

Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission
3839 N. 3rd Street, Phoenix, AZ 85012

July 14, 2022

MINUTES

Advisory Commissioners Present

Joan McDermott, Chairwoman (virtual)
Gene Crego, Vice Chair (in-person)
Chris Gibbs, Commissioner (virtual)
Kathryn Gallowitz, Commissioner (virtual)
Edward Logan, Commissioner (virtual)
Kirk Loving, Commissioner (virtual)
Michael Noble, Commissioner (virtual)
Rebecca Villalpando, Commissioner (virtual)

AZ Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS)

Lupita Santellano, Executive Assistant (in-person)
Jennifer Harris, Legislative Liaison (virtual)
Wanda A. Wright, Director (joined at 11:00 am)

Guests

Beth Johnson (virtual)
Philip D. Cushman (in-person)

Absent

Call to Order – The Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission (AVSAC) meeting, via Google Meets: meet.google.com/jgq-vm-sc-uux; Dial in: (US)+1 617-675-4444; PIN: 425 562 666 6167#. Chairwoman Joan McDermott called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Chairwoman McDermott lead the commission in the pledge of allegiance.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Chairwoman McDermott called for a motion to approve the AVSAC meeting minutes from April 14, 2022. Commissioner Gibbs motioned to accept the meeting minutes. Commissioner Logan second the motion. There being no changes to the minutes or any objections by the Commission, the motion carried unanimously.

Director's Department Update

Jennifer Harris, Legislative Liaison provided the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS) update on Director Wright's behalf. The department is looking forward to the opening of the Arizona State Veteran Home in Yuma (ASVH-Y) this fall. ASVH-Y will accept admission applications within the next quarter. Construction of the Arizona State Veteran Home in Flagstaff (ASVH-F) is almost complete.

The department is looking forward to the groundbreaking of the cemetery expansion at the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Marana, Arizona. In the 2021 state budget there was an appropriation for a veteran home in Northwestern Arizona. The department is currently working on the request for proposals to be issued for the feasibility study for the Northwestern Veteran home. Once the feasibility study is completed the department will present it to the Advisory Commission.

The department is happy to announce that Kimberly A. Trotta, former Administrator of the Arizona Veteran Home in Phoenix and former Regional Compliance Administrator has been promoted to Deputy Director of the Arizona State Veteran Homes. Her main focus will be the Arizona State Veteran Homes. Deputy Director John Scott will focus on the rest of the operations of the Department.

The department is working on new programs for at risk veterans with VBA. Another win for the department this fiscal year is a 10% increase of employee salaries, which will be applied to the upcoming paycheck on July 28, 2022. This is the first state wide pay increase since 2007. Also in the budget was a 2.2-million-dollar appropriation to ADVS to hire twenty Veteran Benefit Counselors (VBCs) in the rural tribal areas. The department will work on legislative implementations within the next week.

Jennifer asked if the commission has any ideas on how the department can recognize employees in a meaningful way. Executive Assistant Santellano will email the commission ideas previously discussed by the department.

The Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (PIA) division is working on the expansion of outreach programming. The PIA outreach team is attending any event they believe veterans will be present at. The department was also part of the AZ Hires Vets! event in Tucson, this event was a great success. Jennifer further elaborated on PIA outreach activities. Commissioner Villalpando requested the tentative date for the ASVH-F opening. Executive Assistant Santellano confirmed the opening of the ASVH-F is March 6, 2023.

Legislative Update

Jennifer Harris provided the legislative update. She posted an end of session wrap up draft which was posted to the ADVS website on Friday, July 8, 2022. Jennifer highlighted a few bills that affect veterans:

- 2.2 million appropriated for twenty FTEs for VBCs located in rural tribal nations.
- Appropriation for 1 million for ADVS to distribute to Indian tribes located in Arizona, to conduct tribal ceremonies for tribal members discharged from the military.
- When the budget passed there was an appropriation in there of 3.6 million for hyperbaric therapy for military veteran's fund, which was removed by a line-item veto by the Governor. When he signed the budget bill, he vetoed that line and provided a letter stating the reason for that decision.
- ADVS received \$731,300.00 to provide a nursing hiring incentive for the Arizona State Veteran Homes. This was a huge win for ADVS.
- 10 million dollars were appropriated to the Board of Regent to cover tuition waiver scholarships for the spouses of Veterans. ADVS's part will be verifying that the Veteran whose spouse is applying is eligible.
- 60 million dollars has been appropriated to the Housing Trust Fund which is used for housing and homeless services. There is a footnote, this appropriation is to be distributed as grants not loans for projects. 20 million of the 60 million has to be distributed to project in counties other than Maricopa and Pima. 4 million of the 60 million has to be distributed to Navajo and Hopi tribal lands.
- 10 million was appropriated to the Department of Housing for the purpose of a homeless services grant pilot.
- US Vets Prescott project at Fort Whipple received funding as well.
- SB1095 - Signed by the Governor subject to voter approval. Property tax exemption based on the veteran's service-connected disability rating. Example: 20% disability rating means 20% tax exemption. This bill will be on the ballot during general election in November. Outreach will be needed for support.
- HB2320 – Property classification brought forth by the American Legion, signed by the Governor which lists property buildings leased to veteran organizations as class nine properties. This bill is for those organizations who are leasing but do not own their building.

- SB1212- The continuation of ADVS and the Advisory Commission. This bill was signed early in session. Senator Leach sponsored this bill.
- SB115- Instate tuition for veterans. ADVS is in compliance with federal law.
- HB2674- The Housing Supply Study Committee will meet and complete a study to allow for more affordable housing. The committee met this week and plans to meet every second and fourth Tuesday. They are encouraging the public to join the meetings to provide testimony. The meeting scheduled for August 9, 2022, will be focused on veterans. Jennifer Harris will provide the Commission the agenda once it is posted.

The full and final legislative report may be found on the ADVS website, click [here](#).

Vice Chair Crego asked if the Hyperbaric Therapy Committee was still going to be created. Jennifer states the department will still fill the committee but without funding they will have nothing to do; however, the committee can meet to help fundraise or to discuss ideas and outreach for support.

Old Business

Strategic Policy Objectives- Chairwoman McDermott emailed an edited draft of the Strategic Policy Objectives to the Commission. She asked the Commission if there were any further edits or comments. Commissioner Gallowitz would like the commission to fully update the Strategic Policy Objectives since they are thirteen years old but the current edits are good for now. Commissioner Villalpando suggested a subcommittee should be created to update the Strategic Policy Objectives in full. Commissioner Logan suggested the Advisory Commission should wait to further update the Strategic Policy Objectives until the new Governor is in office so that the Commission can align with the Governor's plans.

Chairwoman McDermott called for a motion to approve the draft of the Strategic Policy Objectives. Commissioner Logan moved to approve the Strategic Policy Objectives as written and edited, Vice Chair Crego second the motion. There being no objections by the commission, the Strategic Policy Objectives have been approved.

New Business

Nomination and Election of Chair and Vice Chair – Chairwoman McDermott reminded the commission that Commissioner Logan was nominated as Vice Chair and Commissioner Gallowitz was nominated as Chair at the previous Advisory Commission meeting held on April 14, 2022. She opened the floor for further nominations for Vice Chair and Chair. Neither position had any further nominations. There being no objections or further nominations for Vice Chair, Commissioner Logan has been elected as Vice Chair for the Advisory Commission. There being no objections or further nominations for Chair, Commissioner Gallowitz has been elected as Chairwoman for the Advisory Commission.

Outreach Activities for Commission

Commissioner Crego mentioned the United Arizona Veterans (UAV) induction ceremony to the Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame is scheduled to take place on October 14, 2022, at the Talking Stick Resort.

Newly Elected Chairwoman Gallowitz continues to work with the Southwest Veterans Chamber of Commerce and Bunker Labs. She mentioned the Patriots Ball is scheduled to take place on October 22, 2022. Click [here](#) for more information.

Commissioner Logan continues to work with the Air Force Association, also known as the Air and Space Force Association. He attended the Airman leadership school graduation and highlighted a recent graduate that has achieved great success.

Commissioner Loving had nothing to report. Commissioner Villalpando had nothing to report. Commissioner Noble did not report out.

Commissioner Gibbs states the Stand down in his area is taking place on September 30, 2022. He has requested Director Wright's presence. He also mentioned Veterans' week will take place in November.

Joan McDermott provided her full outreach report to the commission via email. Read the full report [here](#).

Open Discussion for the Good of the Order

Orientation Plan for New Commissioners – Chairwoman McDermott would like a written step-by-step plan for orientation/onboarding of new commissioners. Executive Assistant Santellano explained the current process for new Commissioners and the letter that currently explains the process of onboarding with the Advisory Commission. Commissioner Logan mentioned one important item for new Commissioners is the Open Meeting Law. Chairwoman McDermott suggested newly elected Chairwoman Gallowitz work with ADVS on creating a step-by-step plan for orientation/onboarding of new commissioners.

Commissioner Terms – Commissioner Logan's term is up for renewal July 2022. The following commissioners' terms expire July 1, 2023, and must renew their commission if they plan to serve another three-year term: Gallowitz, Loving, Noble, and Gibbs.

Presentations – Director Wright presented Commissioner Villalpando and Chairwoman McDermott with a certificate of appreciation for their time with the Advisory Commission.

Director Wright asked the commission if they have any questions for her. Newly elected Chairwoman Gallowitz asked Director Wright the status of the applications to the Commission. One veteran has been selected for the commission but his documentation has not been mailed to ADVS yet. Boards and Commissions continues to work on filling the other AVSAC vacancies.

Comments by Former and Newly Elected Chair and Vice Chair – Vice Chair Crego thanked Chairwoman McDermott for her leadership and congratulated the newly elected Vice Chair and Chair. Chairwoman McDermott thanked the commission for their patience. She thanked Director Wright, Jennifer Harris, and Lupita Santellano for their help and service. Vice Chair Logan thanked Chairwoman McDermott and the rest of the commission for their work. He looks forward to three more years on the commission. Newly elected Chairwoman Gallowitz thanked the commission and looks forward to working along side them on veteran issues. She will send commissioners her calendar and contact information. She has three pillars in mind during her leadership:

- Workforce – attraction or employment
- Collaboration between veteran service organizations regarding workforce, legislation and outreach
- Strategic Policy Objective updates

Chairwoman McDermott virtually handed newly elected Chairwoman Gallowitz the Advisory Commission gavel.

Vice Chair Crego thanked the guests who joined the Advisory Commission. Newly elected Chairwoman Gallowitz asked how guests join the Advisory Commission meeting. Director Wright explained the Advisory Commission meeting is an open public meeting, anyone can join but the guests must be on the agenda to speak. She also explained the Commission can travel to different locations to meet. Newly elected Chairwoman Gallowitz would like to add travel for two of the four meetings held during the fiscal year to the next meeting's agenda.

Adjournment

Newly elected Chairwoman Gallowitz called for a motion to adjourn the Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission Meeting. Commissioner Gibbs motioned to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Crego second the motion. The motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 11:36 am.