



**CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD**  
**Meeting Minutes #743**  
**December 5, 2014**



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

**Hugh Crooks, Jr., Board Member**  
**Caroline Morales, Member**  
**Gena Truitt, Board Member**

The California Veterans Board met in Sacramento at the Department of Veterans Affairs at 9:00 AM.

**ROLL CALL**

Present: Charlene Taylor, Chair, John Farrell (via phone), Member, Caroline Morales, Member, Sean Sargeant (via phone), Member, Hugh Crooks Jr. (via phone), 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 then announced that Bonnie Kelly, Executive Officer, has retired as of last Monday, 12/1/2014. She is looking to fill the position as soon as possible. In the meantime the Executive Secretary's office has graciously offered assistance.

Caroline Morale introduced herself.

Hugh Crooks, Jr. introduced himself.

Sean Sargeant introduced himself.

Charlene Taylor introduced herself.

Department staff, Secretary, Peter Gravett, Undersecretary Michael Wells, Deputy Secretary Communications JP Tremblay, Deputy Secretary Farm and Homes Theresa Gunn, Assistant Deputy Secretary Rita Almanza, Assistant Deputy Secretary Dave Gerard, Julienne Crisostomo, Deputy Secretary from Minority Affairs, Mirtha Villareal-Younger

**MINUTES**

**RECOMMENDATION**

Approve the minutes from the September 18 & 19, 2014 Board meetings.

Member Morales moved to approve the minutes with one correction. Hugh Crooks Jr. was present. Member Crooks seconded. Motion unanimously approved and carried.

Minutes from the October 8, 2014 Appeals Hearing were tabled until amendments could be made.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

None

**OLD BUSINESS**

## **DEPARTMENT FORUM: Department Update**

### **A. Homes**

Beth Miller reported on the Admissions Review Process and a revised structure. A Pilot project is underway in the West Los Angeles Home since September and has been successful. Another will be underway in Yountville very soon and in the remaining homes early in 2015.

### **B. Legislation**

Deputy Secretary Tremblay reported that the Legislature was sworn in on Monday. The Assembly has a new Speaker, and Jackie Irwin is the new Chair of the Assembly Veterans Affairs Committee. The Senate has a new ProTem but has made no committee assignments at that time.

Mr. Tremblay reported on two recently introduced Assembly bills that will be followed to determine if there is any impact on the Department.

### **C. Communications**

Deputy Secretary Sullivan reported that Communications was able to support Women Veterans with their Women Veterans Outreach Toolkit. He reported on his training and the final stages of the hiring process for a manager and office Tech for the office.

### **D. Veterans Services**

John Craft updated the Board on the totally redesigned CalVet website, including “My CalVet” which allows a more interactive experience. He also reported on an award won from the Center for Digital Government. Mr. Craft then reported on the Local Interagency Network Coordinators (LINCS?), Truth to Trades project and the LA Stand Down September 19<sup>th</sup> thru the 22<sup>nd</sup>. He reported the Veterans Services will continue to support and encourage growth in the Justice involved Veteran Initiatives including Veteran Treatment Courts. The Strike Team continues its success in processing claims. The board was also updated on the training of Veteran Service Representatives through a Veteran Service Rep Academy.

Approval was granted for Orange County to have a Veterans Cemetery.

### **E. Minority Veterans**

Deputy Secretary from Minority Affairs, Mirtha Villareal-Younger reported on the Outreach effort to bridge the gap for Minority veterans, specifically the Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay and Transgender Veteran Community. There is a desire to bring CalVet up to speed with Benefits, addressing some issues, and identifying any barriers.

The Minority Veterans conducted a Black Veterans Summit in Los Angeles which was very successful with 300 attendees.

The division will have a medal of honor recognition ceremony for those not awarded of medal of honor due to various circumstances.

Substantial headway is being made on “El Soldado “. Completion is estimated in the next calendar year. [Http://www. Elsoldado.org](http://www.Elsoldado.org) is the website where donations can be made.

### **F. Women Veterans**

Julienne Crisostomo updated on behalf of the Women Veterans that the CalVet Women Veterans Outreach Toolkit is now available on their website: [www.calvet.ca.gov/womenvets](http://www.calvet.ca.gov/womenvets)

## **G. Farm and Home**

Deputy Secretary Theresa Gunn reported that loan activity continues to increase. As of November 30, 2014, they have funded almost 180 loans totaling approximately \$48.3 million. They have already funded approximately 65% of what was done in 2013-14 (284 loans/ \$71.5 million). 2013-14 was a significant recovery from prior years. As the housing market continues to stabilize and grow, their loan activity grows.

They maintained their double A rating statuses with the Rating Agencies and were able to get Fitch to remove the “negative watch” that they have carried on their bonds for the last few years.

They issued \$100 million in bonds in September under such favorable conditions as to enable them to temporarily lower their interest rates.

They continue to maintain their low delinquency rate and cancellation rates. They work with “Keep Your Home California” to keep contract holders in their homes and have assisted over 430 veteran contract holders collect almost \$12 million to remain in their homes.

Finally, in June voters passed Proposition 41, which authorized \$600 million in general obligation bonds to finance the Veteran Housing and Homelessness Prevention (VHHP) Program. The VHHP Program requires CalVet to work with Housing and Community Development and the California Housing Finance Agency to develop and implement the VHHP Program for homeless and low-income veterans and their families. They have been working with these agencies since before passage of Proposition 41 and have released the Draft Program Guidelines. They expect to finish gathering stakeholder comments to the Draft Guidelines this month, and prepare the Final Program Guidelines for release in mid-January along with a Notice of Financial Award (NOFA) for \$75 million. Applications for the NOFA will be due in April 2015, with awards expected to be made in June 2015.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- A.** Charlene Taylor was nominated by Hugh Crooks Jr, seconded by John Farrell to be the Veterans Board Chair, passed unanimously.
- B.** Hugh Crooks Jr. was nominated by John Farrell, seconded by Sean Sargeant to be the Veterans Board Vice Chair, passed unanimously.
- C.** An appeal was received from Jerome Ghigliotti, Jr. regarding his stay at Yountville. Mr. Ghigliotti has requested a formal appeal: The Board tentatively scheduled the appeal hearing for January 14, 2015 in Sacramento.
- D.** Chair Taylor proposed that Board meetings be increased to bi-monthly (odd months) beginning in January 2015. Hugh Crooks Jr. made a motion to approve this, Sean Sargeant seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Meetings will be the third Wednesdays from 0900-1200. The Board also agreed to rotate the meetings between Northern and Southern California.
- E.** Pursuant to our 2015 goals, the Board agreed to conduct at least two “Town Hall Meetings” in 2015: February or March in Southern California and October in Northern California.

**MEETING ADJOURNED AT 12:00 NOON.**