

**Arizona Department of Veterans' Service Advisory Commission**  
4141 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street (North S. Herrera Way), Phoenix, AZ 85012

**October 11, 2012**

**MINUTES**

**Advisory Commissioners**

George Cushing, Chair  
Jeffrey Olson, Vice Chair  
Terrie Gent  
Philip Hanson  
Wayne Krula  
Ronald Perkins  
Lionel Sanchez  
David Toliver, Sr.

**AZ Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS)**

Colonel Joey Strickland, Director  
Gabe Forsberg, Strategic Planner/Women Vets  
Coordinator  
Katherine Harding, Exec. Asst. to the Director  
Judy Smith, Admin. Secretary

**Guests**

Johnny Stewart, Disabled American Veterans  
(DAV) Dept. Commander

**Call to Order** – The meeting was called to order at 10:01 a.m. by Chairman George Cushing. The minutes were approved as published.

**Communications** – There were none reported.

**Agency Announcements and Updates** – ADVS met this week with architectural firms to review plans and select which firm will build the Flagstaff Cemetery. Colonel Strickland received a letter from Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary of the Federal VA, stating that we are number one on the Federal Priority List and that federal money is set aside for the Flagstaff Cemetery.

Homer Rodgers advised Colonel Strickland that \$435,000 in funds remain from the completion of the Tucson Veteran Home. These funds will be used to add 10 handicap accessible auto opening doors and to provide a canopied outdoor smoking area.

Cremated burials are becoming more prevalent at the Sierra Vista Cemetery. The Sierra Vista community has raised \$65,000 toward the goal of \$200,000 to build a chapel for the Sierra Vista Cemetery.

Colonel Strickland reported that Sierra Vista Veteran Benefit Counselors (VBC's) formerly housed in the Cemetery office are now in offices located separately on the Cemetery property. This will avoid veterans who are filing claims from coming in contact with grieving families in the Cemetery office.

An application to the Federal VA for the North Cemetery in Marana, AZ was made and should be funded in fiscal year 2014.

Colonel Strickland met with members of Phoenix College to discuss creating a Veteran Center at the college. Phoenix College has 200-300 veterans attending classes. They are working with ADVS to become a Veteran-friendly college.

The Navajo Veteran Home project is going well. \$14 million is to be designated by the Navajo Tribe.

Colonel Strickland noted that ADVS has established a department Facebook page for informing the public.

**Attendance Policy Review** – Commissioner Perkins presented the Management Policy for review. Chairman Cushing suggested removing the commissioners’ signatures from the policy. Commissioner Olson made a motion to strike the commissioner names from the policy and accept the draft as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

**Commission Guidelines and Strategic Plan Review Committee Report** – Commissioner Olson reviewed a handout for Strategic Plan Guidelines. The first draft is completed and will be reviewed at the November commission meeting.

The commissioners questioned where their table top display is being stored and whether another display could be made in case one is in use. The display is normally stored at the Director’s Office; however, it is temporarily being used by Cathi Starr at the Tucson Veterans’ Services Division (VSD).

#### **Outreach Activities for Commission -**

**Yuma meeting** - Tom Jones, Veteran Counselor of the Yuma VSD, invited commissioners to visit the Yuma VSD offices on October 24. This meeting will give Commissioners Krula and Toliver the opportunity to see how the region operates. They will meet with veteran organizations if time permits.

**Discussion with Linda Stiles of the Governor’s Office of Boards and Commissions** - Colonel Strickland met with Linda Stiles of the Governor’s Office of Boards and Commissions. The meeting was productive and Ms. Stiles is approachable. They will reach out to Native American, Iraqi or Afghan Veterans and female candidates for the Advisory Commission.

Chairman Cushing noted that commissioners whose terms ended in July are still serving. The Governor has not yet formally reappointed them to a second term. Chairman Cushing encouraged commissioners who want to apply for a second term should do so as soon as possible after the first of the year before their terms expire.

**Open Discussion For the Good of the Order** - Chairman Cushing introduced visitor Johnny Stewart at the meeting. Mr. Stewart retired from the military in 1994 and recently retired from civil service and is now State Commander of the DAV.

- **First issue brought by Mr. Stewart to be addressed:** Disparity of tax levy on posts and chapters of DAV around the state. Four years ago in a Tucson town hall meeting, he had an issue with Veteran Service Organizations (VSO) regarding the disparity of property tax within the state. There are 16 chapters of DAV in Arizona; each county determines VSO tax breaks.

Mr. Stewart wants help in dropping the property tax for posts and chapters statewide.

A statutory change is required through the Legislature. It should be a uniform front.

Chairman Cushing will contact Lew Bradley of Unified Arizona Veterans (UAV) to see what support Mr. Stewart can get from the organization on this matter.

- **Second issue brought by Mr. Stewart:** He attended the Stand Down in Prescott last month which was a great success. Mr. Stewart inquired how the Stand Down in Tucson is handled.

Katherine Harding stated that our agency was contacted and a grant was created to support the Stand Down in Tucson.

Colonel Strickland is not sure who runs the stand down in Tucson. Commissioner Sanchez reported that a committee at the hospital and another group raises donations for the Stand Down.

Colonel Strickland advised Mr. Stewart that our agency will provide a central point of contact in Tucson. Cathi Starr will be the Point of Contact (POC) in Tucson, and Sean Price the POC at our Phoenix office. They will provide information on homeless veterans and the Stand Down.

- Commissioners Toliver and Krula were hoping to tour the Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Yuma; however, they may want to wait until an official invitation is sent to the Director/Advisory Commission. Pepe Mendoza, Assistant Public Affairs Officer of the Tucson VA Medical Center advised that, due to the number of requests for tours, a request in writing must be made before scheduling a tour and attendees' names must be submitted in writing ahead of time.
- Gabe Forsberg announced her retirement from ADVS, effective February 1, 2013. Commissioners are sorry to see her leave the agency but wished her well. Colonel Strickland shares their sentiment in Gabe's leaving and assured the commissioners we will continue to work hard to see that all needs of the commissioners are met.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:53 a.m. The next meeting will be held November 8, 2012.