

ADVISORY BOARD ON VETERANS SERVICES MINUTES

Teams Audio

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Friday, April 9, 2021

9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

Board Members: Ms. Bridget Komine, Chair
Mr. Blair Suzuki, Vice Chair
Mr. Harold Bugado
Mr. Jim Traxler
Ms. Mary Kay Hertog
Ms. Roxanne (Rocky) Bruhn
Mr. Michael Lilly

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

Guests: Dr. Adam Robinson, Director, VAPIHCS
Ms. Amy Rohlf, Public Affairs Officer, VAPIHCS
Mr. Chris McNair, Veterans Service Center Manager, VBA Benefits
Capt. Shaoyu Lee, Chief Engineering Officer, State of Hawaii
DOD Engineering
Mr. Juan Babiak, Veterans Liaison, Yukio Okutsu State Veterans
Ms. Katherine Korenaga, Community and Project Development Director,
Department of Human Services
Ms. Ann Greenlee, U.S. Department of Labor, VETS
Mr. Jim Horton, Director, National Cemetery of the Pacific
Mr. Carlos Santana - Senator Mazie Hirono's Office Representative

Absent: Mr. Reyn Kaupiko
Department of Health
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations

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

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

II. MINUTES

The Board reviewed the March 5, 2021 minutes. Clay Park found one error in the spelling of Mary Kay Hertog's name on Page 3 number 4 under questions for Dr. Robinson. Dr. Adam Robinson motioned to accept the minutes and Blair Suzuki seconded.

III. COMMUNICATIONS

None

IV. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Mr. Chris McNair, Veterans Service Center Manager, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - Benefits

Briefed on: Conducted 118 face to face interviews in the month of March (Honolulu Office), 16 in Hilo and Oon Maui. Veterans are still utilizing the call-in option. There were 426 (Honolulu) 53 for Hilo and 50 for Maui, virtual benefit workshop is scheduled for April 26th and May 26th.

Questions to Chris McNair

1. Roxanne Bruhn asked Chris about the virtual interviews. Is it for veterans trying to get into the VA system or is this for people who are filing claims? Chris answered if they are seeking VBA for claim processing then that is the process. If they are seeking VHA, we will give them the information to do the 1010ez and then hand them the information for VHA so they can start the process. We will also give them information on how to make a claim before we end the call. 433.0505 is a one stop for all. It's a really good number to have.

Dr. Adam Robinson, Director and Ms. Amy Rohlfs, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - Pacific Island Health Care System-Medical

Briefed on: COVID Vaccine update - 11,319 for veterans and staff, 1.800.214.1306 if you need an appointment for a vaccine, Mass Vaccination Event at Keehi Lagoon and Kona- April 10th, Save Lives Act extends benefits to people to get vaccinated to all veterans, caregivers, spouses, and eligible family members, trying to address vaccine misinformation and disinformation, Construction update - Aloha Project has been awarded a 15-year lease and is in 30% design phase.

Questions for Dr. Robinson and Amy Rohlfs

1. Michael Lilly asked Dr. Robinson about audiology and optometry on Maui? Bridget asked that Dr. Robinson to also look at all the neighbor islands for these services. Dr. Robinson answered I will review what we can do. It is very difficult to get certain specialists there.

2. Roxanne Bruhn asked Dr. Robinson and Chris McNair about CBOC and Aloha Project. How it (Aloha Project) interfaces with CBOC or does it take the place of CBOC? Does it work with CBOC? Roxanne Bruhn asked Chris about CBOC. CBOC was told in no certain terms that they cannot help veterans with any claims. Dr. Robinson answered there is no instructions coming from him or anyone from VHA. Please give him a call if this situation persists. The Aloha Project is going to be a "super CBOC" it is not taking placing of CBOC. It's going in the growing parts of Hawaii and emphasizing the primary care aspects. The Aloha Project is our way in increasing care, visibility, and access to our veterans in the Pacific Islands.
3. Carlos Santana asked Dr. Robinson will the small CBOC that is in Ewa close and have there been any issues with vaccine distribution or administration on any of the neighbor islands? Dr. Robinson answered it will close but will be moved into a larger place. It's been going very well.
4. Clay Park asked Dr. Robinson a follow up question from last meeting about the outcome of the meeting with Maui medical group? Dr. Robinson answered outcome is we're continuing to talk. We're having good discussions.

Mr. Ron Han, OVS, Director

Briefed on: State legislature is winding down - nothing has surfaced on veteran's issues; Carlos Santana is chairing the summit and teaming with AARP. Memorial Day - working with the 111th Army band virtual concert.

Capt. Shaoyu Lee, Chief Engineering Officer, State of Hawaii DOD Engineering

Briefed on:

- Pearl Harbor Aviation Museum (PHAM) (Learning Laboratory) - 3/16/2021 PHAM was sent new MOA for signature.
- The 442nd Veterans Club (GIA)- Legacy Center- Due to COVID-19, the project was not able to secure contractors and start the project. Requested to extend MOA. 3/16/2021 completed Supplemental No. 1 (12-month) extension to lapse 6/30/2022.
- Hawaii State Veterans Home, Oahu - March 31, 2021 - Right of Entry executed w/ HHFDC allowing contractor to enter site for materials storage, staging, grading, and trenching. April 12, 2021 - DAGS plans to issue Notice to Proceed for materials, grading, and trenching.
- West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery, Additional Columbaria Units - March 18, 2021 - Received Final Payment Request (No. 10) from Contractor, approved by DAGS. Working on obtaining VA approval/reimbursement for this payment request.
- West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery- Gold Star Monument- March 10, 2021: Provided review/comments for possible new Gold Star Memorial at the West Hawaii Veterans Cemetery.

- Kauai Veterans Cemetery, Phase 2B (FAI No. HI-10-21 and FAI No. HI-19-34), New Access Road, Expansion, and Improvements - March 18, 2021: Preconstruction meeting held at Hanapepe Veterans Cemetery. April 5, 2021: On-site construction start date.
- Maui Veterans Cemetery Expansion and Improvements - March 10, 2021: County of Maui (Department of Water Supply) requiring consolidation of both veteran cemetery lots into a single lot.
- Maui Veterans Cemetery Additional Columbaria Niches - March 10, 2021: County of Maui (Department of Water Supply) requiring consolidation of both veteran cemetery lots into a single lot prior to building permit being issued. This could delay Construction Notice to Proceed (NTP) as building permit is required prior to issuing NTP. March 24, 2021: DAGS to pursue permit exemption from County Public Works (Maui) so that Construction NTP can be issued.

Mr. Juan Babiak, Veterans Liaison, Yukio Okutsu State Veterans

Briefed on: We have 2 admissions scheduled for today. (1 short term and 1 long term) The long term is a transfer from another nursing facility.

Ms. Katherine Korenaga, Community and Project Development Director, Department of Human Services

Briefed on: Mahala to Director Sergio Chao for walking me through their reopening!! Director Cathy Betts is very concern about women and women with children and also about women veterans and their access. So, we have included in this report childcare subsidiaries that can be provided. P-EBT - available to income eligible families going back to August 2020 throughout the school (per child).

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

Briefed on: Received veteran unemployment report for 2020 - will send it out to everyone.

Mr. Jim Horton, Director, National Cemetery of the Pacific

Briefed on: Graveside availability - inventory went down dramatically during the pandemic, haven't changed processes with the funeral homes, but there are no in-ground plots available again at Punchbowl. Memorial Day - not going to have any traditional large ceremonies at all. We will make graveside flags available for individuals to place their own.

Mr. Carlos Santana, Senator Mazie Hirono's Office Representative

Briefed on: Aloha Project- Senator Hirono is leading a delegation effort to put the late Senator Akaka name on the clinic. Summer Summit - AARP reached out and it was decided that we would do a virtual summit. Format will be one virtual session per week for 4 weeks: no more than 90 mins long.

Department of Health - Not present. No submitted report.

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

V. BOARD MEMBER'S REPORTS

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

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- A. Legislative Committee
 - All Veteran bills have gone nowhere. It's basically dead with no activity this legislative period.
- B. By Laws and Procedures
 - No Report.
- C. Recognition and Awards
 - No Report.
- D. Women's Committee
 - No Report.
- E. Project and Events Committee
 - Rededication of the WWII Memorial
 1. The formal obligation for the plaque has been made. Hopefully, we will have something to put out by summer.
 - Maui Veterans Cemetery Blessing/Dedication Event- On Hold ...will be a organized prior to the conclusion of the current project.

VII. NEW BUSINESS - None

VIII. OLD BUSINESS - None

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS - None

X. WORKING SESSION - OVS / Advisory Board Issues / Ideas - None

XI. ADJOURN -10:19am

Mary Kay Hertog motioned, and Blair Suzuki seconded.

Yolanda Ehere - Recorder