



CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD
Meeting Minutes #754
May 25, 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 in Sacramento at the California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) building, Medal of Honor Hall at 9:00 AM.

ROLL CALL

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

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.

MINUTES RECOMMENDATION

Approved minutes from March 29, 2016 Board meeting. Vice Chair Crooks moved to approve the minutes and Member Morales seconded. Motion unanimously approved and carried.

INTRODUCTIONS

Secretary Imbasciani introduced Undersecretary Russell Atterberry, Deputy Secretary Sherri Gustinell (Administration) and Ricardo Reyes (Minority Veterans), and Assistant Deputy Secretary Daniel Fahey (Veteran Services). Deputy Gustinell and Assistant Deputy Fahey were in attendance and greeted the Board and provided brief Bio's.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ed Warren - Chairman, Yountville Allied Council greeted the Board and introduced Bill Goss who is also on the Allied Council and Commander of the California State Commanders Veterans Council, and is looking forward to working with the Board and the Secretary in the future.

Lorna Griess announced that Gerry Guevara passed away on May 21st.

CHAIR'S UPDATE – Chair Taylor reported that she has now attended three of the Secretary's Town Halls. Some highlights that were discussed include: medications on time, food, and transportation. All issues were attended to and resolved or will be resolved when upgrades are implemented. Chair Taylor went on to say that she had her interview with the State sub-committee for Veterans affairs staff for her reappointment and thought that that went well. In addition, she was among about 20 people who came out in support of Secretary Imbasciani during his Senate Confirmation hearing on April 20, 2016. The Commission on Care Report should be completed close to the end of June.

DEPARTMENT FORUM: Department Update

Secretary Imbasciani addressed the Board and reported that the Department recently celebrated its 70th birthday with cake and balloons. He thanked Chair Taylor for speaking on his behalf at his confirmation hearing and was happy to report that the Senate confirmed him unanimously. In addition to the California Housing and Finance Agency Board, the Secretary now sits on the Governors Military Council. The Council is a collection of several dozen high ranking (2-3 stars), Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine; Admirals and Generals. Their mission is to insure and reinforce the military presence in California. In addition to preserving bases, this council's mission will be to attract military-related businesses to California. Secretary Imbasciani went on to talk about the recent Leadership conference in Sacramento. He said it was the 1st of its kind with 150 leaders from the Federal VA, all 8 Veterans hospitals, VSO's and CVSO's, CalVet and several non-profits. It successfully brought "all these leaders under one roof at one time for three days to talk about common challenges and forge a new direction into the future and move toward speaking with one voice".

The Secretary gave an update on the Homes:

- The Census is nearing completion.
- Budget Cost Proposal's (BCP's) are in for the upgrades of the homes. One such upgrade of great importance is the modern electronic medical record that will unite all the homes.
- Homeless programs outreach is working very well.
- "Talyt", the automated medication dispensing machine, is up and running at Chula Vista.
- Yountville, the aging facility, continues to be a challenge. Within the coming week, The Secretary will be convening with community partners, members of CalVet and other interested people to dust off the master plan. His mission is to preserve and invigorate the campus, which could include possible new construction, selling off of some of the property or selling off the golf course.

The CalVet Farm and Home Loan program is still a success. With 423 thousand loans and the lowest foreclosure rate, it is on par to have one of the best performing years ever. The Secretary is very proud of the program saying any threat to that division is a threat to the department.

In the world of Cemeteries, Igo has passed national inspection while the Federal Government has looked at Orange County and negotiations are underway. The Feds have a list where the next 25 cemeteries will go and California is No. 2 on that list looking at somewhere between Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo.

The El Soldado monument refurbish continues to move forward. Deputy Secretary Reyes has been successful at generating the \$206,000 needed to make this project happen. The hope is to unveil it this coming Veterans Day.

OLD BUSINESS

Town Hall, Member Truitt:

Member Truitt reported that she will make a couple changes to her report and send to JP for his review. She said that she spoke with Fabrice Figaro, who presented at the second Town Hall in Rialto, CA back in November of 2015 and would like to invite him to our next meeting in Lancaster so he can share a new program he has been working with that can help Veterans fine tune their resumes.

State Survey of Homes, Member Morales:

Member Morales has met with Pounch Simpson, CFO of the Veterans Homes, who is also researching best practices from other states and they will put their energies together.

Allied Council Meetings:

Chula Vista - Member Truitt will meet with Chula Vista Allied Council on June 11.

West LA – Member Crooks will attend in the near future.

Ventura – Member Crooks will attend in the near future.

Lancaster – Member Thornton will meet with some of the regrouping members when we go to our next meeting there in July.

Barstow – Member Morales will attend in the near future.

Redding - Chair Taylor attended in April

Fresno – Chair Taylor attended in March

Yountville – Chair Taylor attended in March.

NEW BUSINESS

Appeals: Member Trotter reported that the Miller Appeal will be rescheduled and the Board is committed to doing that swiftly. He was also happy to report that the Senini Appeal was withdrawn. Mr. Trotter brought a new Appeal to the Board. Mr. Castleberry has appealed his eviction from the Yountville home. The Board found this Appeal to be outside its jurisdiction and the Appeal was unanimously denied.

Complaints:

Executive Officer Lassiter reported that there were two complaints regarding “no pay”. One was referred to Services and the other was sent out to everyone in the Department and Lassiter will follow up on that.

BOARD COMMENTS:**COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PLAN****Strategic Plan and Objectives****Action Items:****1. Hugh Crooks: Communication and Marketing**

Vice chair Crooks went to the 20th Anniversary of the Barstow Home. This was the second home in the system.

2. Todd Trotter: Administration

Member Trotter reported that there are no policy procedure updates. He is quite happy with the turnaround regarding Appeals. There are more being withdrawn than going forward. It’s a different, more positive stance for all involved.

3. Gena Truitt: Homes

Member Truitt has a meeting with the Chula Vista Allied Council on June 11.

4. Caroline Morales: Legislation

Member Morales gave a thorough outline of the Legislation that the Department is following.

Highlights are: SB 543 continues to present some challenges that the Department is working with the author, Senator Wolk’s office. The current amendments would modify the Board’s role.

Member Morales, on behalf of the Board, reiterated to Deputy Secretary Tremblay that the Board

is part-time. Mr. Tremblay added that the Homes, or any Veteran, can still bring their issues to the Board by way of an Appeal. SB 1596, AB 1880, AB 2253, AB 2561, SB 112 and SB 980 are still active and being watched.

5. Carla Thornton: Services

Member Thornton gave an in depth update on Services. She spoke highly of the Leadership Summit and thanked Keith Boylan for the Services update. The Driver's license program has been a successful initiative with 23,000 Veterans having signed up. The CVSO training is doing well that will standardize and streamline their work. Member Thornton reported that 38 libraries throughout the state now have a Veterans service center and encouraged Veterans to sign up for their benefits!

Ken Holleybee inquired about a program awhile back where a Veteran would fill out a card when discharged and wanted to know whether that program was still running? Deputy Secretary Tremblay replied that they are now using a system called VetPro. VetPro allows the Department to get pertinent information through the CVSO's as Veterans file for their benefits. There is also the DD 214's that are coming in as well as "My CalVet" which allows Veterans to sign up online. All this makes for a broader outreach.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 11:30 AM