

**Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission**  
3839 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Phoenix, AZ 85012

**November 09, 2023**

**MINUTES**

**Advisory Commissioners Present**

Philip Cushman, Chair (in person)  
Gene Crego, Commissioner (in person)  
Charles Byers, Commissioner (in person)  
Andrew Meshel, Commissioner (virtual)  
Matthew Kenney, Vice Chair (virtual)

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

Dana Allmond, Cabinet Executive Officer (in person)  
Lupita Santellano, Executive Assistant (in person)  
Valen Harris, Administrative Assistant (virtual)

**Absent:**

Kathy Gallowitz, Commissioner  
Michael Noble, Commissioner  
Chris Gibbs, Commissioner

**Guest(s)**

Angie Foltz (in person)  
Amy McWilliams (in person)

**Call to Order** – The Arizona Veterans' Services Advisory Commission (AVSAC) meeting, via Google Meets: <https://meet.google.com/jgq-vm-sc-uux>; Dial-in: (US) +1 475-222-5532 PIN: 275 244 224#. Chairman Cushman called the meeting to order at 1:25 pm. The commission did not meet quorum until 1:25 pm, at which time the Advisory Commission began their scheduled meeting, originally scheduled for 1:00 pm.

Chairman Cushman led the commission in the pledge of allegiance.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Chairman Cushman called for a motion to approve the AVSAC meeting minutes from September 14, 2023. Commissioner Crego motioned to accept the meeting minutes. Commissioner Byers second the motion. The commission moved to approve the minutes unanimously.

Chairman Cushman called for a motion to approve the AVSAC Subcommittee minutes from October 25, 2023. Commissioner Crego motioned to approve the meeting minutes. Commissioner Byer second the motion. The commission approved the minutes unanimously.

**Presentation by Angie Foltz, President and CEO of Western Arizona Senior Living**

Western Arizona Senior Living President and CEO, Angie Foltz spoke to the Commission in regards to services she provides vulnerable seniors, specifically Veterans in rural areas. Presentation found [here](#).

**Agency Announcements and Updates**

**CEO Department Update** - CEO Allmond attended the 2023 Arizona Veterans Hall of Fame Induction on October 13, 2023 alongside Secretary of State and Marine Corps Veteran Adrian Fontes, they presented

awards to the 19 Veterans honored for their accomplishments and service to the Arizona community outside their military service.

### **Phoenix Veterans Day Parade**

- Saturday, November 11, 2023, beginning at 11:00 a.m.
- Parade route: Begins north of Missouri Avenue and Central Avenue. Travels south, takes a left at Camelback Road. Then takes a right onto 7<sup>th</sup> street and ends at Indian School Road.
- Governor Katie Hobbs has invited CEO Allmond to ride along with her in the parade.
- ASVH-Phoenix will take Veterans to watch parade

### **Arizona State Veteran Homes**

#### **Flagstaff**

- Hiring for critical positions
- Director of Nursing – Plans, organizes and directs the Nursing Department. Salary is \$99,000-\$104,500 (DOE).
  - Social Worker Supervisor – Plans, organizes and supervises the social services program. Salary is \$65,000-\$76,500 (DOE).
- Admissions Coordinator – Coordinates all aspects of the admissions process for Veterans and qualifying dependents interested in care at ASVH-Flagstaff.
- Activities Director - responsible for organizing and developing therapeutic recreation services for ASVH-Flagstaff residents. Salary is \$51,700-\$60,500.
- Spread the word! Apply for these positions and more at [azstatejobs.gov](http://azstatejobs.gov)

#### **Phoenix**

- Arizona State Veteran Home Phoenix (ASVH-P) is working to raise \$150,000 to upgrade current old vehicles to two new wheelchair accessible vehicles
- Transit bus (like an airport shuttle bus) would transport residents to activities and community events
- Van would transport residents to medical appointments
- To donate – visit our website [dvs.az.gov](http://dvs.az.gov). There is a story about the fundraiser on the ADVS website homepage that has a link to the donation site

#### **Tucson**

- Applebee's will be providing their annual free Veterans Day lunch to residents on November 12, 2023
- CEO Allmond will be attending

#### **Yuma**

- Staff will be taking residents to the Veterans Day Parade in Yuma

## **Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemeteries**

### **Missing In America Project**

- Laid to rest more than 30 Veterans at Camp Navajo and Marana last month

### **Veterans Day**

- All three cemeteries will have flags placed on markers for Veterans Day
- Flags will be up through the weekend and taken down by November 13, 2023

### **Wreaths Across America**

- Help ADVS cemeteries reach their goals
- Sponsorship deadline for wreaths is November 28, 2023
- You can buy a wreath that will be placed on markers at [wreathscrossamerica.org](http://wreathscrossamerica.org)
- On the website – you can search for each cemetery location by name
- ADVS cemeteries are: Southern Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery, Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery at Marana, Arizona Veterans' Memorial Cemetery at Camp Navajo
- Wreaths Across America Day Ceremony will happen at all locations on Saturday, December 16, 2023, at 10:00 am

## **ADVS Grant Opportunities**

### **Small Veterans Donation Fund Grants**

- We are focused on ensuring that applications address social determinants of health
- Applications must pertain to at least ONE of these categories: basic needs, employment, family and social support, finances and benefits, higher education, housing and homelessness, legal, mental health and substance abuse, physical health and spirituality
- To apply for the small VDF grant – visit ADVS' website [dvs.az.gov](http://dvs.az.gov)

### **Large Veterans Donation Fund Grants**

- 2024 Large Grant cycle now open to the public
- ADVS has \$1 million to award this year
- Also focused on direct services and social determinants of health
- ADVS will need volunteers to review applications – the department will announce that soon so be sure to register!

### **Upcoming Veteran StandDowns**

- Graham/Greenlee StandDown - Friday, November 17, 2023, from 9:00 am -2:00 pm. Graham County Fairgrounds – 527 Armory Road in Safford, Arizona.

### **Legislature Update**

- ADVS has hired a Legislative Liaison for the agency. She will be starting at the end of November

## **Old Business**

**Status of Letter to the Governor, Edits and Re-Vote** - Chairman Cushman states he did not complete the task of editing the letter to the Governor. He will make the appropriate edits to the previous letter mailed to the Governor, which will include Prop 130. The Commission will meet to approve the letter to the Governor before January 2024.

## **Strategic Policy Objective Revision – Review & Discuss the Subcommittee Report Conflict of Interest Process/Updates**

The commission reviewed the Strategic Policy Objective revisions made by the subcommission. The commission approved the meeting minutes and notes to be posted on ADVS' website. Report found [here](#).

## **New Business**

**Advisory Commission Meeting Dates for 2024** - Chairman Cushman reviewed the calendar year 2024 Commission meeting dates. All meetings are hybrid. Chairman Cushman asked the Commission to place the dates on their calendars and inform ADVS staff if they are unable to attend on any of the dates listed:

- Thursday, January 11, 2024
- Thursday, March 14, 2024
- Thursday, May 9, 2024
- Thursday, July 11, 2024
- Thursday, September 12, 2024
- Thursday, November 14, 2024

**Suggestions for Guest Speakers for Calendar Year 2024** - Chairman Cushman asked the commission to submit their speaker suggestions to ADVS for upcoming commission meetings. The commissioners must provide all contact information for timely coordination. Chairman Cushman suggested Dr. David Swindell, Director for the Center on Urban Innovation at ASU for the January 2024 commission meeting.

## **Outreach Activities for Commission**

Commissioner Gallowitz's outreach efforts include the following:

- SWVCC Patriots Ball
- SWVCC Marketing Committee
- SWVCC Board OF Directors meeting
- Glendale Chamber Military and Veterans Affairs Committee
- Glendale Chamber Military Appreciation Event
- Veterans Medical Leadership Council Luncheon
- AZ Manufacturing Summit
- Women In Manufacturing Meetings

Commissioner Nobel's outreach efforts include the following:

- His detachment had a booth at the Sedona Wings and Wheels event on Saturday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, where his detachment handed out a variety of veteran support materials

- Attended a ceremony dedicated to the memory of Rear Admiral John Mateczun USN and a Veterans Resources Event in the Yavapai County Complex
- As a member of the Verde Valley Marine Corps League Honor Guard, he provided flag presentations to the Brian Carlson Family at Our Shepherd Lutheran Church in Cornville on October 14<sup>th</sup>
- Attended a memorial event at the Veteran Service Park in Cottonwood on October 27<sup>th</sup>
- Posted the colors for classes at the Immaculate Conception Church (kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade)
- Verde Valley Toys for Tots Drive is underway for the six surrounding towns. Last year his detachment provided over 8,000 toys to approximately 2,000 kids. This year is an even bigger challenge because of support cuts for the National Toys for Tots support

Upcoming Events:

- On November 9<sup>th</sup>, I will be attending an event at the Sedona Library “Honoring Women Veterans”
- The Marine Corps Birthday Ball in Cottonwood is on November 11<sup>th</sup>. There will be a very special guest speaker, Lt. General John Goodman, USMC retired (3 start)

Commissioner Byers states his outreach efforts consist of going out into the community and empowering the aging veteran healthcare options. He states 65% of Arizona Veterans are over 65 years old and many are not aware of the programs available to them. He states there will be a shift in geriatric healthcare in the VA healthcare system. He also states he had an opportunity to visit San Antonio and witnessed current combat medic training.

Chairman Cushman provided his outreach report, found [here](#).

**For the Good of the Order**

**VSO Restrictions with Gaming** - The commission was unable to discuss this information. They will revisit this topic at the next scheduled meeting on January 11, 2024.

**Action Item Recap from Meeting** - The commission was unable to discuss this information.

**Open Floor for Comments**

None.

**Adjournment**

Chairman Cushman adjourned the commission meeting at 2:00 pm.

## **WESTERN ARIZONA SENIOR LIVING**

As we approach Veterans Day, we are honored to have the opportunity to present our latest project and findings to the Arizona Department of Veterans Services and Veterans Administration. The data we've gathered reveals telling signs of where gaps in services exist, highlighting the critical needs of our senior and veteran communities.

We are deeply grateful for the chance to be a strong advocate for those who have served our nation and for the seniors who have contributed so much to our society. This presentation is a heartfelt commitment to being a voice for the voiceless, especially at a time as significant as Veterans Day.

Thank you for your time today. We will quickly move through the presentation and will have time to answer your questions afterwards. You can use this sheet to take notes in the appropriate section for questions or to reach out to us later for more assistance or clarity.

### **Introductions:**

Western Arizona Senior Living began during Covid 19 and has quickly become the hub for senior resources and care coordination throughout Western Arizona. President and CEO Angie Foltz currently serves on the board with River Cities United Way and WACOG as a representative for the senior population. She was a Gulf War Veterans spouse and has previously worked with those experiencing homelessness due to medical conditions.

Place My Care is the same company but serves all of Maricopa County. Senior Vice President Amy McWilliams most recently left her position as Executive Director of Lake View Terrace Memory Care to join the team and provide her wealth of expertise in the senior living world to our clients. She also has experience working with vulnerable adults and has fond memories of her time working for low-income seniors at Fellowship Towers in Central Phoenix.

**Members of:** BeConnected and BBB

We feel passionate about creating solutions for the problems we will discuss later in the presentation and hope you will find value in the current solutions we offer seniors and their families.

### **Why us:**

No cost unbiased care coordination of everything needed when staying at home is no longer the safest or best option. Compassionate care understanding the complexities and challenges of each senior and their family is unique. We consider the medical, financial, social, and religious needs of the senior.

Safety and Wellness checks: One time of regularly scheduled checks of seniors which included things such as observations of nutrition, medications, fall hazards, etc in the home with a report shared with family. This is exceedingly helpful for families that don't live in the area.

ALTCs applications: Low-cost application assistance. 70 % of applicants get denied services the first time they apply. Our BSW becomes their authorized representative to assist in making sure the correct documentation is gathered and filed in a timely manner and appointments aren't missed.

**Our first location** – La Paz County

Facts: No current assisted Living in the entire county.

The average life expectancy in Maricopa County is 79.6 years. It is 73.9 years in La Paz

Senior homelessness has risen 73% in America between 2021 and 2023

**Transitional Care:**

Provides care under Assisted Living licensure with staffing ratios higher than skilled nursing.

Addresses chronic care condition education and social / financial barriers utilizing the currently available community health worker program under the supervision of a licensed social worker.

**Location:** Next to La Paz Regional satellite clinic in Quartzite, heli-pad, and fire department EMS

**End goal:** Permanent sustainable assisted living, independent living, or reunification with family that can provide care.

**Our strategic partners:**

Northern Arizona University

Mohave Community College

La Paz Regional Hospital

SRJ Housing

WACOG

**Our future strategic partners:**

Telehealth primary, specialist, mental health providers, AZDVS, Veterans Administration, Medicare, DES, AHCCCS, ALTCs, Major Healthcare Insurers, Hospitals, HUD and housing programs.

To reach us or connect us with organizations you feel could assist us in this endeavor:

Angie Foltz 928-566-2488 [angie@placemycare.com](mailto:angie@placemycare.com)

Amy McWilliams 602-832-9621 [amy@placemycare.com](mailto:amy@placemycare.com)

To refer please to us directly visit our referral page: [pmc.placedreferrals.com](http://pmc.placedreferrals.com)

To learn more about Western Arizona Senior Living visit: <https://westernaz.com>

**Minutes from #3 of AZ Veterans' Advisory Commission Strategic Policy Update Meeting from Oct. 25, 2023; minutes updated 2 Nov 2023; by Kathy Gallowitz; Committee: Kathy Gallowitz, Phil Cushman, Chuck Byers; Director Allmond attended 25 Oct 2023**

**Overall Priorities:**

- Decrease Veteran suicide through improved education, collaboration and coordination of services.
- Increase affordable housing and decrease homelessness.
- Improve access to healthcare for rural Veterans.
- Elevate the property tax and income threshold for state tax exemptions.
- Educate employers on Veteran-hiring/retention best practices, draw Veterans and military spouses to AZ and develop the AZ Employer Council with a majority of employers to decrease Veteran unemployment and underemployment.
- Expand Veteran Treatment Courts and other support of justice-involved Veterans.
- Increase the number of Veterans that become teachers and healthcare providers.
- Use Medicare credentialing reciprocity for TRICARE providers.
- Understand and monitor the impact of immigration policies and water shortages on Veterans.
- Expand engagement of the civilian faith community in support of Veterans.
- Assess whether the long term care needs of Veterans are being met, the financial well-being of Veterans and prevalence of Veteran heat-related deaths.

**Questions to answer:**

**Director Allmond will attempt to obtain answers from relevant agencies.**

**Policy objectives will be modified if needed once responses are received.**

- What are the demographics of Arizona's Veteran community, i.e. age, gender, ethnicity, where they live and rank.
- What are the current suicide rates for Arizona Veterans and how do they compare with other states?
- How does the homelessness of Arizona's Veterans compare to Arizona civilians and to other states?
- What are the unemployment and underemployment rates of Arizona Veterans? How do these compare with other states?
- What are the barriers for Arizona Veterans obtaining good paying jobs in Arizona?
- What are the causes of Veteran underemployment in Arizona?
- How can we assess the financial well-being of Arizona Veterans?
- How many civilian faith communities have specific Veteran-community support initiatives in place?
- Are the long term care needs of Arizona's Veterans being met?
- How do the baccalaureate graduation rates of student Veterans compare to non-Veterans in Arizona and to other states?
- How many Veterans have been deported and why?
- How many Veterans died by heat-related deaths in 2023 and where did these occur? How does this compare to previous years?



## **Arizona Veterans Advisory Commission 2023 Updated Strategic Policy Objectives**

- I. Promote sustainable employment, talent development and the economic security of Arizona's Veterans.**
- Educate employers on Veteran-hiring best practices (P)
  - Attract Veterans/Military Spouses to Arizona's workforce (P)
  - Draw Native Americans back to Arizona after their military service (P)
  - Develop the State Veteran Employment Council with employers as a majority (P)
  - Create hiring preferences for able/disabled Veterans in state and local government jobs (P)
  - Establish 3% state contract set-asides for Veteran Owned Businesses (P)
  - Incentivize small business and local governments to hire Veterans (P)
  - Expedite military medics into civilian healthcare jobs (P)
  - Add funding to Troops to Teachers so that more Veterans can become teachers (P)
  - Elevate property tax and income threshold for state tax exemptions (P)
  - Make twenty tribal/rural Veteran Benefit Counselor's (VBC) a budget line item (P)
  - Monitor and promote the overall effectiveness (#claims, approval rating) of Veteran Benefit Counselors, in particular those in rural and tribal areas (A)
  - Examine and monitor Veterans' transportation challenges i.e. for medical appointments, work, school, etc (A)
  - Assess the financial well-being of Arizona's Veterans and identify ways to positively influence (A)
  - Support Arizona Coalition for Military Family's:
    - *Arizona Veteran Supportive Employers (AVSE)*
    - DOD Skillbridge
    - "AZHires Vets," to employ more Veterans in state government jobs

## II. Improve Veterans' access to mental, physical, spiritual and legal support.

- Broadly support suicide prevention strategies, to include:
  - Support funding of Arizona Coalition of Military Family's *Be Connected Support Line, Resources and Navigator Training* (P)
  - Firearm safety in Veterans' homes (A)
  - DVS' initiatives:
    - Suicide prevention training pilot program to educate VSO leaders and VBC's (A)
    - Stakeholder outreach to facilitate Veterans receiving a warm handoff to civilian life (A)
    - Outreach to Veterans to foster awareness about direct services and benefits (A)
    - Training VBCs to specialize in rural area populations (A)
    - Identification of high-risk Veteran populations.
- Advocate for adding "Ask a Veteran: Have you or family served in the Armed Forces?" to all state agency forms (A)
- Expand tele-health and tele-medicine into rural communities, including extending broadband and fostering digital literacy (A)
- Fund *Star Behavioral Health* to educate civilian behavior health providers about military culture and learn evidence-based interventions (P)
- Monitor and evaluate Veteran heat-related deaths and influence positive outcomes (A & P)
- Monitor, evaluate and influence expansion of Veteran-specific spiritual support within the civilian faith communities (A)
- Support the needs of aging Veterans in these ways:
  - Obtain current aging demographics of Veterans (A)
  - Assess whether the long term care needs of Veterans are being met (A)
  - Protect and grow the cemetery trust fund with the intent to build more Veteran cemeteries across the state (P)
  - Provide memorial grants for private and municipal cemeteries (P)

- Provide better communication and coordination of benefits for Veterans' widows (A and P)
- Foster collaboration of Arizona HealthCare Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) and Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) to better support Veterans aging in rural communities (A)
- Understand and potentially streamline eligibility requirements for residents and enable staffing of Arizona's Veterans Nursing homes (A)
- Support development of more Veterans Treatment Courts:
  - Increase funding (P)
  - Share best practices (A)
  - Promote DVS':
    - Development of a "Justice Involved" Veterans tool kit (A)
    - Full utilization of the staff Housing Coordinator (A)
- Support organizations that provide legal assistance to Veterans (A)
- Keep needs of Veteran subgroups top of mind - Minority, Women, Disabled, Rural, Native American: (A)
  - Support DVS' engagement with Native Americans:
    - Create rural and tribal engagement events using satellite internet capabilities
    - Deploy tribal traditional healing program
    - Monitor the impact of water shortages
- Advocate for these federal issues:
  - Provide Veterans paid transportation to healthcare appointments, especially for rural Veterans (A)
  - Use Medicare credentialing reciprocity for TRICARE providers (P)
  - *Fisher Homes* in Phoenix, Prescott and Tucson (A)

### **III. Ensure Access to Affordable Housing**

- Expand affordable housing options for Veterans (P)
- Ensure Veterans have access to HUD-VASH vouchers (A)

- Monitor and promote financial stability for military families (A)
- Support these efforts:
  - Arizona Veteran Homeless Action Plan (A)
  - DVS Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (A)

#### **IV. Improve educational outcomes for Veterans and their families:**

- Monitor Veterans' postsecondary graduation rates and barriers for successful completion (A)
- Fund Purple Star Schools to foster awareness about the needs of and support for military children K-12 (P)

#### **V. Monitor, evaluate and influence how these Governor priorities affect Veterans:**

- Water shortages
- Immigration policies

Legend:

(A) Administrative response

(P) Policy issue - may require legislation

**09 November 2023**

**To: Arizona Department of Veterans' Services Commission**

**From: Commissioner Cushman**

**Subject: Outreach to Veterans 14 September 2023 to 08 November 2023**

The following is a summary of outreach to Veterans performed between Commission meetings. I chair several committees at my local VFW and American Legion Post to include Bylaws Committee, Naming Committee, Executive Committee, and the Quartzsite Masters Charity Desert Golf Tournament.

- Attended AZDVS Commission Meeting, Phoenix, Arizona (14 September 2023)
- Attended American Legion Post 113, Quartzsite, Arizona monthly membership meeting (16 September 2023). Provided update on Commission activities, planning efforts for new Post Sign, and process for Legion Post 113 naming.
- Substitute Teaching, Ehrenberg Elementary School, Ehrenberg, Arizona (18 September 2023). Inspired the next generation to consider careers in the U.S. Military.
- Visited VFW Post 9401 and Legion Post 81 in Lake Havasu City (19 September 2023)
- Visited VFW Post 9401 and Legion Post 81 in Lake Havasu City (26 September 2023)
- Reviewed AVSAC Conflict of Interest Statements for Commission (28 September 2023).
- Attended VFW Post 769, Quartzsite, Arizona monthly membership meeting (14 September 2023). Provided update on Commission activities.
- Attended reception for the U.S. Marine Riders at Gunny's Military Museum, Quartzsite, Arizona (14 October 2023).
- Attended La Paz County Homelessness Coalition meeting (17 October 2023).
- Attended Legion Post 113, Quartzsite, Arizona monthly membership (21 October 2023) Provided update on Commission activities and planning efforts for new Post Sign.
- Substitute Teaching, Ehrenberg Elementary School, Ehrenberg, Arizona (23 October 2023). Inspired the next generation to consider careers in the U.S. Military.
- Attended AZDVS Strategy Committee Meeting, (25 October 2023)
- Attended Legion Post 113, Quartzsite, Arizona Executive Board meeting to address a sensitive membership matter (25 October 2023).
- Substitute Teaching, Ehrenberg Elementary School, Ehrenberg, Arizona (26 October 2023). Inspired the next generation to consider careers in the U.S. Military.
- Telephone call with Dr. David Swindell regarding future presentation to the Commission on the employment of Veterans in local government (27 October 2023).
- Meeting with Quartzsite Assisted Living regarding future presentation to the Commission on housing for Veterans in need (27 October 2023).
- Meeting with CEO of La Paz Regional Hospital regarding the care and services to Veterans at their local hospital (30 October 2023).
- Attended Legion Post 113, Quartzsite, Arizona Executive Board meeting to address a sensitive membership matter (30 October 2023).

- Meeting with Commander, VFW Post 769 to advise on preparations for annual inspection (31 October 2023).
- Substitute Teaching, Ehrenberg Elementary School, Ehrenberg, Arizona (2 November 2023). Inspired the next generation to consider careers in the U.S. Military.
- As owner of Cushman Apiaries, coordinating free honeybee removal services with VFW Post 9401 Lake Havasu City. Also provided beehives to two Veterans (U.S. Army and U.S. Navy) who wanted to host a beehive in their yard and thereby provide them with a purpose and sense of responsibility.

Respectfully Submitted,

Philip D. Cushman  
Commissioner