



CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD
Meeting Minutes #756
September 12, 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 in West Los Angeles, CA at 9:00 AM.

ROLL CALL

Present: Charlene Taylor, Hugh Crooks Jr., Juan Gonzalez and Todd Trotter.

Absent: - Gena Truitt, Carla Thornton and Caroline Morales.

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 July 12, 2016 Board meeting. Vice Chair Crooks moved to approve the minutes and Member Trotter seconded. Motion unanimously approved and carried.

INTRODUCTIONS

PUBLIC COMMENTS

The new “right to die” law that went into effect June 9, 2016 was discussed. Secretary Imbasciani gave a description of the law and how it affects the residents living in the homes. It is a State, not Federal, law. The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA), who partially funds the homes, said that under no circumstances will California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet) offer this medication to its residents or their funding for all eight (8) homes would be pulled. The Department was granted an emergency regulation regarding the end of life option but will expire in December of this year. CalVet has filed the necessary paperwork with the Office of Administrative Law to make the regulation permanent. The “right to die” option remains, however, the resident would have to be discharged from the home. If no family or friends are available to care for the Veteran, CalVet has made arrangements with a network of hospices up and down the state for that purpose.

PRESENTATION – Chris Walter, Deputy Administrator, California Veterans Home – West Los Angeles gave a

presentation to the Board about the home. The West LA Veterans home was built in 2010 and remains a work in progress. The home houses 304 residents with a staff of close to 400. Mr. Walter reported that the next step is a unit that will open downstairs in the next 45 days and after that will be a 30 bed memory care unit. The home just hosted an art show that was well attended by the public. He gave thanks to the West LA Foundation and concluded with expressing the pride the staff feels for the work that they do.

When asked about the challenges they face with recruitment, Mr. Walter responded that while it is a challenge, retention remains the biggest challenge. West LA is a very expensive area and pay is typically not enough to afford to live close to the home leaving many to travel up to two hours to get to work. Many times they can get better pay elsewhere and not have to travel so far. The Deputy Administrator said that they recognize this and are working to find remedies. They realize that staffing is a key component to filling more beds and familiar faces are important to the residents. In addition, the home loses money when residents need to be sent outside for various therapies. The administration has asked the State (CalHr) to give geographical or occupational specific supplements to their compensation.

CHAIR'S UPDATE –

Chair Taylor reported that she met with Secretary Imbasciani on Thursday, September 8, 2016. She also said that she received an email from a resident from Yountville and then a telephone call from another resident at Fresno about a meeting for the Chairs of the Allied Councils.

DEPARTMENT FORUM: Department Update

Secretary Imbasciani announced that Chris Walter will soon become Lieutenant Colonel as he will take formal command of the 1st Battalion, 160th Infantry of the 40th Infantry Division in the California Army National Guard.

Homes: Secretary Imbasciani reported that all Homes continue to pass inspections with exceptional marks. He was happy to report that the Department has finally satisfied the State Audit report by testifying in front of the Assembly Oversight Committee in which CalVet was questioned on their acquisition of the electronic medical records computers. CalVet is in phase 2 of acquiring a replacement called CEHR (California Electronic Health Record). In addition, “Talyst”, the new mechanized manner of distributing medications, which had been sitting in boxes for the last 5 years, has been up and running in all wards at Chula Vista and Barstow. It will be unveiling in the rest of the homes soon.

Services: The Secretary stated that El Soldado, the Latino/Mexican American monument will be rededicated on Veterans Day. The 2nd phase of that monument will build a memory wall around the statue. An update on the Cemeteries: Igo is up and running. Monterey is moving forward and hiring for the positions there. The planning phase for the 3rd cemetery in Orange County will begin soon. Dr. Imbasciani reported that the Federal Government has already anticipated the need for a 4th Cemetery that will be located somewhere between San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara. The California State Approving Authority for Veteran Education (CSAAVE), continues to approve and monitor education institutions. CalTAPP is now hiring to fill positions for this new program within CalVet. This program will make for a smoother transition for the 25,000+/- veterans returning from service by assisting with accessing their benefits.

Farm and Home: The Secretary reported that the second neighborhood of residential enriched homes has

been completed in Santa Clarita . Twenty-Seven homes were built with help from Habitat for Humanity, Home Depot, PG&E and Citibank to name a few, and Walt Disney built a park across from the homes.

The Secretary concluded with an update on the status of Yountville’s Masterplan. Some of the ideas in the masterplan include building a new home on the campus and closing the Eisenhower, Roosevelt and Holderman buildings so they can be renovated. In order to do this the Department will look into partnering with another entity or entities. Four options, at this point, are as follows:

1. Federal partner: San Francisco VA is very interested in opening a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in the McKinley building. And possibly a mental health facility.
2. State partner: Civilian Conservation Corp is interested in the Truman hall next to the baseball field.
3. Community Not-for-profits such as Pathway Home.
4. Community for profits: Turn the chapel into a wedding chapel? Turn Holderman into a 5-star hotel?

Chair Taylor gave credit to the Secretary for all he has done since he has taken the position of Secretary.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Plan and Objectives

Action Items:

1. Hugh Crooks: Communication and Marketing

Vice Chair Crooks reported on events for Veterans Day coming up and the State Commanders Council meeting coming up October 1 that he will attend and represent the Board.

2. Carla Thornton: Services

Absent

3. Todd Trotter: Administration

No report at this time.

4. Gena Truitt: Homes

Absent

5. Caroline Morales: Legislation

Member Morales submitted a report in her absence. (Attachment 2)

OLD BUSINESS

Allied Council Meetings:

Vice Chair Crooks reported that he attended the West LA and Ventura Allied Council meetings recently. A reference to property behind the Ventura home prompted an acknowledgement that ten (10) of those twenty (20) acres have been given back to the City of Ventura. Pending approval by the Public Works Board, the City agreed to use Prop. 41 funds to build supportive veterans housing on that land.

Member Trotter reported that he plans to attend Yountville’s Allied Council coming up within the week.

NEW BUSINESS

Appeals:

Mr. Raul Vallejo – Eviction; out of the Board’s jurisdiction, denied.

Mr. Sheldon Ciment – Eviction; out of the Board’s jurisdiction, denied.

Mr. Andrew Blackman – Tuition Fee Waiver; Withdrawn by Veteran.

Complaints:

Executive Officer Lassiter reported that there were no new complaints.

BOARD COMMENTS:

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 11:30 PM

Attachment 1



CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD **Meeting Minutes #755** **July 12, 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 in Lancaster, CA at 9:00 AM.

ROLL CALL

Present: Charlene Taylor, Hugh Crooks Jr., Gena Truitt, Caroline Morales, Carla Thornton, Juan Gonzalez. Todd Trotter was present 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 May 25, 2016 Board meeting. Vice Chair Crooks moved to approve the minutes and Member Thornton seconded. Motion unanimously approved and carried.

INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Taylor introduced Norman Andrews, Administrator for the California Veterans Home, Lancaster. Mr. Andrews thanked the board for holding their meeting at the home and gave a brief summary of the home's statistics (Attachment 1). The Administrator served in the Air Force, obtained his nursing degree and spent 26 years commissioned in the army. Currently, he is enjoying his service at the home. Mr. Andrews reported that there are still 14 World War II veterans residing at the home. He was happy to relay that residents there feel like the

Veterans home at Lancaster is like a Cruise ship that never leaves port. His goal is to establish a facility where Veterans can retire in dignity and be treated with respect.

Chair Taylor asked about plans for when residents have more need since Lancaster provides residential care only. Do they transfer to local facilities?

Mr. Andrews responded that their ambition is to transfer to West LA, Barstow or Ventura. But ultimately, we Transfer where the family would like the Veteran to be transferred.

The administrator concluded that the Lancaster home benefits from a tremendous amount of community support. When the home first opened, an advisory committee gave the home \$150,000 to support activities. Their donation fund is a separate account from the MWR funds.

PRESENTATION - Fabrice Figaro: Member Truitt introduced Mr. Figaro, Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Representative (DVOP) for the State of California Employment Development Department. Mr. Figaro spoke on how to best manage the system of obtaining employment from the standpoint of a Veteran. (Attachment 2).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dean Brown, Antelope Valley Veterans Community Action Coalition (AVVCAC), announced the Los Angeles Regional Community Veterans Engagement Board Facebook page can be found following the link below:

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=los%20angeles%20regional%20community%20veteran%20engagement%20board>

They are looking for comments, suggestions and contacts for outreach to communicate with Veterans and address any needs they might have.

An issue, not unlike the other Veterans Homes, was brought up that the residents have to travel 3 hours to West LA for a simple blood draw. That takes all of several minutes, but then they have to wait for all the others to have theirs done before they can be transported back to the home. Their CBOC is not a VA facility (contract) and this creates a problem in terms of paying for services. There is no mechanism for paying a contractor for those services so they pay more to bus the residents to West LA for now. Chair Taylor asked for a report from Services on the timeliness of the VSO's with claims.

CHAIR'S UPDATE – Chair Taylor reported that the Commission on Care report was just finished on June 30 and contains 18 recommendations as follows:

The VHA Care System

1. The VHA should establish high-performing, integrated community-based health care networks, to be known as the VHA Care System.

Clinical Operations

2. Enhance clinical operations through more effective use of providers and other health care professionals, and improved data collection and management.
3. To provide an Appeals process that is more transparent and timely.
4. Adopt a continuous improvement methodology to support VHA transformation, and consolidate best practices and continuous improvement efforts under the Veterans Engineering Resource Center.

Health Care Equity

5. Eliminate health care disparities among veterans treated in the VHA Care System by committing adequate personnel and monetary resources.

Facility and Capital Assets

6. Develop and implement a robust strategy for meeting and managing VHA's facility and capital-asset needs.

Information Technology

7. Modernize VA's IT systems and infrastructure to improve veterans' health and well-being and provide the foundation needed to transform VHA's clinical and business processes.
8. Transform the management of the supply chain in VHA.

Governance, Leadership, and Workforce

Board of Directors

9. Establish a board of directors to provide overall VHA Care System governance, set long-term strategy, and direct and oversee the transformation process.

Leadership

10. Require leaders at all levels of the organization to champion a focused, clear, benchmarked strategy to transform VHA culture and sustain staff engagement.
11. Rebuild a system for leadership succession based on a benchmarked health care competency model that is consistently applied to recruitment, development, and advancement within the leadership pipeline.
12. Transform organizational structures and management processes to ensure adherence to national VHA standards, while also promoting decision making at the lowest level of the organization, eliminating waste and redundancy, promoting innovation, and fostering the spread of best practices.
13. Streamline and focus organizational performance measurement in VHA using core metrics that are identical to those used in the private sector, and establish a personnel performance management system for health care leaders in VHA that is distinct from performance measurement, is based on the leadership competency model, assesses leadership ability, and measures the achievement of important organizational Strategies.

Diversity and Cultural Competence

14. Foster cultural and military competence among all VHA Care System leadership, providers, and staff to embrace diversity, promote cultural sensitivity, and improve veteran health outcomes.

Workforce

15. Create a simple-to-administer alternative personnel system, in law and regulation, which governs all VHA employees, applies best practices from the private sector to human capital management, and supports pay and benefits that are competitive with the private sector.
16. Require VA and VHA executives to lead the transformation of HR, commit funds, and assign expert resources to achieve an effective human capital management system.

Eligibility

17. Provide a streamlined path to eligibility for health care for those with an other-than-honorable discharge who have substantial honorable service.
18. Establish an expert body to develop recommendations for VA care eligibility and benefit design.

***Question: Member Thornton asked about a timeline for the Secretary to respond and added that she was surprised at the lack of media attention this has received.

Chair Taylor responded “the President and the Secretary will implement any of the recommendations that are deemed reasonable and feasible” but she is not aware of any specific timeline.

***Question: Has the Board looked into the VSO’s and how they are not giving the proper information? Chair Taylor responded “From the Board perspective, the Board has not as of yet. From the Commission perspective, the Commission has given recommendations to close gaps in the Appeal process.” In addition, Veterans were urged to go to County Veteran Service Officers (CVSO) or Veterans Service Officers (VSO) as opposed to the various other organizations.

DEPARTMENT FORUM: Department Update

Undersecretary Russell Atterberry delivered the Department Update via teleconference. The Undersecretary reported as follows:

- Welcomed Yountville Deputy Secretary, Administrator Ursela Stuter
- Chula Vista’s Administrator, Lael Hepworth, has taken another position elsewhere and has terminated his employment with CalVet. There is an advertisement for his replacement, Gin Miller will be acting in interim
- Talus is up and running. The next implementation will be at Yountville and they will keep the program moving forward.
- The IT project, electronic health record, is underway. There are basically four phases to this project. Phase one was completed in record time.
- The Redding home just recently received a 5 star rating which is the only one in California at this time.
- The Legal department has just completed an emergency regulation for the end of life option. The undersecretary noted that CalVet was the only Agency to get their regulation approved on time. In addition, the Department is looking into the need for another emergency regulation for Medical Cannabis.
- CalVet also has a new regulations unit that will streamline the regulations process and make it more efficient.
- Minority Affairs Deputy Secretary, Rick Reyes, has been working with staff in the Capitol on immigration and incarceration/Corrections reform. He is also working on the El Soldado project which is now in the construction phase.
- CalVet is looking into addressing the pay discrepancies and ways to keep staff engaged and happy.
- Women’s Veterans Deputy Secretary, Lindsay Sin, has been working hard on the next leadership meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Town Hall, Member Truitt:
No report at this time.

State Survey of Homes, Member Morales:

Member Morales attended the Little Hoover Commission with Vice Chair Crooks recently. On behalf of the Board Ms. Morales was able to report to the Commission, on the study she and Ms. Simpson (CalVet) have been conducting, comparing Veteran Home statistics among other states. She stated that we need to identify the demand i.e., we need more skilled nursing beds.

Allied Council Meetings:

Member Truitt visited the California Veterans Home, Chula Vista on June 11, 2016 and attended their Allied Council meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Appeals:

Member Trotter reported that there was one new Notice of Appeal. Mr. Charles Nickerman has requested a Review of Record for denial into the California Veterans Home – Ventura. However, the Board needs more information in order to make the determination whether to accept or reject.

Complaints:

Executive Officer Lassiter reported that there were no new complaints.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PLAN

Strategic Plan and Objectives

Action Items:

6. Hugh Crooks: Communication and Marketing

Vice Chair Crooks attended the Little Hoover commission meeting at the West LA home along with Member Morales. This was not a formal meeting and there was no testimony given. The Commission's concerns focused primarily on the California Veterans Homes. One of the issues identified was that the Homes do not seem to have enough skilled nursing beds. The Commission seems very optimistic.

7. Gena Truitt: Homes

Member Truitt attended an Allied Council meeting in Chula Vista on June 11. She listened to their concerns about admissions and the need to include screening for substance abuse in the admissions process. The Allied Council thought an Alcohol abuse specialist should be included in the screening process. The specialist, trained to identify red flags, would make issues of substance abuse more easily detectable. It was also suggested to change the probation period from 90 days to 6 months.

8. Caroline Morales: Legislation

Member Morales reported the California Legislative Bills that are currently being tracked include SB 543, AB 112, AB 1596 and AB 1303,

9. Carla Thornton: Services

Member Thornton highlighted some of the services that the CalVet Services division provides to Veterans:

- While the County Veteran Service Officers (CVSO's) fall under the authority of the County Board of Supervisors, they are trained by the CalVet. They are paid, in part, by CalVet based on the amount of Vets they see. They have trainings, 2-3 per year and CalVet pays them to go to those trainings.
- The Strike Force Team continues to make a positive impact helping address the huge backlog of United States Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) benefit claims. Some Veterans were waiting for two years to receive their benefits. Since then, the Strike Force Team has processed 90,000 claims awarding \$128 million in retroactive payments.
- Also established was an appeals team that began hearing appeals out of the district offices: Los Angeles, San Diego and Oakland. Since that time they have heard over 462 appeals.
- CalVet's Services Division also works closely with the California Public Colleges and Universities to oversee the proper utilization of the Veterans' GI bill. CalVet has been

successful in stopping some of the private sector abuse associated with the GI benefits. Also, Veterans are currently awarded 7educational units for their service. A vision the Services division has is to increase those units and make the whole system more consistent and/or congruent.

- Cemeteries: Northern CA Veterans Cemetery is receiving applications now and should be opening soon. California Central Coast Veterans Cemetery is on schedule to open in September 2016 with 798 people processed so far for future burial.
- CalVet's Incarcerated Veterans Outreach Program is making great strides with its Veterans Courts. Every county has one now reaching out to Incarcerated Vets, letting them know that the Veterans Courts are available for them.
- The Drivers' license designation continues to do well.
- The Library project is going strong, connecting Vets to libraries where they can learn about their benefits and how to apply for them.
- The Division recently published the Resource book.

BOARD COMMENTS:

CLOSED SESSION –

Deliberation: Mr. Brian Matthew Miller, Fee Waiver Appeal.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 12:30 PM

Attachment 2

Bills still moving:

- 1) **SB543 (Wolk) Veterans: Veterans' Home of California MWR Funds** – This two year bill reforms the structure for the Morale Welfare and Recreation Funds at each of the eight Veterans Homes and would establish a centralized oversight of the funds as well as ensure more equal distribution of those funds to all the homes. The author's office has been in contact with Senator Nielsen's Office (author of SB 980) regarding an issue of conflicting language in Section 1010 of the bill. *The bill was approved by the Assembly on Thursday.*

Most important bill the department is focusing on. Conflicting language was not material to the bill it was technical moving around definitions in proper sections of the bill.

There will be one single MWR account the department will oversee. Funds dispersed by home population. The department will likely have to hire someone to do this to ensure the funds are being used appropriately. Home representatives so far are on board with supporting the bill. The Board would be appeal option as is for other given Veteran's benefits.

- 2) **AB840 (Ridley-Thomas) Nurses, Licensed Vocational Nurses and Certified Nurse Assistants Overtime** – this bill would prohibit state facilities from using mandatory overtime for Nurses, LVNs and CNAs. This two-year bill will have a major impact on the cost of operations of our state Veterans Homes as well as State Hospitals and State Prisons. *The bill is on the Senate Floor.*

The department would have to hire 180+ nurses.

- 3) **SB 866 (Roth)** This bill authorizes a housing developer or service provider that provides housing pursuant to the Veterans Housing and Homeless Prevention program, to provide housing or services to veterans and their children in women-only facilities in limited instances. This bill was passed by the Assembly VA committee on 28 June after being amended to clarify that the provision of women-only housing was not tied to the bond funds but applies to those that operate the program or housing project. *The Senate gave final approval on Thursday and sent the bill to the Governor.*

Department concern with this bill is it may conflict with Federal Fair Housing rules but supports the concept of the bill.

- 4) **SB 1059 (Monning) Postsecondary Education: Title 38 Awards** – This bill relates to the State Approving Agency for Veterans Education.; includes as a qualifying institution for federal Title 38 awards, an institution that has been accredited by the Committee of Bar Examiners, if the institution complies with specified disclosure and compliance requirements. *The bill was approved by the Assembly and sent back to the Senate for concurrence.*

Neutral position.

- 5) **SB 1180 (Jackson) Public School Employees: Military Veterans** – This bill requires that a certificated or classified employee who is a military veteran with a specified military service-connected disability rating be entitled to a specified number of days leave of absence with pay for the purpose of undergoing disability-related medical treatment. *The bill was approved by the Assembly and sent back to the Senate for concurrence.*

Support

- 6) **SB1227 (Lara) California Conservation Corps Veterans** – This bill would require CalVet and EDD to work with the Conservation Corps to help graduating members of the Corps who are Veterans find employments and access their state and federal benefits and services. *The bill was approved by the Assembly and sent back to the Senate for concurrence.*
- 7) **AB 2563 (Assembly VA Committee)** – This bill makes technical and definitional corrections to the Military and Veterans Code relative to veterans relative to services being provided to incarcerated veterans. *The bill was approved by the Assembly and sent to the Governor.*

The Following bills were held in the Appropriations Committee are now considered dead:

- 1) **SB 980 (Nielsen) Veterans Homes M&V Code Section Rewrite** – was intended to update the section of the Military and Veterans Code that related to the operations of the State Veterans Homes. *The bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.*

Department is disappointed this bill failed.

- 2) **AB 1029 (Frazier) Veterans Service Providers certification** – This bill would have created a certification program in CalVet for any Veteran Service Provider that wants to seek CalVet certification. *The bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.*
- 3) **SB 384 (Leyva)** This bill would have required a percentage of the Veterans Housing and Homeless Prevention bond funds be reserved for housing underserved veterans. *The bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.*
- 4) **AB 1880 (Irwin) State Real Property** -- This bill would have authorized the Director of General Services to revert a specified parcel of State real property adjacent to the Ventura Veterans Home, to the City of Ventura. *Since the issue was being resolved administratively, the author chose to let the bill be held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.*
- 5) **AB 1844 (Gallagher) Hunting and Fishing License: Reduced Fee** - This bill would have required the Department of Fish and Wildlife to reduce the fee required to obtain lifetime hunting and sport fishing licenses for a person who is a veteran and is a resident of the State. *The bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.*
- 6) **AB 1972 (Chau) Veterans State Park Passes** – This bill would have required the Department of Parks and Recreation to issue a park pass for free use of all park facilities to any veteran who meets specified criteria. *The bill was held in Senate Appropriations Committee.*
- 7) **AB 1672 (Mathis) Veterans Treatment Courts: Judicial Council Survey** – This bill would have require the Judicial Council to conduct a study of veterans treatment courts. *The bill was held in Senate Appropriations Committee.*
- 8) **AB 2494 (Hernandez) Veterans Resource Center Grants** – This bill would have established the Veteran Resource Centers Grant Program, which would authorize a grant program to create resource centers for Veterans at Community College campuses. *The bill was held in Senate Appropriations Committee.*
- 9) **AB 2574 (Chavez) Veteran Farmers** – This bill would have directed the Department of Food and Ag, CalVet, EDD and the Employment Training Panel to provide veterans interested in Farming or Farming related careers with information about Federal grants and programs to help them. *The bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.*

Other actions:

- 1) **AB2561 (Assembly VA Committee) Cemetery Donation Fund** – This non-sponsored Department bill would have create a separate fund for donations made to the Central Coast Veterans Cemetery for specific small projects. *The bill was approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee but was moved to the inactive file on the Senate Floor.*

- 2) **SB 930 (Irwin) Work for Warriors Program** –This bill would authorize the California Military Department to establish a Work for Warriors program, to provide direct placement job services to service members, veterans, military families, and other related populations. The bill would authorize the department to accept federal funding to supplement this program, and to adopt regulations, rules, and guidelines as are necessary to implement the program. *Moved from the inactive file to Second Reading on the Senate Floor.*