

1 **VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD**
2 **CITY OF LAS CRUCES**
3 **June 22, 2021, at 9:00 a.m.**
4

5 **MEMBERS PRESENT:** Karen Woods, UMW of Southwest, Chair
6 Kyle Trout, Special Forces Association, Vice-Chair
7 John Poland, American Legion Post 10
8 Victor Eres, Marine Corps League
9 Rod Gajewski, MOPH
10 Christine Sautter, MOAA
11 Mike Cano, Member at Large 3
12 Hubert L. Gay, Vietnam Veterans
13 Sam Bothern, DAV Chapter 10
14

15 **STAFF PRESENT:** Eric Enriquez, Assistant City Manager
16 Larry Nichols, Director Community Development
17 Audrianna Sambrano, Administrative Assistant
18

19 **OTHERS PRESENT:** Dale Lawrence
20 Sam Robert Jones
21 Deborah O'Callaghan
22 Crystal Davis-Whited
23 Desiree Javery
24 Scott del Oso
25 Rick Pineda
26 Tony Alvarez
27 Lester Palmer
28 Arnold Diaz
29 Melanie Goodman
30

31 **I. CALL TO ORDER (9:12 a.m.):** Chair Woods called the meeting to order.
32

33 **II. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:**
34

35 a. The minutes from May 25, 2021, are being reviewed.
36

37 **III. OLD BUSINESS:**

38 a. Iraq/Afghanistan memorial: Mr. Gajewski stated that as of now, there
39 is not a designated area for the monument however, it is fully paid
40 for.
41

42 Chair Woods asked if there was an idea of where the monument
43 should be placed, and Mr. Gajewski stated that they would like to

1 place it next to the helicopter on the left-hand side where the Korean
2 monument was before it was moved up.

3
4 Mr. Gajewski made a motion to make a recommendation to the City
5 of Las Cruces' Parks & Recs department that Iraq/Afghanistan
6 Operation (inaudible) Freedom Gulf of War Veterans monument be
7 placed in the southwest corner near the helicopter in Veterans Park.

8
9 Board Member Gay seconded the motion.

10
11 **IV. NEW BUSINESS:**

- 12
13 **a. Medals for the Display Case:** Chair Woods stated that Mr. Gajewski
14 presented her with some campaign ribbons from the Korean War that
15 he received from one of his members. That gave Chair Woods an idea
16 that instead of cluttering the new display case at Veterans Park, to
17 get a campaign ribbon from each one of the conflicts, wars, etc., and
18 place those in the case.

19
20 Mr. Cano stated that a lot of the medals in the old display case had
21 some very old and faded medals, and you could not tell what colors
22 they were.

23
24 Chair Woods stated that her thought on the new display case would
25 include all major conflicts such as World War I & II, Korean,
26 Iraq/Afghanistan, etc. By placing the major ones
27 on top, there will be leeway at the bottom for other items.

28
29 (inaudible) stated that there is not a ribbon for the Civil War.

30
31 Mr. Cano mentioned that you can get the medals from Medals on
32 America. Also, that the Purple Heart did not exist as a medal until
33 1934. Before that, George Washington gave a purple swatch of cloth
34 as a recognition of honor. Getting a medal or a campaign ribbon from
35 the Civil War

36
37 (inaudible) asked if they are not able to get a medal, can they get a
38 picture and laminate it to put it in the case to at least show
39 something.

40
41 Chair Woods stated that they will get the ribbons that they can for
42 now to get started on it. They can always rearrange what is in there.
43 Chair Woods also stated that she will write something up for Sonya

1 and Frank from Parks & Rec., on how the display case should be set
2 up with approval.

3
4 Motioned by Hubert Gay
5 Seconded by Rod Gajewski
6

7 **V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATON:**

8
9 **a. VA Clinic:** Crystal Davis-Whited gave an update on William Beaumont.
10 She stated that they will be doing an opening ceremony on July 1st.
11 On July 11th, at 7:00 a.m., they are going to start switching the ER
12 over. Everything before 7:00 a.m., will go to the old Beaumont and
13 after 7:00 a.m., will go to the new Beaumont. They will continue to
14 treat those people in the ER, they will not be moved. If you show up
15 at 6:59 a.m., on that date, they will treat you in the old Beaumont.
16 After that, people need to report to the new one.
17

18 As far as the VA moving over there, they are meeting with the army
19 corps engineers. The VA and the contractors are working together and
20 are still working on some of those plans. Ms. Davis-Whited also stated
21 that the new Primary Care Provider for Team #5 in place, her name is
22 Satia Mohamad, Nurse Practitioner.
23

24 **b. Veterans Park Monthly Report:** Mr. Hubert stated that the Korean
25 War monument had the two medallions which were stolen but no one
26 knows when. They have been replaced. (inaudible) got more of them.
27 Someone also stole the two plants that Parks & Rec put there. Mr.
28 Hubert also stated that someone also glued two ceramic pictures onto
29 the benches behind the Korean War monument, but they have been
30 removed. Someone also glued a silver cross next to their relative's
31 name on the wall, but they have been removed. Mr. Hubert is
32 requesting for everyone to talk to their groups and ask them not to do
33 that because it can mess up the park.
34

35 Arnold Diaz, Honor Flight of Southern New Mexico, stated that they
36 had a request to use their fire truck to spray off the helicopter. He
37 stated that he took it up to the Chain of Command and explained that
38 they can use it as an actual training. They would not drive the fire
39 truck onto the park, they would use a hose which will benefit them to
40 get some training done. Right now, the decision is at the Chief's level,
41 so nothing is official. Mr. Enriquez stated that he will be checking with
42 Fire Chief Smith.
43

1 Mr. Diaz stated that the Honor Flight of Southern New Mexico is a hub
2 of 147. The network is finally opened up and they are able to do trips
3 again. The board has decided not to do one this year but to hopefully
4 do one next year halfway through the year so they can start doing
5 some fundraising. They did have a successful car show at Allen
6 Theaters which raised some money for them. They are always looking
7 for Veterans and volunteers.
8

9 **VI. BOARD MEMBER REPORTS:**

- 10
11 a. **Melanie Goodman, Field Representative, Office of Senator, Ben**
12 **Ray Lujan**, gave an update on what the Senator has been up to. They
13 are working on getting their office up and running at their location at
14 the Bank of the West building downtown. Ms. Goodman stated that all
15 of their congressional offices provide a service called Constituent
16 Services and Case Work. They work one on one with individuals that
17 need help with Federal Agencies. Senator Lujan came from the House
18 of Representatives after 10 years. He built a reputation on being really
19 good at case work. Even if they do not get the outcome they want,
20 they are still going to do everything they can. As a result, they have a
21 lot of cases already.
22

23 One area that the staff in the Washington area is addressing is the
24 barriers to VA enrollment. One of the primary barriers they see often
25 for Veterans is proving eligibility for VA benefits. The VA and the DOV
26 work better together to make that happen and to ensure that military
27 branches and the transmitting of the records to the VA give a
28 presumptive eligibility to that Veteran on their discharge from service.
29 Senator Lujan advocated very strongly for better for better outreach
30 and vaccine access for Veterans earlier on when they were short on
31 the vaccine.
32

33 Senator Lujan introduced legislation to get a congressional charter for
34 Native American Veteran Organizations. Senator also voted in favor of
35 Commander John Scott Hansen Veterans Mental Health Improvement
36 Act, is groundbreaking legislation specific to Veterans mental health
37 care. It addresses things like access to workforce to give veterans an
38 alternative and local treatment for services.
39

- 40 b. **Tony Alvidrez, Mesilla Valley Community of Hope**, stated that he
41 is at the Oak Street Apartments, the Veterans Transition Center. He
42 stated that if anyone needs anything he would be willing to help out.
43

1 c. **Scott del Oso, Healthcare Navigator, Mesilla Valley Community**
2 **of Hope**, stated that his purpose is to provide housing for homeless
3 Veterans. He connects them with medical services that prevent them
4 from getting housing.
5

6 d. **Rick Pineda, Veteran Liaison for Congresswoman Yvette**
7 **Herrell**. He stated that he is starting to get out to the district such as
8 Hobbs and Truth or Consequences and is still working his way up. He
9 stated that the Congresswoman has been signing bills that has to do
10 with Veterans. The first one was VA (inaudible), Veteran Program
11 Extension Act, Veterans Healthcare Freedom Act, Wingman Act, Pause
12 Act, and Affordable Housing for Veterans Act 2021. Mr. Pineda stated
13 that one of the issues that he has been seeing a lot of is travel in the
14 rural areas. He has spoken to the owners of (inaudible) Ruidoso and
15 they can cover the district if any Veteran needs transportation, just
16 reach out to Mr. Pineda.
17

18 e. **Dale Lawrence, Vet Center**, stated that eligibility has changed over
19 the years to now anyone that can prove that they have been in the
20 service, in uniform, is eligible. Also, from Reserves and National Guard
21 they have been called up, such as if the National Guard has done any
22 of the drug missions and stuff like that on the border, they are not
23 eligible. The Reserves, if they have been called up by the state for
24 floodings, etc., they can receive services now, as long as they can
25 prove they don't have D214's anymore. Sometimes Reserves or
26 National Guard don't get D214's if they have never been deployed. If
27 they can prove that they wore the uniform whether it is Commanders
28 orders, call up orders, ribbons, etc., they can seek services now. Mr.
29 Lawrence also stated that there is a Veterans Crisis hotline. Deborah
30 O Callaghan, Vet Center, stated that they also see active-duty people.
31

32 Chair Woods had a question regarding the Crisis Center. Mr. Enriquez
33 stated that the triage center is not fully open yet. They are working on
34 staffing and pharmacy approval, so they administer the medications.
35 Mr. Enriquez stated that Jaimie Michael is the coordinator and the
36 person to contact for any questions regarding the building. She is
37 located at the Dona Ana County building on Motel Blvd. Mr. Enriquez
38 would like to invite Ms. Michael to a meeting to do a presentation on
39 the triage center.
40

41 Crystal Davis-Whited stated that one of the ideas is that if someone is
42 in crisis that needs to be medically cleared and does not want to go
43 through the ER this may allow them to bypass the ER by sending them
44 to one of the mental health facilities.

1
2 Mr. Enriquez stated that the goal of the City is to have a mobile crisis
3 team consisting of a mental health provider, a police officer, and a
4 paramedic riding as a team to follow up on those who utilize the system
5 to work in conjunction with the triage center.
6

- 7 f. **Sam Jones, Outreach Specialist, Vet Center,** stated that he goes
8 to a lot of events and if anyone has an event coming up to reach out
9 to him and he will participate if he is available.
10

11 Deborah O Callaghan stated that if there is an event in El Paso, they
12 collaborate with the El Paso Vet Center and they can cover and attend
13 if they are available. Ms. O Callaghan also stated that they have not
14 been approved for their back to work plan, but they are reaching out,
15 planning, and scheduling events in the community. Ms. O Callaghan
16 also stated that they are rebranding and re doing their logos.
17

18 **Christine Sautter, MOAA,** stated that despite of the pandemic, they
19 were able to get their awards out the high school and to NMSU. They
20 will be starting their regular meetings hopefully in September. Ms.
21 Sautter asked if anyone would be willing to take on a stand down issue.
22

- 23 g. **John Poland, American Legion Post 10 Commander,** stated that
24 they are starting to open next month. The developing transition
25 planning to the New Mexico Gaming board so they can hopefully have
26 bingo starting on August 4th. They have recently hit a milestone and
27 have 400 members. Over the course of the past few months, they have
28 distributed and delivered over 1,500 USDA food boxes to people in the
29 community. Mr. Poland also stated that they will be having their annual
30 American Legion State Convention on June 24-27th.
31

- 32 h. **Hubert Gay, Vietnam Veterans,** stated that there was a dedication
33 on May 27th for the Hall of Fame and Gold Star. The next monument
34 that they are discussing is for the Afghanistan/Iraq, which will be
35 ordered sometime in the next month or so. Mr. Gay also stated that
36 before it gets placed at the, he will bring it to the board for approval.
37 Mr. Gay also stated that the DVA has a food drive every first of the
38 month. It will be at the Valley Drive Walmart. They receive a lot of
39 donations that get passed along to the community. They also had a
40 car show coming up to raise funds for the Afghanistan/Iraq
41 monument and they raised \$4,803.00.
42

1 i. **Rod Gajewski, Military Order of the Purple Heart**, stated that
2 they will be out at the New Mexico State Fair on September 29th
3 through October 3rd.
4

5 j. **Karen Woods, United Military Women of the Southwest, Board**
6 **Chair**, mentioned a couple of events including, a car show on
7 September 4th at the Sonoma Ranch Golf Course; an event on
8 September 25th at Top Golf and they are looking for sponsors; and
9 the Fourth of July Parade. They are needing two grand marshals and
10 is recommending Jay Lloyd to be one of the Marshalls. Mr. Lloyd is the
11 only WWII vet. Chair Woods would like to encourage all Veterans to
12 get registered for the VA. In November will be the Veteran's Day
13 Parade.
14

15 **VII. REMINDERS:**
16

17 a. **Garrison Flag: Hubert Gay, Vietnam Veterans** stated that Parks &
18 Rec is working on getting the Garrison Flagpole fixed as well as the
19 two poles next to the Vietnam memorial. It is a contract job to replace
20 the ropes on the poles.
21

22 b. **Next meeting July 27, 2021:** will take place at the East Mesa Public
23 Facility Complex.
24

25 **VIII. ADJOURNMENT (10:32 a.m.)**
26

27 Motion to adjourn by Board Member Hubert Gay, seconded by Board
28 Member Rod Gajewski. Motion passes
29
30

31
32 
33 _____
34 Chairperson



Date