



CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD
Meeting Minutes #744
January 21, 2015



Charlene Taylor, Chair
John Farrell, Board Member
Sean Sargeant, Board Member

Hugh Crooks, Jr., Vice-Chair
Caroline Morales, Member
Gena Truitt, Board Member

The California Veterans Board met in Los Angeles, CA at the Bob Hope Patriotic Hall at 9:00 AM.

ROLL CALL

Present: Charlene Taylor (Chair), Hugh Crooks Jr. (Vice-Chair), Caroline Morales (Member), Sean Sargeant (Member), Gina Truitt (Member)

Chair Taylor presided.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

WELCOMING REMARKS/INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Taylor welcomed the group in attendance and thanked them for attending the meeting. She also introduced Tina Lassiter, the new Executive Officer, who started on December, 11, 2014. Strategic plan has been completed and approved in December. Board meetings will commence every other month, starting with January 2015 and will rotate between Northern and Southern California.

Caroline Morales introduced herself.
Hugh Crooks, Jr. introduced himself.
Charlene Taylor introduced herself.
Gena Truitt introduced herself.
Sean Sargeant introduced himself.

Undersecretary Michael Wells was present.

MINUTES

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the minutes from the December 5, 2014 Board meeting in Sacramento, CA. Member Crooks moved to approve the minutes. Member Sargeant seconded. Motion unanimously approved and carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ruth Wong, Director of Military and Veterans Affairs.
Patricia Jackson Kelley, Veterans Advisory Commission.
Tamiko Hirano, U.S. Veterans Foundation

OLD BUSINESS

DEPARTMENT FORUM: Department Update

Undersecretary Michael Wells reported on behalf of the Department. He shared that the Department enthusiastically welcomes acting Secretary Debbie Endsley who happened to be in West LA with Secretary Gravett attending the job fair going on simultaneously and appears to be very successful. The Department as a whole is doing very, very well considering all the changes that have occurred.

- A. Veterans Services** - Strike Teams continue to help with the backlog of Claims. They have successfully brought 100 million in revenue back to Veterans.
- B. Women Veterans**- The Toolkit continues to be a very popular. Due to demand, there are plans of releasing another production in the next month or so.
- C. Homes** - Mr. Wells reported that Veterans Homes are all doing very well. Most are at 90%, or greater, occupancy. He encouraged those who have not seen the homes to have a visit.
- D. Farm and Home** - Farm & Home was reported to have a 50% increase since last year in Home Loans. They are expanding and interest was expressed that Farm & Home would be interested in expanding to the Bob Hope Patriotic Hall. The Residential Enriched Neighborhood program located in San Fernando Valley, Sylmar and Santa Clarita has been very successful, allowing Veteran, first-time homebuyers to get into a beautiful home for around \$180,000.
- E. Communications** – The Department has amped up the outreach efforts including more than 85 press-related distributions in the last three months including Facebook, YouTube, and traditional media access points. There will be no slowing down in 2015.

BOARD COMMENTS:

Concern about the excessive turnover of Nursing Home Administrators was expressed by the Board. The Department was asked to consider a third party to conduct exit interviews for Administrators who leave to attempt to remedy the situation. Mr. Wells said that he would speak with the Secretary about the suggestion.

The Department was asked if there are plans to work more closely with the Governor's office in the future when filling the positions. The Board was advised that The Department does in fact have a great deal of engagement with the Governor's office. The Homes get a lot of attention.

Interest in "recommendations" for a new Secretary was expressed. It was expressed that applications are filled out and run through the Governor's Appointments Office.

Mr. Crooks brought up that someone is telling service officers that they should not be using the American Legion to file a Power of Attorney because they will lose their funding.

NEW BUSINESS

COMMITTEE REPORTS/UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PLAN

Charlene Taylor: Changes to the Board's Agenda have met approval with the Department. A copy of the 2014-15 budget was distributed and reviewed. Charlene usually meets bi-monthly with the Secretary and will plan to continue this with the Acting Secretary, Debbie Ensley.

A. Strategic Plan and Objectives: With the meeting's format change, you will see Strategic Plan and Objectives stay on the Agenda. One person from the Department will give the Department's update to streamline our meetings.

B. Action Items:

Town Hall Meetings: Pursuant to our 2015 goals, the Board agreed to conduct at least two "Town Hall Meetings" in 2015: March in Southern California and October in Northern California.

Paul and JP meeting suggestions:

- Possible rename to "California Veteran Board Hearing" so that we "hear" from the Veterans as opposed to them being given information.
- The format suggested is a Panel interview with Subject matter experts from the Department available if needed. Emphasis will be on explaining what the Board's function is and its goals, making clear that the Board is not involved with Veterans Affairs and medical issues.
- They will be held on Saturdays from 9-12 a.m. or 10-1 a.m.
- Department Heads could be available as experts in the audience.
- The Board will try to partner with Speaker Atkins office.
- CalVet Communications can supply press releases, flyers and media coverage.
- Subject areas should include Health, Education, Housing and Employment.

Board Suggestions:

- San Diego possible location for first meeting on March 21, 2015.
- Suggestions for Northern California include Sacramento and San Francisco.
- Interest expressed to get information out: "Did you know" blurbs.
- Reason for meetings is to hear issues not give information.
- Suggestions to invite local military leadership and various groups from the area was expressed.
- Can have flip charts and/or an amnesty box.

Hugh Crooks: Needs to improve communication. Need flyers and information earlier than 10 days to get the word out.

Caroline Morales: Caroline reported that she is participating in a Teleconference every other Friday with J.P. regarding Legislation. The Department is monitoring various bills; in-State tuition for Veterans and potentially packed Benefit reductions for Veterans Organizations. Kind of quiet right now, but should speed up in February.

Gena Truitt: Gena reported that she is beginning to look at the Policies and Procedures for the Board in an attempt to bring them up to date. The estimated due date will be Summer.

Sean Sargent: Sean had short term goals and long term goals. Short term he continues on the TR

Support at Camp Pendleton/ Miramar; Long term he will be reaching out to connect with CVSO's and LINC's to work closely with them and get involved.

PRESENTATION BY U.S.VETS – Mr. Steven Peck, President and CEO of U.S. Vets, spoke to the Board about homeless Veterans and the various things they are doing to help.

COMMENTS BY BOARD MEMBERS – Charlene Taylor reported on her invite to attend the transition meeting for the Secretary and the feeling that that invitation was positive for the Board. Charlene also reported on the Conference call regarding the 2015-16 Budget and that it will be maintained consistent with the 2014-15 budget, with the addition of adding funding for Fort Ord. She then announced Veronica Ortiz-Torez who has joined the Governors Appointments Office as the Undersecretary of Appointments. They discussed filling the vacancy on the Board. Charlene highly recommends a former co-worker of hers from Kaiser, Mr. Todd Trotter. They also discussed John Farrell's possible separation from the Board and which Home will be next to represent the Homes on the Board. Plans were suggested to present a Plaque to John the night before the Town Hall meeting if the meeting commences in San Diego. The expiration dates of the Members were discussed. Gena Truitt commented that she has been trying to make sure that her time on the Board is not a conflict of interest with her job with VA and whether she needs to take "leave" to attend meetings..... Charlene and Caroline shared how they make that work . The Board was reminded to complete their Form 700's. Gena also added some further work and events coming up in the Inland Empire area. Hugh Crooks shared his recent trip spent 11 days traveling up and down the State with the National Commander of the American Legion. Caroline Morales shared her excitement for the up-coming Board Hearings. The up-coming Appeals Hearing regarding Mr. Ghigliotti was discussed. Finding speakers for the Board Meetings was also discussed. The Board went over the next meeting and it's close proximity to the Town Hall Meeting three days later. All Board members are good with the dates. The possibility of having another Speaker for the next meeting was discussed.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 12:00 NOON.