MONICA DIAZ:

Mr. Veverka, Administrator to the Yountville Home – Mr. Veverka welcomed everyone and gave an overview of the Yountville home with its' amazing programs and services. He spoke of some of the Mental Health resources that are lacking and expressed his concerns of the readiness of the homes to handle the next generation of Veterans that will be coming in and the changing demographics. The administrator passionately shared his view that the opportunity and obligation is there to treat and care for our Veterans and stressed focusing on PTSD. He wants to welcome them and the challenges they faced to a place they can come and find peace. He questioned how will we help them and what do we have for them? He conveyed that we really need to be addressing this.

Ms. Monica Diaz, Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) Administrator at the Yountville Home – Ms. Diaz gave an overview of the STAR Ratings and how they are calculated. ([Attachment #2](#)). Basically, there are three components:

Survey – Based on Health inspections. They use an average of the last three years.

Staffing – Is it adequate? They look at direct resident care based on two measures: RN hours and total staffing hours per resident.

Quality measures - How well are the residents being cared for? Clinical performance based on 9 quality measurement areas. It is a system of points.

Yountville’s survey will be conducted in March. They have had exceptional surveys in the last couple of years but a negative one three years ago. Since the calculation is done by taking an average of the last three years, this next survey should drop the previous bad mark from three years ago and allow their star rating to go up. Ms. Diaz concluded that she likes to focus on the care as opposed to numbers. If the care is good, the numbers will come.

Chair Taylor questioned if there is a Dashboard that is shared among the other homes so they can learn from each other? Yes, the Matrix report and MDS (minimum data set) system. They do collaborate among all the homes to share what is working and what is not. The matrix report is sent to the Homes division at California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

James Musson - Treasurer Allied Council. Mr. Musson welcomed and thanked the Board for holding their meeting at the Yountville home. He gave compliment to Mr. Veverka’s passion and dedication for the home and the Veterans along with reprimand to the Department for its negligence. ([Attachment #3](#))

Mr. Bob Heiss – Resident. Mr. Heiss encouraged the department to procure a Medical records system.

Edwin Warren – Allied Council chairman. Mr. Warren spoke of SB 543 by Senator Wolk, dealing with MWR, and how the MWR funds make life worthwhile. He talked of an amendment to that bill that would add an Allocation Board and he would like to see the California Veterans Board be that Allocation Board.

Wallace Barry – Chair of the Allied Council. Mr. Barry spoke about the MWR bill, SB 543 and he encouraged a decent amount Local control.

Michhel Evje – Chief engineer for KVET studio. Mr. Evje complained about the inefficient system of procurement within CalVets’ ISD department. It took seven months to get three computers with the vital software that the studio requires for editing. To make matters worse the computers arrived without the vital software. Mr. Evje stated that it’s a systemic problem. “Not slow, inefficient, or cumbersome but deplorable.” He strongly urged to Board to seek solutions for the system.

Eddie Olsen - former Board member. Mr. Olsen applauded KVET, stating that it offers transparency and communication. He is looking to be a great team again with the Board.

CHAIR’S UPDATE – Chair Taylor first thanked all those that spoke. She reiterated that one of the Goals of the Board was to increase its’ visibility and become more familiar with the homes. With this intent, she explained that the homes were divided up among the Board members and Mr. Trotter was assigned to Yountville. The designated members will attend allied council meetings quarterly or at least twice a year. She reported that she, along with EO Tina Lassiter, had a good meeting with staff from the Little Hoover Commission on Monday January 25, 2016. The Little Hoover Commission stated that they are concerned about the homes, particularly the older ones. Chair Taylor will testify at

the public hearing on March 3, 2016 in regards to the Boards' role, who the members are, how the authority changed in 2013 and how the Board might improve oversight. She said that Yountville, in particular, clearly has peoples' attention at the highest level and encouraged optimism. Chair Taylor and EO Lassiter met with the Secretary on January 6, 2016. The Secretary expressed his concerns about the aging Yountville home and stated he will be putting a plan together to address that. Discussion also included how the communication between the department and the Board could be improved and it was agreed upon that Tina will attend the Executive meetings on a monthly basis and report highlights to the board. Chair Taylor continued with a report about her work on the Federal Commission on Care. She said they are looking at the VA health system and how it might be transformed in the next 20 years, and they will report to the president in June.

DEPARTMENT FORUM: Department Update

Coby Petersen, Deputy Secretary, Homes – Mr. Petersen reported on the Secretary's trip down south to meet with the VA Secretary McDonald and reiterated that all that has been testified, the secretary is aware of and eager to address. He is working on developing a plan for Yountville. Deputy Secretary Petersen reported that headquarters recently welcomed the new Deputy Secretary of Administration, Sherie Gastinel and Undersecretary Russell Arterberry. Mr. Petersen recounted that West LA sits victorious with its new kitchen, extra beds and the passing of their recent survey with 0 deficiencies. He continued with a report on the various divisions of CalVet:

Women's Veterans – The third week of March is Women's military history week and there will be a Women's Reception on March 17, 2016 in Sacramento with more information to come on that. He also pointed out that Women's Veterans' hosts a webinar the 1st Monday of every month and it is available to anyone to listen in.

Farm and Homes - The Farm and Home division continues to grow. They are over their goal in loans and the delinquency and cancellation/foreclosure rates are lower than the National average.

Communications – The new driver's license designation continues to grow with 13,000 Veterans designating their Veteran status on their driver's license within the first two months! ([Attachment #4](#))

Vet Services – Mr. Petersen referred to the attachment. ([Attachment #5](#))

Deputy Secretary Petersen finished with conveying that there is lots of momentum and energy in the Department to address concerns. He supported their frustrations and provided encouragement.

Chair Taylor questioned what the budget item, \$600,000, for nine positions for food delivery at the Redding and Fresno homes was for? Answer: It is for staffing the Satellite kitchens which is a requirement of the Department of Public Health.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

Appeals:

No new appeals but gave recognition to the department for increasing dialogue and coming to agreement so as not go to Appeal.

Complaints:

Executive Officer Lassiter reported that there were no new complaints since the last Board meeting of December 3, 2015.

BOARD COMMENTS: Todd Trotter commented on the Driver's license designation pointing out that having that designation on your driver's license also alerts healthcare providers allowing for an appropriate plan of care for said veteran. It also helps expedite the process of gaining employment since verification of the designated status has already been done. Member Crooks added that it helps with claims as well and thanked everyone for attending. Member Trotter thanked Deputy Secretary Petersen by for being there and delivering the Department update to the Board.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PLAN**Strategic Plan and Objectives****Action Items:****6. Hugh Crooks: Communication and Marketing**

Member Cooks reported that he has met with his old Board at the West LA home which is the home that he has been assigned to. He explained that he is very familiar with the frustrations expressed today.

7. Todd Trotter: Administration

Member Trotter reported that there are no new Appeals and commended all parties involved for coming to agreement as opposed to going through with the Appeal process.

8. Gena Truitt: Homes

VA Secretary McDonald visited Loma Linda hospital and said that the CalVet homes are on his radar. They are looking for better ways to partner with the Homes.

Member Truitt asked Mr. Petersen if West LA has the appropriate mental health care for the homeless Veterans? Mr. Petersen reported that CalVet/West LA provides the housing and the Federal VA provides the services.

Member Truitt expressed concerns about admission denials due to lack of services and queried whether partnerships with other VA's for the other homes lacking services is possible? Answer: The Department will continue to reach out to the VA.

Member Truitt then asked if there was a Vet center closer to Yountville than San Francisco? Answer: Yes, but by statutes they have to go to San Francisco.

9. Caroline Morales: Legislation

Vice-Chair Crooks updated legislation on behalf of Member Morales. Bills that are being watched include: AB 1596, Veterans; SB 112 State Veterans bill of rights; SB 866, Veterans Housing; SB 543, MWR funds. ([Attachment #6](#))

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 11:30 AM

