

**ADVISORY BOARD ON VETERANS SERVICES
MINUTES**

Skype Audio

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Friday, July 10, 2020

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

Board Members: Ms. Bridget Komine, Chair
Mr. Harold Bugado
Mr. Jim Traxler
Mr. Michael Lilly
Mr. Blair Suzuki
Mr. Reyn Kaupiko
Ms. Mary Kay Hertog

OVS Staff: Mr. Ron Han, OVS, Director
Ms. Yam Yi Lee, Administrative Services Assistant
Ms. Yolanda Ehere, Secretary

Ex-Officios: Dr. Kathryn Ryder, Acting Director, VAPIHCS

Guests: Mr. Sergio Chao, Director, VBA Benefits
Mr. Wade Ishii, Asst. Chief Engineering Officer, State of Hawaii DOD Engineering
Mr. Juan Babiak, Veterans Liaison, Yukio Okutsu State Veterans
Ms. Ann Greenlee, U.S. Department of Labor, VETS
Mr. Gene Maestas, Public Affairs Officer, National Cemetery of the Pacific
Mr. Carlos Santana – Senator Mazie Hirono's Office

Absent: Department of Health
Department of Human Services
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations
Oahu Veterans Center

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & CALL TO ORDER – A Moment of Silence

Chair Bridget Komine led the Pledge of Allegiance. After a moment of silence, called the meeting to order at 0900 hours.

II. MINUTES

The Board reviewed the June 5, 2020 minutes. Harold Bugado motioned to accept seconded by Blair Suzuki. Minutes were unanimously accepted by the Board Members.

III. COMMUNICATIONS

None

IV. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Dr. Kathryn Ryder, Acting Director, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs – Pacific Island Health Care System-Medical

Briefed on: increased face to face visits in specialty care, opening new audiology booth, continuing to push virtual care for mental health, CLC is going well and doing dry runs in case someone gets sick

Questions for Dr. Ryder

1. Blair Suzuki asked what is the process for veterans who want to receive a COVID test? Is it in house or referral? Do we have data on if it is spreading through our Veteran community? Dr. Ryder answered it depends first where people are located. The VA will pay for COVID test depending on what island they're on. They can go to their PCP to get an order for the test and they can go to a testing site. Many of the VA clinics have the capability to do onsite testing. Yes, we track the numbers 3 times a week. We can only track veterans that's in our system. We reach out to other hospitals and our clinics on neighbor islands.

Mr. Sergio Chao, Director, VBA– Benefits

Briefed on: VBA still not open to public, New virtual appointment system – Veterans can call in and leave a voice message and a counselor will return their call within two hours.

Questions for Sergio

1. Blair Suzuki asked what is the current intake load? Are you at capacity? Sergio answered they are seeing about eight a day; it's been only a couple of weeks. When the word gets out, we will see if we can maintain the two-hour turnaround.
2. Reyn Kaupiko asked for the older veteran demographic has there been any setbacks with technology accessing the services? What is their reception of it? Sergio answered he hasn't heard anything. I know from the VRE perspective they have expressed that the tele counseling is going well.

Mr. Ron Han, Director, OVS

Briefed on: Dr. Paul Lawrence, Undersecretary of benefits is conducting a virtual townhall, Virtual appeal hearings went very well, state legislator had a special session to work on budget piece, State hiring freeze, 75th Anniversary Commemoration of the End of WWII is still on from Sept. 22nd – 28th.

Mr. Wade Ishii, Asst. Chief Engineering Officer, State of Hawaii DOD Engineering

Briefed on: Maui Veterans Cemetery Additional Columbarium Niches – 100% completed as of today and out to bid next week Pacific Aviation Museum – Supplemental No. 2 executed on June 19th. Pearl Harbor Aviation Museum – payment issued on 6/9/20. Remaining balance is \$10,914. USS Missouri Memorial Association – Check was delivered on May 28th and final report is due on 7/31/21. Audit to follow. Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery – 06/23/20 submitted updated Program Narrative to VA and increased grant request to \$9 million, West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery – June 30th uploaded grant application for \$4.9M to grants.gov, Kauai Veterans Cemetery – DAGS to submit letter to SHPD to get concurrence with determination that No Historic Properties Affected , Kauai Veterans Cemetery – New Columbarium Wall – project will be started very soon. Maui Veteran Cemetery Gravesite Restoration – 7/1/20 Pre-final inspection, Maui Veteran Cemetery – Additional Columbarium Niches - DAGS to submit letter to SHPD to get concurrence with determination that No Historic Properties Affected

Questions for Wade

1. Mary Kay Hertog asked how many days will the work on the Columbarium Wall take? 30days? 60day? How long does the contractors have to finish the wall? Wade answered contractor started on Wednesday. The notice to proceed started on June 1st and he has 120 days to complete which will be September 28th.
2. Blair Suzuki asked have you always historically operated at 40 percent staffing? Wade answered due to various reasons it seems we are always 1 to 2 people short, but we just have to try our best.

Mr. Juan Babiak , Liaison, Yukio Okutsu Veterans Home in Hilo

Briefed on: Testing on staff and residents with symptoms, spending a sufficient amount on overtime for 1 to 1 coverage.

Director Ann Greenlee, U.S. Department of Labor, VETS

Briefed on: Catholic Charities just received a new 3-year grant to help homeless veterans gain training and employment they need. US Vets, Honolulu and Barber's Point and Catholic Charities are the 3 grantees for Hawaii for homeless veterans, American Job center on Dillingham is open by appointment only,

Mr. Gene Maestas, Public Affairs Officer, National Cemetery of the Pacific

Briefed on: Administration building is closed for the safety of the staff, Restrooms are open to the public, all interments are limited to 10 persons only, Disinterment's of unknowns have been postponed, Construction work to begin June 2021 for

columbaria 14.

Mr. Carlos Santana – Senator Mazie Hirono’s Office - Present.

Department of Health – Not present. No submitted report.

Department of Human Service - Not present. No submitted report.

Department of Labor and Industrial Relations - Not present. No submitted report.

Oahu Veterans Centers- Not present. No submitted report.

V. BOARD MEMBER'S REPORTS

1. Kauai – Ms. Mary Kay Hertog – No submitted report.
2. Maui – Mr. Michael Lilly – No submitted report.
3. Oahu – Mr. Blair Suzuki - No submitted report.
4. Oahu – Ms. Bridget Komine, Chair - No submitted report.
5. Oahu – Ms. Reyn Kaupiko, Chair - No submitted report.
6. Big Island – Mr. Harold Bugado - Report submitted. No additions.
7. Big Island – Mr. Jim Traxler - Report submitted. No additions.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Legislative Committee
 - End of legislation – a lot of bills will be deferred to 2021
- B. By Laws and Procedures
 - No Report
- C. Recognition and Awards
 - No Report.
- D. Women's Committee
 - Bridget will reach out Pam Ellison for an update
- E. Project and Events Committee
 - Rededication of the WWII Memorial in 2020
 1. James Hisano feels the plaque is too wordy, so adjustments are being made
 2. Ron will contact James for latest update on the plaque and its completion date.
 3. Bridget will contact NALC about their funding.
 - Maui Veterans Cemetery Blessing/Dedication Event
 1. Moving forward; trying to get past the ligation piece
 2. Anticipation for the Notice to Proceed

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- Talk about the open vacancies (Vice chair and committee vacancies)

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

X. WORKING SESSION – OVS / Advisory Board Issues / Ideas

XI. ADJOURN – 10:02am

Yolanda Ehere – Recorder
Attachments