



**CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD**  
**Meeting Minutes #750**  
**September 16, 2015**



**Charlene Taylor, Chair**

**Hugh Crooks, Jr., Vice-Chair**  
**Juan Gonzalez, Board Member**  
**Todd Trotter, Board Member**

**Caroline Morales, Member**  
**Sean Sargeant, Board Member**  
**Gena Truitt, Board Member**

The California Veterans Board met at the California State Capitol, Room 2040 at 9:00 AM.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Hugh Crooks Jr. (Vice-Chair), Caroline Morales (Member), Gena Truitt (Member), Todd Trotter (Member), Juan Gonzalez via teleconference (Member)

**Absent:** Charlene Taylor (Chair) - traveling out of the Country, and Sean Sargeant (Member) - work conflict. Vice Chair Crooks presided.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**WELCOMING REMARKS/INTRODUCTIONS**

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

**MINUTES**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Approved minutes from July 15, 2015 Board meeting. Member Morales moved to approve the minutes and member Truitt seconded. Motion unanimously approved and carried.

**PRESENTATION BY HONORABLE JIM NEILSEN**, Member of the California State Senate and Chair of the Veterans Affairs Committee. Senator Neilsen was unable to attend due to last minute scheduling conflicts. He did send over a statement via Wade Teasdale, Chief Consultant of the Veterans Affairs Committee with information for the Board. (Attachments included)

**PRESENTATION BY LINDSAY SIN: Deputy Secretary, Women Veterans, California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet)** – Deputy Secretary Sin gave a very thorough update on what her division has been working on to connect Women veterans with Benefits. Recent research they conducted regarding social media allowed them to update their webpages to better serve women veterans. They also focused on improving Women’s healthcare and worked closely with the U.S. Veterans Affairs. Lindsay reported that she has been doing a lot of training relevant to military sexual assault recently returning from a National Sexual Assault conference. They have conducted three trainings this year for the California Veterans Service Officers (CVSO’s). In conjunction with the CVSO’s they have produced pamphlets as well. On November 14 in San Diego, they will hold a “Dress Code Event” which is basically a clothing closet and make over event. Ms. Sin reported about the Housing Homeless prevention project and her work with Farm and Home Deputy Secretary, Theresa Gunn. She continues to get out to as many events as possible and update the website to grow the network.

**PRESENTATION BY JOHN SPANGLER: Chief Consultant, Veterans Affairs Committee, California State Assembly** – Mr. Spangler began with an overview of his job. Basically, he is the institutional knowledge for everything Veterans. The Assembly Veterans Committee has 9 members. Jackie Irwin is the chair and Devon Mathis is the vice chair. The committee has oversight over two departments, CalVet and the Military Department and they conduct oversight hearings on various topics throughout the year including C-Save. They will be looking into other areas to help C-Save. Mr. Spangler noted that the Committee will have a hearing in October regarding the Veterans Housing and Homelessness Prevention (VHHP). They recently had a J-Lac audit that has been approved. He spoke on the MWR bill and the continuing work being done to bring that bill through. Mr. Spangler noted the importance of the CVSO's and the strike teams and extended the support of the committee. He also applauds the Governors military Council. Mr. Spangler concluded that the committee is interested in any feedback regarding upcoming concerns.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

1. **Mr. Pete Conaty, Veteran and Veterans Advocate** – Mr. Conaty expressed his concerns over the Department turmoil. He went over AB 717 with emphasis on the Appeal process and the Board's role in the policy development of CalVet. He reiterated the requirement of the Board to meet with the California State Commander Veterans Council (CSCVC) twice per year and that a meeting will be coming up possibly in late October or November. Mr. Conaty addressed the Homes and urged the Board to utilize and visit the Homes and their residents. He also recommended that the Board devise a way to provide an authorized chain of reporting issues from residents of the Homes. (Attachments included)
2. **Mr. Ed Warren, Yountville Allied Council, MWR task force.** Mr. Warren discussed the reconsideration of SB 543 in the coming session of the legislature. He wanted to make sure that the Board was aware that this bill has a role for the Board and he encouraged the Board to have a meeting at Yountville.

**CHAIR'S UPDATE – None at the time**

## **DEPARTMENT FORUM: Department Update**

**Todd Irby, Acting Secretary/Chief Council** - Mr. Irby gave a very thorough update on the Homes and the various repairs and upkeep taking place. The kitchen construction project at West LA is on track for completion by mid-October, with Commissioning projected for mid-November. He spoke of the California Central Coast Cemetery at Ford Ord and its intended completion in June or July 2016. Ventura and Yountville homes have passed their USDVA surveys while Fresno is waiting to receive its CMS rating. Acting Secretary Irby expressed his appreciation to the Governor's office for its support to the department during the transition time. He also expressed his enthusiasm in regards to the Department's direction and stated that he has been honored to serve as Acting Secretary.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PLAN

### Strategic Plan and Objectives

#### Action Items:

1. **Hugh Crooks:** No update at this time.
2. **Gena Truitt:** Member Truitt reiterated the importance of visiting the Homes. She works closely with Barstow and reports that they are working on trying to fill more beds.
3. **Sean Sargeant:** No Update at this time
4. **Todd Trotter:** No Update at this time.
5. **Caroline Morales:** J.P. Tremblay, Deputy Secretary, Legislative and Governmental Relations, CalVet delivered the legislative report. He gave a brief report on the Homes concerns, reassuring the Board that Staff at the Homes is exemplary and residents are receiving good care. Mr. Tremblay pointed out that there is, in fact, a process for residents to bring concerns to the Department, i.e. the Allied Council, the Administrator and also the CalVet Board. He went on to report on several bills of interest but specifically 4 two year bills: SB 543, dealing with the MWR funds. AB 171 regarding CVSO's. AB 1029 would require the Department to certify Veteran Service Organizations and AB 840 dealing with mandatory overtime.
6. **Chair Taylor:** No update at this time
7. **Juan Gonzalez:** No update at this time

### OLD BUSINESS

**Town Hall:** Members discussed the highlights of the upcoming Town Hall and how the planning is going.

### NEW BUSINESS

**Appeals/Complaints** – Four complaints were reported to the Board by the Executive officer. No official Appeals at this time. (Attachment included)

**BOARD COMMENTS:** The Board thanked everyone for coming and commended the audience for their participation.

**MEETING ADJOURNED AT 12:00 NOON**