

## ADVISORY BOARD ON VETERANS SERVICES MINUTES

Teams Audio  
+1 808-829-4853, 339 622 932# (Dial-in Number)  
**Friday, July 2, 2021**  
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Board Members: Ms. Bridget Komine, Chair  
Mr. Blair Suzuki, Vice Chair  
Ms. Mary Kay Hertog  
Mr. Reyn Kaupiko  
Mr. Michael Lilly

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

Guests: Mr. Chris McNair, Veterans Service Center Manager, VBA Benefits  
Ms. Katie Kalama, Assistant Director, VAPIHCS  
Ms. Amy Rohlf, Public Affairs Officer, VAPIHCS  
Capt. Shaoyu Lee, Chief Engineering Officer, State of Hawaii  
DOD Engineering  
Mr. Wade Ishii, Asst. 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  
Mr. Gene Maestas, Public Affairs Specialist, National Cemetery of  
the Pacific  
Mr. Carlos Santana – Senator Mazie Hirono’s Office Representative

Absent: Mr. Jim Traxler  
Ms. Roxanne (Rocky) Bruhn  
Ms. Yolanda Ehere, Secretary  
Ms. Ann Greenlee, U.S. Department of Labor, VETS  
Department of Health  
Department of Labor and Industrial Relations

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

Mary Kay Hertog 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 June 4, 2021 minutes. Juan Babiak found one error on Page 3 under his briefed-on section last sentence “We use them interchangeably with our surgical N95 masks.” It should be N95 masks are only utilized for use in our yellow zone (new admissions/quarantined) and our red zone (covid positive) if/ needed.

## III. COMMUNICATIONS

None.

## IV. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

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

Briefed on: Upcoming outreach event/workshop on: July 26th. Bluewater Navy claims are being adjudicated. There are 60,492 veterans that have been identified with \$13.6 million retroactive award already paid out. So far, 7,451 claims have been completed.

Questions to Chris McNair

1. Clay Park asked Chris if the veteran has passed away, is the spouse and dependents entitled to DIC for the Bluewater claims? Chris answered yes letters were sent out to surviving spouses or dependents. And if there are retroactive payments, we will look for the next claimant that is eligible to receive the retroactive payment. If you do have a spouse that may have put a DIC claim, I would recommend they resubmit the claim if their husband is a part of the Vietnam era.

### **Ms. Katie Kalama, Assistant Director & Ms. Amy Rohlfs, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs - Pacific Island Health Care System-Medical**

Briefed on: Ms. Kalama introduced herself. OHSA has come out with an emergency temporary standard for VA to compile with when it comes to mitigating risks to COVID. Clinic will be closed from July 3rd through July 5th in observance of the 4th of July. The pharmacy (curbside) will be opened on Saturday, July 3rd from 8am to 1pm.

Upcoming events:

- July 6 VA session at 4:30 pm for the Hawaii State Veteran Summit
- July 6 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Daybreak Church Health Fair, 1230 Kailua Road
- July 13 Get the Flu And COVID-19 Vaccine Virtual Event 12-1 p.m. July 13, 2021 (Virtual presentation for Veterans, their *family*, and caregivers)
- July 26 Veteran Tele Town Hall Noon – 1 p.m. (This will also be on Facebook Live)

Questions for Amy Rohlfs:

1. Blair Suzuki asked Amy what is the turnout of the events? Amy answered because it's new we haven't done one before. Our hope is that this will increase

our ability to reach veterans. We have hired a company called BroadNet to help us do tele town halls.

2. Travis Schmidt, LCSW introduced himself. He is Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator – VA.

**Mr. Ron Han, OVS, Director**

Briefed on: New fiscal year (July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022), Past year OVS contactless overall contacts is over 80,000 ranging from 5 mins to 2 or more hours across state. Trying restart the women's subcommittee with Col. Pam Ellison asked for a small delay to start in July. The first meeting will be a virtual update to discuss national issues.

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

Briefed on:

- Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery Gravesite Restoration - June 10, 2021 – Updated costs to VA for restoration will not be submitted as updated costs are lower than that already submitted to VA.
- HSVC Expansion and Improvements, Oahu - Received response from the SHPO concurring with our findings of No Historic Properties Affected for our cemetery project. On June 24, 2021: Received letter from VA authorizing us to proceed to the bidding phase of this project.
- Hawaii State Veterans Home, Oahu - June 23, 2021: Mtg w/ FIN, HHFDC, B&F, DAGS, DOD to discuss possible monetary / land compensation for HHFDC for affordable housing land given up for this project. DOD/AG reviewing ground-lease terms between HHFDC and DOD.
- East Hawaii Veterans Cemetery No. 1 and No. 2 Gravesites Restoration (O&M) Projects - June 10, 2021: Submitted updated costs to VA for restoration of EHVC No. 1. Will not submit updated costs for EHVC No. 2 at this time as updated costs are lower than that already submitted to VA.
- Kauai Veterans Cemetery Gravesite Restoration (O&M) Project - June 10, 2021: Submitted updated costs to VA for restoration of KVC.

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

Briefed on: Nothing to add to report

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

Briefed on: Nothing to add just wanted to expand on SNAP benefits eligibility. Because of the public health emergency, waivers were granted so that we didn't have to do the eligibility reviews. The reviews are back on so there may be a waiting period for getting assistance.

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

Briefed on: Office will be closed on Monday, July 5th; no scheduled interments, but the cemetery will be open for visitations. The American Battle Monument commission completed their design chert for their proposed interpretive center on July 1, 2021. They're going to move forward with two different building proposals. There is some oppression from Native Hawaiians groups and need to mitigate some safety concerns and historical issues. The Republic of Korea Consulate General was here last week for a small commemorative ceremony. There is planning for the Nisei 442 ceremony and the Gold Star Family ceremony on September 26th. Good news alert - We were awarded the National Cemetery Administration Customer Satisfaction Award!!

Questions for Gene Maestas:

1. Michael Lilly asked how many people can attend an interment service? Gene answered we do not have a limit on the number of people who can attend an interment service. The caveat is that we are only going to set up 10 socially distanced chairs inside the tent.

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

Briefed on: Sgt. Ketchum Rural Veterans Mental Health Act of 2021 became law. Summit is going great. Registration is free and get a zoom link to participate. ([www.hawaiiiveteransfoundation.org](http://www.hawaiiiveteransfoundation.org))

**Ms. Ann Greenlee, U.S. Department of Labor, VETS** – Not present. No submitted report.

**Department of Health** – Not present. No submitted report.

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

**BOARD MEMBER'S REPORTS**

1. Kauai – Ms. Mary Kay Hertog – Report submitted. No additions.
2. Maui – Mr. Michael Lilly - Report submitted.
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.
7. Big Island – Mr. Jim Traxler – No submitted report.

**V. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

A. Legislative Committee

- No Report.

B. By Laws and Procedures

- No Report.

C. Recognition and Awards

- No Report.

D. Women's Committee

- Will standby to hear from Col. Pam Ellison

E. Project and Events Committee

- Rededication of the WWII Memorial
  1. Manufacturing is in progress.
- Maui Veterans Cemetery Blessing/Dedication Event – On Hold

**VI. NEW BUSINESS - None**

**VII. OLD BUSINESS - None**

**VIII. ANNOUNCEMENTS - None**

**IX. WORKING SESSION - OVS / Advisory Board Issues / Ideas**

- Cemetery compliance inspection – How can the board help? Start at the grassroot level.

**X. ADJOURN**

Michael Lilly motioned, and Mary Kay Hertog seconded.

Yam Yi Lee – Recorder